Lauren Guilmette

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In What We Tend to Feel is Without History: Toward a Feminist Ethics of Affect

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Abstract Cover Page

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An abstract of a dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the James T. Laney School
of Graduate Studies of Emory University in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Abstract:
In What We Tend to Feel is Without History: Toward a Feminist Ethics of Affect

By Lauren Guilmette

My project begins from the need for ethics to speak to the messy, relational space between freedom and determinism through which histories persists in us. I bring together Spinoza's ethics and politics of affect, Foucault's genealogies of 'abnormals' (and the *will to know* them), and Butler's response ethics to develop a language for these affective mediations—scripts, fictions, frames—and to consider how such an understanding of affect could enrich and concretize a response ethics: beyond the call to respond to another sentient being in its 'otherness,' its overflow of what we could conceptualize or thematize, an 'ethics of affect' addresses the concrete and historically singular ways in which we approach this unbridgeable gap. I am particularly concerned with 'interest,' and with sympathy and curiosity as modes of interest in the lives of others, because these modes negotiate forms of identification, difference, and spectacle that animate this gap. My aim is to develop terms to help us to articulate and counteract the persistence of racism, homophobia, transphobia, and other stuck cultural patterns of association which delimit what it is possible to think and feel.

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Introduction: Affect and Ethics

This project engages the resources of the **affective turn** in continental philosophy, feminist and queer theory toward a **feminist ethics of affect** which attends to the ways in which we concretely respond to the vulnerabilities and opacities of others (and ourselves). I turn to Judith Butler's *Giving An Account of Oneself* (2005), *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (2010), and other recent works which engage the framing of our responses to vulnerability in others. Butler generatively *asks the questions* that spark my inquiry: **the place of bodily vulnerability in Spinoza's ethics of affect** (Chapter One); **the role of fictions in framing responsiveness to others** (Chapter Two); and **the limits of identification with others** (Chapter Three). I differ from Butler primarily on her reading of Michel Foucault, and my fourth chapter engages the limits of her early critique in *Gender Trouble.* I find that **Foucault** supplements Butler's response ethics with the **affective framing of interest** and the complex motivations of the **will-to-know.**

<div align="center">*</div>

By '**affect**,' I denote those patterns of feeling which animate relations, exceeding and subverting the register of discourse as they also surface there—in speech, gestures and facial expressions, but also in architecture and the arrangement of space, in the resonances of music. As the late Teresa Brennan argued (2004), **affects refuse self-containment**; the editors of *The Affect Theory Reader* (2010) describe it as arising in the "**in-between-ness**" of capacities to act and be acted upon in a world of encounters, impingements, resonances, sometimes fleeting and sometimes enduring, sticking "to

bodies and worlds."[1] **Emotions** are but one incarnation of affect, distinctive of human and non-human animals, though affect extends to all finite modes which strive and persist in relation to other finite modes—the relational becoming of wasp and the orchid,[2] the attraction of mosquitos to light and flesh, the proliferation of mold on those leftovers behind the milk, the rust collecting with the rain on the balcony rail. In these encounters of finite striving, one negotiates these excesses and impingements with **affect scripts**: habituated patterns of response. Though contagious, this does not make affect mimetic: I can catch your anxiety without its narrative backdrop, delight and even join in your laughter without getting the joke. So we never *fuse*, though we may experience breakthroughs in the process of attunement.

Spinoza claimed in his *Ethics* (1677) that all finite modes have affects, from grass growing toward the light to the cat purring against the doorframe. But while affects may be innate sentient capacities for feeling, their patterning in human relations through "scripts" is historically contingent. The ethical and political difference between affects and affect scripts is underscored in Ruth Leys' forceful objections to Brian Massumi and others who distinguish affects—as pre-interpretive stimulus responses—from the qualification and signification of emotion; Leys finds that affect, thus described, becomes an all-the-more inaccessible unconscious, irrelevant to how we might feel better or live

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[1] Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Cornell UP, 2004); Melissa Gregg & Gregory Seigworth, eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (Duke UP, 2010).

[2] Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus,* trans. Massumi (U. of Minnesota Press, 1987).

otherwise.[3] Rather than engaging interest, anger, guilt, and other affects as values in and of themselves, such that joy becomes the good, we might productively engage the historical scripts through which our responses to others are affectively shaped and delimited.

This is what I take Michel Foucault (1971) to be doing when he writes that genealogy attends to "*dans ce qui passe pour n'avoir point d'histoire,*" curiously translated as "those things *we tend to feel* are without history" but more directly that which *passes* for being ahistorical, of which he lists four examples: sentiments, love, conscience, instincts.[4] Genealogy engages the messy, piecemeal beginnings of affective phenomena, uncritically sedimented into the background of action. Affects attach to images, half-forgotten stories, assumptions and associations in the **potentially articulable yet not often articulated *frame* of engagement** with another; ethics becomes a matter of **how we can intervene upon**, attune, and transform **seemingly automatic feelings**. I find that lasting systemic injustices like racism, homophobia, and transphobia operate as tacitly conscious affect scripts (*fear* of turban-touting 'terrorists,' *disgust* with non-normative sexualities, etc) and **an ethics attuned to histories of oppression must attend to these fictions.** Thus, Foucault claims that, whereas the Christian ethics of a former age worked on *desire* and Kant's Enlightenment morality

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3. Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," *Cultural Critique* 31, no. 2 (Autumn 1995): 83–109, at 85. Ruth Leys, "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," Critical Inquiry, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Spring 2011), pp. 434-472 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/659353>

4 Michel Foucault "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," *Essential Works*: *Aesthetics, Method, Epistemology*, ed. James Faubion (The New Press, 1994), 369; Nietzsche, la généalogie, l' histoire: 145-172, *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite,* Paris, P.U.F., coll. «Épiméthée», 1971.

worked on *intention*, today "**the part of ourselves which is most relevant for morality is our feelings**."[5]

Foucault brings contingency into an ethics of affect, understanding affect as the felt register of power relations. I find two movements of affect in Foucault's *History of Madness* (1961). First, the scripting and framing of affect through practices; second, the resistant potential of affect to disrupt these frames and scripts, as when one comes to feel ill-at-ease with something taken for granted. As Foucault's *Madness* illustrates, the Western history of negotiating with the unintelligible and abject shows that the reason-- the desire to understand, the will-to-know--is thoroughly mediated by affective frames, attractions and aversions, stock characters, stories, and scripts of responsiveness. At least four affective schema emerge in *Madness*:

- **Passions** (vs. Reason) - 17th c. - Descartes; the banishment of unreason as "madness"

- **Pity** (vs. Self-Love) - 18th c. - Rousseau; the corruption of nature by civil society

- **Instincts** (vs. Intention) - 19th c. - Nietzsche; the medical-juridical paradox of intent with the "motiveless crime"; the rise of psychiatry

- **Drives** (vs. Choice) - early 20th c. - Freud; the psychoanalytic overcoming of neuroses through "the incitement to discourse," driven to articulate the abyss within

Affects such as happiness, hope, and fear reinforce the background of the familiar through habituated scripts. Yet, affects **also** disrupt and subvert this habituated range—in **discomfort** with the background of the familiar (images, narratives, symbols); in the **transformative** potential of **sympathy, curiosity,** and other modes of **interest** in the lives of others; in the **reminder that we understand the experiences of others only**

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[5]Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics" (1983), *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (Pantheon, 1984), 353

partially, contingently, with misunderstandings and projections in abundance. **Foucault's genealogical method engages seemingly automatic patterns of feeling** by attuning the **fictions** through which we persist.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Yet, in much of what has been called the 'affective turn,' Foucault has figured as a **paranoid foil** where he has been mentioned at all. In part, his absence from the affective turn is historical circumstance, as affect theory emerged in the 1990s with posthumanism, new materialisms, and others after the height of poststructuralism. Deleuzian feminists, while not explicitly anti-Foucauldian, present a counter-movement to the early Butler's "Foucauldian" emphasis on the discursive and performative workings of 'natural' things (like the sexed body). Yet, Johanna Oksala observes (as does Huffer) that nature/culture questions of sex and gender, vital to Anglo-American feminist theory, fall under a single term for Foucault: *le sexe*. Thus, while Butler argues that sex (like gender) is discursive, Foucault did not problematize sex in this way; instead, he claimed sex is **imaginary**. Oksala explains: "he was not arguing that femaleness is imaginary, ideal, or arbitrary. Rather, h**e was trying to problematize a certain kind of explanatory framework of sexuality: the idea of a foundation or an invisible cause that supports the visible effects**."[6] Foucault was trying to problematize sexuality as the story we tell ourselves *about* ourselves, the fictions through which we find coordinates in a shared reality.

Foucault's absence in the affective turn also follows from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's analysis of paranoid reading, which takes Foucault's critique of the

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[6] Johanna Oksala, *Foucault on Freedom* (Cambridge UP, 2005), 116

'repressive hypothesis' as a prime example, with its "pseudo-dichotomy between repression and liberation," reproducing all the more abstract concepts—"hegemonic" and "subversive," the "status quo" and "resistance"—obscuring "**the middle ranges of agency**" beyond the *compelled* and the *voluntary*.[7] Sedgwick compares Foucault to Klein and Tomkins and calls him "marmoreal" and a "treadmill going-nowhere" and "the inapt choice...[to be] a French exemplar for American queer theory" because he cannot provide an account of queer agency.[8] Sedgwick's critique, while exquisitely argued,[9] overlooks these affective dimensions in Foucault following a limited reading of *Sexuality One* that misses its "ironic rhetorical structure," **free indirect discourse**, which metaphorically beheads the enunciating subject and isolates what is said without a speaker; that this rhetorical move disorients the reader by making *strange* what "we" say about "ourselves."[10]

Even as Sedgwick parts ways with Foucault for the affect theories of Freud, Klein, and Tomkins "to put some experiential flesh on a thin Foucauldian sexual dispositif,"[11] she recognizes that [*Sexuality One*] "was divided against itself in what it wanted from its broad...and subtle critique of the repressive hypothesis" (TF 10). Judith

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[7] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Duke UP, 2003), 110.

[8] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Weather In Proust,* ed. Goldberg (Duke UP, 2011), 182n8.

[9] This is not an uncommon criticism of Foucault—though, Lynne Huffer notes, "usually not expressed in a prose as exquisite"—given that feminists have complained for decades that he offers no normative resources for the emancipation he seems to offer. Lynne Huffer, "Foucault and Sedgwick: The Repressive Hypothesis Revisited," *Foucault Studies,* No. 14: 20-40, 2012 <http://rauli.cbs.dk/index.php/foucault-studies/article/viewFile/3888/4231>

[10] Lynne Huffer, "Foucault and Sedgwick: The Repressive Hypothesis Revisited," 31-2

[11] Lynne Huffer, *Mad for Foucault* (Columbia UP, 2009), 172

Butler's 1990 critique of Foucault, which I address at length in my fourth chapter, turns on a similar tension, staged between the **dominant critical voice** of *Sexuality One* (1976) —which she calls "the official Foucault"—and the **emancipatory romantic nostalgia** she attributes to his less famous work, *Herculine Barbin* (1978/80). Butler dismisses this romantic "Foucault" and lauds "Foucault" the critic of the "repressive hypothesis." **While I am critical of the early Butler's "Foucault" in *Gender Trouble*, I engage her recent ethics of responsiveness to vulnerability, turning to Foucault to supplement limited accounts of affect and interest.**

While critical of Sedgwick's repudiation, I find useful—and not incompatible with Foucault—the language of '**affect scripts**' which Sedgwick appropriates from Silvan Tomkins. We negotiate affects by reflexively observing scripts for coping: "**sets of ordering rules for the interpretation, evaluation, prediction, production, or control of scenes.**"[19] I like the language of scripts because, much like actors, we so often perform but do not write our lines. We need scripts to function efficiently; yet, the paths to some scripts are so frequently traveled that they join the background of action.[12] A Foucauldian post-moral ethics, then, **negotiates these scripts** and sensitizes—or attunes—our interest in the lives of others, balancing sympathetic care with curiosity toward the differences between us.

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[12] Scripts resonate with Foucault, though Sedgwick's appeal to the "subversive biologism" of Tomkins's innate affects does not. Here, we might return to Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1991), where she describes queer theory as both universalizing and minoritizing. The universality of affect (i.e. Tomkins) does not capture the way in which we live and breathe affect as the materiality of ethics (i.e. Foucault), historically singular scripts which can never be fully undone but at least fractured genealogically.

Affect attempts to name a relational in-between-ness; to return to Sedgwick, a "middle-range of agency" between the compelled and the voluntary, discourse and materiality. The ideas presented here as "mine" have been formed in relation to interlocutors—in what they say and do not say, in what I misunderstand them to say, in the subtexts and commitments I imagine to frame their speech and their silence. Must like affect scripts, **these chapters bear the sediment of histories of contact,** in talking through ideas but also in living with them, observing the missteps of my own interest in the suffering of others. I have been lucky to find my project reflected back to me, again and again, in conversation with mentors and friends, enabling the distance to return to it anew. Yet, aside from myself, I am sure that no one could have spent more time with these ideas than my father, who would listen (and listen) and then offer them back to me, challenging whatever jargon might allow me to conceal my uncertainty or shy away from my point. Before turning to my own chapter-by-chapter summary of what I think I am doing, I include my father's summary of what *he* thinks I am doing, not only **because I find it beautiful in its own right,** but because **it bears the sediment of a dialogical spontaneity of not just *what* was said but *how*,** what sorts of pauses, gaps, misunderstandings, impassioned or lethargic cadences undergirded and exceeded each claim. While his terms do not match up precisely with Spinoza or Foucault, Butler or Nussbaum, this is for me beside the point; my father's outline takes the time to think *with* me, returning my inquiry to me anew, with intellectual humility and poetic generosity.

> from: Guilmette, Winfield <wguilmette@ursinus.edu>
> to: "leguilmette@gmail.com" <leguilmette@gmail.com>
> subject: My Take

> Laur, This is my very abstract take on your ethics. I don't know if this will help. Don't let it distract you.
>
> **Chapter One**
> We experience through the filter of our habits for sensing, emoting, thinking, and intuiting.
> Habits provide the constructs that we use to experience the world. The constructs are scripts that frame our experience.
>
> **Chapter Two**
> Scripts facilitate the negotiation of our experiences, but they also filter our experience.
> We can change the scripts that inform our attentions. We can reform our scripts with fictions.
> Fictions can inform our intentions and thereby reform our attentions.
>
> **Chapter Three**
> We apply the scripts and fictions as we interact with each other. We can harmonize the relations among us by blurring our differences. We can simply love each other.
>
> **Chapter Four**
> We can improve the relations among us only by discerning the differences and using the differences to find accordances. We can simply care about each other. If we care, we inquire.
>
> The balance between caring and loving is crucial. At the margin when caring is not enough, love must carry us through our differences.
>
> Sympathy drives us to reserve our differences; it drives us to resolve our differences. Nothing new can emerge.
>
> Curiosity drives us to explore our differences; it drives us to involve our differences. Something new can emerge.
>
> Love, Dad

<div align="center">*</div>

My first chapter engages the Deleuzian feminist turn to Spinoza, which I find generative for conceiving of ethics beyond the human, engaging micro-relations and emergent relations of becoming; yet, following Butler's inquiry into a Spinozist account of **bodily vulnerability** and its political implications,[13] I critically engage the equation of knowledge (**adequacy**) / power (**activity**) / affect (**joy**) for a feminist ethics attentive to histories of oppression. I ask what 'joy' means, beyond the Neo-Stoic therapeutics of

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[13] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* Verso, 2010, 30.

adequate understanding and activity animating Spinoza's *Ethics*. Turning from the adequate understanding of the *Ethics* to **Spinoza's social epistemology of fictions** in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* and the *Theological-Political Treatise,* I consider the Spinozist inheritance of Foucault's work on **power** (*pouvoir*) and **knowledge** (*savoir*) with his claim that he has never written anything but fictions.[14] My third and fourth chapters engage the negotiation of interest in works by Judith Butler and Martha Nussbaum, balancing **sympathy**-taking seriously the experiences of others or imagining oneself in their shoes—and **curiosity** in the dissimilarities and irreducible opacity of that difference. Unlike sympathy or empathy, which find their grounding in identification, **curiosity invests in that with which we do not identify**, arising as a mode of interest in encounters with difference and ambiguity. In this moment of instability, **the curious gaze might fit its new object into pre-existing frames, patterns, pathologies, or this curiosity might become transformative, opening the sedimented background of the familiar**. My final chapter explores Foucauldian genealogy as a post-moral ethical project of 'curiosity-as-care' as an *interruption* of toxic affect scripts in the present; an inversion of Spinoza's *Ethics* in his insistence on attending to those things we tend to feel are "without history" the Foucauldian transformation of affect scripts.

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[14] Michel Foucault, "The History of Sexuality," *Power/Knowledge* [*Pouvoir/savoir*]: *Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 193.

Chapter One: Feminist Spinoza: The Ethics and Politics of Joy in the Affective Turn

> "Whereas most positions derived from Spinozistic accounts of bodily persistence emphasize the body's productive desire, have we yet encountered a Spinozistic account of bodily vulnerability or considered its political implications?"
> — Judith Butler, *Frames of War* (2010)

<div align="center">*</div>

This chapter engages the continental feminist turn to Baruch Spinoza toward **an ethics and politics of *affect*,** which Spinoza defines in his *Ethics* (1677) as a finite being's capacities for feeling **pleasure, pain, and desire** (*cōnātus*) **in relation to other finite beings** (EIIIApp1); a relational rather than atomistic phenomenon, affects rise and fall as "the body's power of activity is increased or diminished, assisted or checked, together with the idea of these affections" (EIIIdef3).[15] Significantly for feminist philosophers who critically engage human exceptionalism, **'affect' pertains not just to the emotions of human and non-human animals** but to the phototropism of plants growing toward the light, to the rust that forms when iron and oxygen meet with moisture. Toward a meteorology of the psyche, Spinoza regards "human emotions…not as vices of human nature but as properties pertaining to it in the same way as heat, cold, storm, thunder, and such pertain to the nature of the atmosphere" (TP I.4). Feminist philosophers have used Spinoza's *Ethics* (1677) for **an undoing of patriarchal dualisms**—mind and body, reason and emotion or passion, self and other, man and woman—and for his **distinctive model of ethics** which locates human freedom, counterintuitively, in 'adequate

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[15] Baruch Spinoza, *Complete Works*, trans Shirley, ed. Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002). For parenthetical citations, I follow the standard abbreviations. All citations of the *Ethics* are abbreviated E followed by the Part (I-V), then the definition (def.), axiom (ax.), proposition (p.), scholium (s.), corollary (c.), lemma (lem.), preface (pref.) or appendix (app.). Spinoza's *Political Treatise* (TP) is cited by Chapter (I-XI) and paragraph (1, 2, 3…), e.g. TP III.2.

understanding' of deterministic causality. Anomalous in the history of philosophy, Spinoza displaces the Cartesian view of the body as a mechanistic self-identical substance controlled by the rational will.[16] Rather than establishing the primacy of reason over feeling and imagining, **Spinoza seeks an ethical attunement of affect and power through adequate understanding of our own activity**—a flight from bondage to 'inadequate' ideas of 'external causes.[17] The *ethical* project then becomes one of **overcoming passivity** and suffering through adequate understanding of the causal nexus behind an encounter (EVp3); this overcoming increases our power (*pŏtentĭa*) and correspondingly our joy, culminating in a **Neo-Stoic state of intellectual love**: acceptance of one's place in the eternal order, *sub specie aeternitātis*. Gilles **Deleuze** builds from this understanding of power-as-*pŏtentĭa* to address 'molecular' becomings of power (*puissance*) as force relations immanent to substance; he addresses ethics as an '**ethology**', an empirical study of joyful and toxic relations.[18] Spinozist-Continental feminists—with the exception of Judith Butler—have largely extended Deleuze's interpretation of Spinoza toward an ontology and ethics attentive to the affective sediment of oppression.

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[16] Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Indiana University Press, 1994), 11..

[17] Heidi M. Ravven, "Spinoza's Materialist Ethics: The Education of Desire": 311-327. *Spinoza: Critical Assessments* II, ed. Lloyd. Routledge, 2001. From *International Studies in Philosophy* 22 (1990): 59-78. Ravven explains that Spinoza uses Aristotle's criterion of the voluntary: one is free to the extent that one is self-caused, the active source of one's actions; to be in 'bondage' is to be enslaved to passions, i.e. external causes (ibid, 313).

[18] Deleuze and Guattari write: "Affects are becomings. Spinoza asks: What can a body do? We call the *latitude* of a body the affects of which it is capable at a given degree of power" (Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus,* trans. Brian Massumi [U. Minnesota Press, 1987], 256). See also Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, tr. Joughin (Zone, 1992[1968]); Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (City Lights, 2001 [1970]), 3-14.

For instance, **Rosi Braidotti** turns to Spinoza as a means of theorizing desire (*cōnātus*) beyond psychoanalytic 'lack and Hegelian struggles for mastery, relics "of a moment of capitalist domination"; we might instead understand these as particular arrangements of material and social conditions enabling "the actualization (that is, the immanent realization) of the affirmative mode of becoming...a dynamic shifting horizon" of possibility.[19] Similarly, **Moira Gatens** writes of Deleuze and Spinoza as "anti-juridical" thinkers, attentive to the '**molecular**' self-organization of bodies: immanent relations of power and sexual difference that subvert '**molar**' forms (the organs to make sense of the body, the Oedipal complex to explain the unconscious, laws to explain power relations) and deny a "transcendent plane"—whether a god or a sovereign—organizing nature.[20] **Hasana Sharp** boldly offers a postmodern Spinozist conception of adequacy in the "force" of ideas, which become true when they gather the capacity to determine individual and collective action.[21] **Shannon Sullivan** develops a Spinozist (and Nietzschean) transformation of whiteness toward a joy which renders one "strong enough to build up others," overcoming sad passions which "simultaneously poison the person

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[19] Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Polity, 2002), 100.

[20] Moira Gatens, "Feminism as "Password": Re-Thinking the "Possible" with Spinoza and Deleuze," 59-75, Hypatia, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2000), 60, 65. Hereafter Gatens 2000. Gatens finds in Deleuze's Spinoza an exciting theory of power and sexual difference "as coagulations of molecular combinations," capable of more joyful reassembly (63).

[21] The critical attempt to alter ideologies, superstitions and other pernicious ideas requires "a favorable affective environment" without which one must add to the *force* of an idea with more information, examples, anecdotes, narratives, or simply the resistance of multiple minds in association. Hasana Sharp, "The Force of Ideas in Spinoza," *Political Theory* 35.6 (2007): 732-755. See also Hasana Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* (Chicago UP, 2011).

constituted by them and create toxic relationships with other people that in turn infect them with sad passions."[22]

While I find this Deleuzian feminist turn ontologically compelling, generative for an individual ethos, attentive to micro-relations and emergent possibilities, my Foucauldian feminist position is wary of the tendency to equate knowledge (**adequacy**) / power (**activity**) / affect (**joy**). My inquiry into the relation of affect and power follows a question raised by Judith Butler in her sparse comments on the 'desire to live' in Spinoza: "Whereas most positions derived from Spinozistic accounts of bodily persistence emphasize the body's productive desire, **have we yet encountered a Spinozistic account of bodily vulnerability or considered its political implications**?"[23] Countering the French post-structuralist tendency to read Spinoza as an anti-dialectical, anti-Hegelian thinker, Butler **heretically** interprets this model of desire *alongside* **Hegel,** as a **social desire for recognition**. Following Butler, I find that *sad passions* reflect the constitutively **relational striving** of the *cōnātus*, which, while unpleasant, disempowering, and often counter-productive, may also be transformative; as Butler writes of guilt, "I am guilty because I have destroyed a bond that I require in order to live" (ibid, 45). Yet, Butler barely cites Spinoza's writings, imprecisely gesturing to the sixth proposition of Part III throughout her work. My engagement with Spinoza begins from Butler's heretical question concerning vulnerability, asking after the social (rather

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[22] Shannon Sullivan, "Sad Versus Joyful Passions: Spinoza, Nietzsche, and the Transformation of Whiteness," *Philosophy Today* 55 (2011 SPEP Supplement): 231-9, ed. Willett & Lawlor, 231.

[23] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* Verso, 2010, 30. I will also be citing Butler's *Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford UP, 1997), *Undoing Gender* (Routledge, 2004), and "The Desire to Live: Spinoza's Ethics Under Pressure": 111-130, *Politics and the Passions 1500-1850*, ed. Kahn, Saccamano, & Coli (Princeton UP, 2006). Hereafter cited as Butler 2010, Butler 1997, Butler 2004, and Butler 2006.

than contemplative) *ends* toward which we remedy and re-educate affect scripts, as well as the measure by which our cognitive-affective grasp of a situation might be called adequate under a **post-moral affective reframing of ethics and politics**.

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Born in Amsterdam, 1632, to a family of Portuguese Jewish immigrants who fled the Inquisition, Spinoza was excommunicated in 1656 for his controversial philosophical interests (and refusal to renounce them). Charged by his synagogue with "monstrous deeds" and "abominable heresies," Spinoza lived alone, usually in boarding houses; he supported himself by grinding optical lenses, an occupation which caused his early death from inhalation of particles of glass.[24] Having lived for a time in Rijnsburg, where he wrote the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* and the *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being*, Spinoza moved to The Hague[25] and, in 1663, published his only non-anonymous work, an exposition of Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy*.

Spinoza's heretical substance **monism**, causal **determinism**, and resulting **naturalization of values**, outlined in his *Ethics* (1677), follow from his diagnosis of immanent contradictions in the dualism of Rene Descartes (1596-1650), for whom the 'free will' lorded over the passions as a force of moral might, preserving freedom and sin alongside a mechanistic understanding of causation by distinguishing mind and body as

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[24] Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 3-14; Steven Nadler, "Baruch Spinoza," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2001, rev. 2008 <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/spinoza/>.

[25] The Hague placed him near tolerant politicians and sympathizers, such as the Grand Pensionary of Holland, Jan de Witt, before his brutal assassination by an enraged mob in 1672. Spinoza, horrified, is said to have written a placard with the words *ultimi barbororum*, which he intended to place at the execution site. His landlord, in fear for his safety, prevented Spinoza from leaving the house.

separate substances.[26] The Western concept of "free will" arose among the Roman Stoics with the Latin word *arbitreum*: making the heroic or noble decision to choose the good.[27] With the rise of Christianity, Augustine identified the free will with choosing good and resisting evil; Spinoza rejects this Christianized freedom of the immortal soul, so carefully preserved by Descartes, and instead modifies the older Stoic model, in which freedom means doing one *must* do according to the necessity of the universe.

Amélie Rorty aptly summarizes Spinoza's critique of Descartes: "The will is not more rational because it is self-caused; it is only more rational if its affirmations are fixed by, and reflect, the system of the world."[28] When we 'will' something, **we do not inspect the clarity and distinctness** of our perceptions and passions from above **because we are** *in* **those relations,** affectively committed, seduced or repelled.[29] We can attempt to habituate more active desires based on a more adequate understanding of how we affect and are affected by objects and others around us, but *freedom* cannot mean the transparency of, let alone liberation from the natural strivings of desire (human beings,

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[26] While mind-body dualism "resonates well with the awe and wonder we deservedly have for our own minds," neurologist Antonio Damasio argues that research supports Spinoza's theory of mind as the "idea of the body," since the brain's continuously mapping of the body gives rise to mental processes. Antonio Damasio *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2003), 12

27 Notes from Ursula Goldenbaum's Spinoza seminar at Emory, Fall 2008

[28] Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, "The Two Faces of Spinoza": 279-292. *Spinoza: Critical Assessments* II, ed. Lloyd. London & New York: Routledge, 2001. From *Review of Metaphysics* 41 (1987): 299-316, 283

[29] Spinoza thus rejected the dominant Western (Judeo-Christian) cultural anthropology of the free will in control of desire. Heidi Ravven, "Embodying & Naturalizing Ethics," *Feminist Interpretations of Spinoza,* ed. Gatens (Penn State, 2009), 126. See also Ravven, "Spinoza's Materialist Ethics": 311-327. *Spinoza: Critical Assessments,* Vol. II, ed. Lloyd. (Routledge, 2001[1990]).

like everything else, are *part of nature*).[30] **Freedom**—inseparable from Spinoza's theory of knowledge—does not mean liberation from constraints but, rather a rich understanding of the psychological, environmental, social, and political factors at work in a given moment so that one can respond *adequately*;[31] thus, a will extending any wider than the intellect would not be *free* but merely arbitrary, inexact about what the intellect affirms of reality ("will and intellect are one and the same thing," EIIp49c). This redefinition of freedom foregrounds Spinoza's conceptual nexus between *affect*, the felt register of 'power' (*pŏtentĭa*)—motivated by a desire (*cōnātus*) to persist in one's being—and *ethics*: the therapeutic practice of coming to *adequately* understand one's patterns of feeling. **Only a stronger affect can counter an affect** (EIVp7), so personal and collective transformation demands **studying the force relations and patterns of how one has come to feel**; Gatens and Lloyd (1999) write: "Indeed, the possibility of change depends on getting a richer understanding of the structures that produce the bad situation."[32]

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[30] Ursula Goldenbaum explains that Spinoza entered the canon only at the end of the eighteenth century, and in significantly Christianized form; in this guise, he was "misinterpreted as a thinker who stood in the long tradition of those who sought to subordinate affects to reason, and who understood human freedom as the freedom from affects, i.e. as the reign of reason over affects." Spinoza claims, rather, that desire is the essence of finite beings, including humans (EIIIApp1). Ursula Goldenbaum. "The Affects as a Condition of Human Freedom in Spinoza's *Ethics*," pp. 149-165. *Spinoza by 2000*, The Fourth Jerusalem Conference, ed. Yovel & Segal (New York: Little Room Press, 2004), 149.

[31] While it exceeds the scope of this paper, an idea is "adequate" not by correspondence to a material object in the world but by containing the intrinsic properties of a true idea, given that "the order and connection of ideas" runs parallel, simultaneous, but causally distinct from "the order and connection of things" (EIIdef4, EIIp7). I return later to what adequacy might mean for a postmodern feminism, but it suffices for now to note that Spinoza measured adequacy by our comprehension of order in the universe.

[32] Susan James, Genevieve Lloyd, & Moira Gatens. "The Power of Spinoza: Feminist Conjunctions," *Hypatia*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 51. Going Australian: Reconfiguring Feminism and Philosophy (Spring 2000), pp. 40-58 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810654> See also: Moira Gatens & Genevieve Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present* (London & New York, 1999), which I engage primarily in Ch. 2.

Spinoza generated controversy for his **heretical affirmation of imagination and sensuous embodiment** as "serious subjects of scientific and philosophical investigation."[33] Imagination, though it presents the site of our inadequate and fragmentary knowledge, furthermore provides the testing ground from which knowledge starts, drawing connections from among this excess of images to form ***common notions*** —"universally exemplified particulars, their interconnections and structures rationally articulated"—which increase in number with the body's connections to the other bodies (EIIp39).[34] Affects carry with them "**implicit beliefs about their causes** and are intelligible as **attitudes and compulsions to act for self-persistence** based on those beliefs."[35] One's beliefs may be more or less adequate given one's capacity to reconstruct and comprehend the causal patterns at stake.[36] Thus, rather than establishing the primacy of reason over imagining, thinking and feeling inseparably intertwine for finite self-preserving beings. **Freedom demands attention to our affects**—desire, pleasure, pain, and their modifications—to comprehend our own activity and escape bondage to

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33 Goldenbaum, "The Affects as a Condition of Human Freedom in Spinoza's *Ethics*," 156; "Thus rehabilitation of body and sensuality is directed not only against the tradition of anti-sensual ethics, with its concomitant contempt for the body, but also against an attitude in libertinism, which sees the only pleasures as sensual ones, precluding the participation of the soul" (165). Libertines such as the Marquis de Sade present only the other side of Christian values because they fundamentally maintain taboos and sins. Spinoza breaks with both lines of anti-natural thinking.

34 Rorty, "The Two Faces of Spinoza," 286; These common notions cannot be equated with "universals" or other abstract "transcendental terms", which blur what they take to be unimportant differences among particulars to accentuate and only some "common characteristic" of an indefinite group. (EIIP40S1).

35 Heidi M. Ravven, "Spinoza's Materialist Ethics: The Education of Desire," 314.

36 Pleasurable affects may arise from either passive or active transitions of the mind depending on whether the feeling arises from an adequate understanding; negative affects, particularly pain, cannot be active because they present "the passive transition of the mind to a state of less perfection" (EIIIp11s).

'inadequate' ideas of 'external causes.[37] We need not be moralizing about our affects (EIVp45s); **rather, our attitude must be "political:** since the effects of the passions are damaging, one must organize social and political life so as to neutralize such effects."[38] In what follows, I critically engage the Deleuzian interpretation of these ideas in feminist philosophy with Butler's appeals to bodily vulnerability and the sociality of the *cōnātus*; **beyond asking *what a body can do*, I ask how toxic affect scripts might be discerned and transformed** through a response ethics of affect: 1) **non-mimetic sympathy** for vulnerability, pain, trauma (including one's own) and 2) **non-totalizing curiosity** toward the unfamiliar, strange, different (sometimes within the self).

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Following the anonymous publication (but rumor spreads quickly) of Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise* (TTP) in 1670, Spinoza's name resoundingly became a bad word, even a threat. When his friends posthumously published his complete works in 1677, Spinoza's ideas were banned, scorned, and only tacitly engaged until the late eighteenth century, reemerging through German Romanticism as, for instance, in **Hegel's claim that "thought must begin by placing itself at the standpoint of Spinozism**; to be a follower of Spinoza is the essential commencement of all Philosophy."[39] Hegel distinguishes himself—as will be important for continental philosophers inspired by

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[37] Ravven explains that Spinoza uses Aristotle's criterion of the voluntary: one is free to the extent that one is self-caused, the active source of one's actions; to be in 'bondage' is to be enslaved to passions, i.e. external causes (313).

[38] Emilia Giancotti, "The Theory of the Affects in the Strategy of Spinoza's *Ethics*," pp. 129-138. *Spinoza by 2000,* Vol. III, Desire and Affect: Spinoza as Psychologist. Papers presented at The Third Jerusalem Conference, ed. Yovel. New York: Little Room Press, 1999, 134-5, citing TP I.6.

[39] GWF Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy,* tr. Haldane & Simson, Vol. 3 (Humanities Press, 1955), 257.

Deleuze—by **claiming that Spinoza failed to see the determinations of the negative in**

***Substance* as themselves productive** (and furthermore necessary) for the emergence the

Subject and the durational development of the *Idea* of freedom. Spinoza defines

substance as "that which is in itself and in conceived through itself" (EIdef3) such that,

understood from the perspective of eternity as ***natura naturans,*** substance does not

change even as it expresses the endless becomings of its finite parts or modes, ***natura***

naturata. As J.M. Fritzman and Brianne Riley write in their Hegelian rejoinder to the

recent popularity of Spinoza's *Ethics*, "expression is a one-way street... *sub specie*

aeternitātis, nothing happens."[40] If substance remains unchanged, Hegel finds there can

be no determinate individuation of the *modes*, which would then follow a predetermined

future in which their activity has no effect on the development of the whole.

Gilles **Deleuze**—resisting his French Hegelian milieu—**claims Spinoza as an**

affirmative thinker of immanence in the style of **Nietzsche**, dismantling the affective

mechanisms of the negative and its power in hatred (turned outward) and guilt (turned

inward). Responding to Hegel's criticism in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*

that Spinoza grasped the infinity of the absolute but failed to recognize determinate

negation, Deleuze finds that denunciation of the negative is "the glory and innocence of

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[40] J.M. Fritzman & Brianne Riley, "Not Only Sub Specie Aeternitatis, but Equally Sub Specie Durationis: A Defense of Hegel's Criticisms of Spinoza's Philosophy," pp. 76-97, *The Pluralist,* Vol. 4, No. 3 (Fall 2009), 79.

Spinoza, his own discovery" against the negativity of the Hegelian dialectic.[41] Deleuze's 1968 interpretation turns on the meaning of *expression* in Spinoza's definition of *God* as "substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which *expresses* an eternal and infinite essence" (EIdef6). Deleuze answers to Hegel by **inverting Spinoza's monism into a pluralism of finite modes**; substance cannot remain unaffected by this flux of modes because it *expresses* them through the attributes, the infinite means through which the intellect experiences itself substance.

Immersed in the movement of Spinoza's thought, Deleuze does not purport to offer historical scholarship but, rather, to reframe and refresh the intricate scaffolding of Spinoza's definitions, propositions, and scholia; describing himself as a "pure metaphysician," Deleuze seeks to reframe and refresh the intricate scaffolding of Spinoza's definitions, propositions, and scholia for their relevance to contemporary scientific understanding, attentive to multiplicity, event, and virtuality in a differential universe.[42] He champions Spinoza's attention to the body as the site of a felt register that "surpasses the knowledge that we have of it"—*we do not know what a body can do* (EIIIp2); emphasizing this immanence rather than the eternal standpoint of blessedness, Deleuze describes **Spinoza's scholia as a subterranean *Ethics*** beneath "the continuous

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[41] Deleuze continues: "In a world consumed by the negative, he has enough confidence in life, in the power of life, to challenge death, the murderous appetites of men, the rules of good and evil, of the just and the unjust. Enough confidence in life to denounce the phantoms of the negative. Excommunication, war, tyranny, reaction, men who fight for their enslavement as if it were their freedom—this forms the world in which Spinoza lives. The assassination of the DeWitt brothers is exemplary for him. *Ultimi barbarorum*. In his view, all the ways of humiliating and breaking life, all the forms of the negative have two sources, one turned outward and the other inward, resentment and bad conscience, hatred and guilt" (Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy,* 13).

[42] (Daniel Smith & John Protevi, "Gilles Deleuze," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/deleuze/>, May 2008; substantive rev. Sep 2012).

stream of definitions, propositions, demonstrations, and corollaries," an immanent 'unconscious' of the text "expressing all the angers of the heart and setting forth the practical theses of denunciation and liberation."[43] As with his other studies of individual philosophers,[44] Deleuze's "Spinoza" emerges as a pastiche, a hybrid figure anachronistically post-Nietzschean in its ethics of joyful experimentation. It is thus no coincidence that the **first word of the text** is "**Nietzsche**"—nor that "Active and Reactive" (on Nietzsche) begins with "Spinoza"[45]—given that Deleuze presents the "scandal" of Spinoza in Nietzschean terms: "**materialism, immoralism, and atheism**" correspond to a triple denunciation of "consciousness," "values," and "sad passions." Of interest for this chapter is the denunciation of "sad passions," the correspondence of this denunciation to "atheism," and its legacy in the continental feminist turn to affect. Deleuze writes that "atheism" rejects the passive and reactive desires of what he calls the Judeo-Christian 'moralist trinity': the slave (bearer of sad passions), the tyrant (exploiter of sad passions), and the priest (who mocks and disdains passions); each of these figures appeals to transcendent values that turn against life: "**Before Nietzsche, [Spinoza] denounces all the falsifications of life**, all the values in the name of which we disparage life" (ibid, 26). Yet, Spinoza's own replies to accusations of atheism suggest that Deleuze's ethics resembles Nietzsche's will-to-power as much as Spinozist blessedness,

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[43] Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, 31.

[44] i.e. *Nietzsche & Philosophy* [1962], *Bergsonism* [1966], and *Masochism* [1967]...

[45] In the subsection of *Nietzsche and Philosophy* "Will to Power and the Feeling of Power" (1962), Deleuze finds it "difficult to deny" a Spinozistic interpretation of the Will to Power, insofar as the quantity of a force corresponds to its capacity for being affected: "all the more force so far as it could be affected in a greater number of ways" (94).

that Deleuze is far more invested in **what Spinoza can *do*** than what he meant or intended.[46]

Deleuze *does* philosophy *with* Spinoza rather than explicating Spinoza. This sometimes gets lost in the post-Deleuzian affective turn, framed by Deleuze's vitalism of joyful striving and empowerment and thoroughly mediated by a Nietzschean overcoming of reactive forms of consciousness that would render us passive. Thus, **Braidotti appeals to this immanent vitalism in Spinoza's name** toward a critique of pity and an "active" theory of desire, externalized (rather than repressed) in an "erotic imaginary": the range of intimacies possible (imaginable) between individual modes, reconfiguring desire as "free of the constraints of the confessional and the brothel."[47] As a **foil** to her joyful reconfiguration of desire, **Braidotti criticizes Judith Butler for her Neo-Hegelian attachment to personhood and rationality and "a negative, mournful theory of**

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[46] In 1671, Spinoza replied to a friend (Jacob Ostens) regarding a letter written by Lambert de Velthuysen, a relatively liberal medical doctor, philosopher, and theologian at the University of Utrecht, who had condemned the TTP: "But I think I see in what mire this man is stuck...He finds nothing to please him in virtue itself and in intellect, and would choose to live under the impulsion of his passions but for one obstacle, his fear of punishment." Comparing these accusations to Descartes' condemnation by the Dutch theologian Voetius, Spinoza claims that this "is what often happens to all good men," those who attempt to think outside the mainstream (Ltr. 43, 878). To be fair, in the Appendix to Part I of his *Ethics,* Spinoza unravels the inadequate idea of a personal god who punishes or rewards, and Deleuze rightly apprehends Spinoza's opposition to "grim and gloomy superstition" that forbids enjoyment (EIVp45s). While he challenges the ultimate truth of biblical narratives, Spinoza's *Ethics* **nevertheless finds its orientation and its remedy in an eternal standpoint, accessed in its transparency through intuition, the highest form of knowledge** (EIIp40s2). Thus, Deleuze's tendency to **conflate *amor dei* with *amor fati*** joins Velthuysen in **missing the orienting reverence of intellectual love** in Spinoza's work. Regarding Deleuze and Guattari's iconoclastic claim that "God is a lobster" in relation to their self-proclaimed Spinozism, John Protevi writes: "For Spinoza, God and Nature were equivalent" and, in a historical moment that defined God as transcendent, "Spinoza's insistence on immanence was seen as atheism"; Deleuze and Guattari, who claim Spinoza for his immanent metaphysics and show little interest in his notion of God, focus on Part III ("what can a body do?") rather than Part V of the *Ethics* (John Protevi, *Political Affect: Connecting the Social and the Somatic* [Minnesota UP, 2009], 106).

[47] Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses,* 101; Braidotti calls this theory "feminist" insofar as it resists "the past of a memory dominated by phallocentric self-referentiality" (ibid, 100).

desire, which understates the impact of pleasure on the constitution of the subject" (ibid, 50). She continues on Butler: "I actively yearn for a more joyful and empowering concept of desire and for a political economy that foregrounds positivity, not gloom" (ibid, 57). Yet, **what is the *content* of positivity**? And how can we conceive of situations as joyful or sorrowful without the mediation of interpretations that give value to acts and events?

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Surprisingly, Judith Butler claims that Spinoza's *cōnātus* has been and "remains at the center" of her work, prefiguring desire in Hegel and Freud, and complicating the Spinozist accounts of "**Deleuzians who for the most part wish to root negativity out of their conception of individuality and sociality alike**."[48] Butler writes of the *Ethics*, **her earliest encounter with philosophy**, in the way one recalls the words of a formative teacher or an old friend: "My emotions were surely rioting, and I turned to Spinoza to find out whether knowing what they were and what purpose they served would help me learn how to live them in some more manageable way."[49] While she undoubtedly paints Spinoza in bold brush strokes,[50] Butler **provokes Deleuze's anti-Hegelian ethology of affirmation** by insisting upon the relational constitution of the *cōnātus* and the threat of social death, given that only *some* lives are recognized as significant, possible, grievable.

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[48] Judith Butler. "The Desire to Live: Spinoza's Ethics Under Pressure," 111-130, in *Politics and the Passions, 1500-1850,* ed. Kahn, Saccamano, & Coli (Princeton UP, 2005), 118. Hereafter DL.

[49] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender, 235*

[50] For instance: the confusion of the *Political* and *Theological-Political Treatises*, the misspelling of Macherey—but these are peripheral details for Butler's purposes. It would be easy to pounce on these things but, as Butler herself reflects in her meditations on the "Other" of philosophy (2004), the discipline has become too invested in policing the boundaries of what is and isn't philosophy. I agree, and find uninteresting the project of silencing insight with the weight of scholarship.

Bringing Spinozist desire together with the Hegelian desire for recognition, Butler claims that **the desire-to-persist is a relational desire**—the very act of striving, of desire, implies a struggle with something to which one relates, "impressed upon it from elsewhere" (DL 121). Thus, the *cōnātus*—our very desire to persist, forms relationally and incorporates others into its very striving: "the 'I' is **already responsive to alterity in ways that it cannot always control**, that it absorbs external forms, even contracts them, as one might contract a disease" (DL 121). Butler elaborates this point in *Undoing Gender* (2004):

> It was Spinoza who claimed that every human being seeks to persist in his own being, and he made this principle of self-persistence, the *cōnātus*, into **the basis of his ethics and, indeed, his politics.** When Hegel made the claim that desire is always a desire for recognition, he was, in a way, **extrapolating upon this Spinozistic point,** telling us, effectively, that to persist in one's own being is only possible on the condition that we are engaged in receiving and offering recognition.[51]

To be unrecognizable, to find no norms of recognition through which we might be understood, is to be "foreclosed from possibility," placed outside the moral community of worth. Butler gives her Spinozist-Hegelian theory of desire a Foucauldian twist when she argues that these norms themselves "**produce and deproduce the notion of the human**" rather than register a preexisting human nature. One's persistence depends upon "a social norm that exceeds the 'I,' that positions the 'I' *ek-statically* outside of itself in a world of complex and historically changing norms" (ibid, 32). One's persistence cannot be limited to one's bodily boundaries for social, relational beings, for whom the persistence of others—and of norms of intelligibility between self and others—are necessary for

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[51] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 32.

survival. This **alterity**, Butler argues, "**animates responsiveness to that world**" in the form of affects such as hope and fear, suffering, joy, and rage, and she goes on to claim that **these affects** "become not just the basis, but the **very stuff of ideation and critique**":

> Because such affective responses are **invariably mediated**, they call upon and enact certain interpretive frames; they can also **call into question the taken-for-granted character of those frames**, and in that way provide the affective conditions for social critique. As I have argued elsewhere, **moral theory has to become social critique** if it is to know its object and act upon it" (*Frames of War,* 34-5).

The historical world of finite modes—their coagulations, power dynamics, intimacies and antagonisms—**lacks the transparency of adequate understanding**, fails to meet the rigor of geometrical proof; Butler writes, "life itself has to be rethought as this complex, passionate, antagonistic, and necessary set of relations to others" (ibid, 44). She asks: "Whereas most positions derived from Spinozistic accounts of bodily persistence emphasize the body's productive desire, **have we yet encountered a Spinozistic account of bodily vulnerability or considered its political implications?**" Butler claims that sad passions, rather than something to be overcome, reflect the constitutively relational striving of the *cōnātus*; guilt, for instance, reflects this sociality: "I am guilty because I have destroyed a bond that I require in order to live" (ibid, 45). Her defense of the sometimes-instructive, sometimes-transformative work of sad passions **counters the post-Deleuzian tendency to privilege joy** without considering **how that joy is framed by histories of attachment and aversion** sedimented into the present.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

While Rosi Braidotti dismisses Butler's mournful theory of desire, Hasana Sharp tarries with Butler's claim that Spinoza's *cōnātus* prefigures Hegelian desire by formulating this conscious striving not as a purely self-referential project but one that is **fundamentally responsive.** Sharp helpfully contextualizes Butler's bold claim with scholarly evidence, given that Hegel's critical comments about Spinoza in his lectures and his *Science of Logic* address only the first set of definitions in the *Ethics* and his use of the geometrical method. Surprisingly, **Hegel misses Spinoza's *cōnātus* and "thus overlooks an important dimension of finitude.**"[52] Instead, Hegel accentuates the endless positivity of Spinoza's metaphysics in the infinity of substance, but he only refers to the most abstract picture of that heretical system. Troubling the Spinoza/Hegel binary of positivity and negativity, Hasana Sharp (2011) has noted: "The opposition between the **negative and positive approaches to desire** is **Hegel's** own. **By invoking this dichotomy, Spinozists reproduce Hegel's division between his thought and Spinoza's [inverting] the value implication of his judgment, without challenging his terms**" (ibid, 120). Sharp thus supports Butler's reframing of the opposition between Spinoza and Hegel; furthermore, she finds Butler's work "**an improvement on the Hegelian paradigm**, since her politics demands perpetual context and resists the notion that human community can be perfected" (ibid, 152).

Yet, at the moment when she could explore the overlapping models of desire in Hegel and Spinoza, Sharp objects to Butler's anthropocentric politics of recognition and personhood at work in this "**an anti-natural concept of the human**" (ibid, 153). Two

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[52] Hasana Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* (2011), 124

separate criticisms risk blending together in this critique. **First,** that the Hegelian desire for recognition ultimately justifies domination because we come to be "persons" after "a long training in obedience." While he did not, like Hobbes, make domination a permanent condition, Hegel bears a Hobbesian rather than Spinozist conception of subjectivity **in domination presents an essential step**: *lack* **and the oppositional demands of others generate a motor of desire** and teach us to surpass *mere life* for a more authentic *freedom.*[53] Always potentially at the expense of others, one gains recognition from a community whose norms function by hierarchical standards of "who is human (fetuses? babies? women? slaves? the cognitively disabled?), **and thereby demarcate[s] our sphere of moral concern.**"[54] **Second,** that Butler only conceives of this Spinozist desire "as the desire of a **social** (and, emphatically, **not natural**) subject seeking the recognition of other social subjects, negotiated within the constraints of formal and informal institutional structures (ibid, 172, 120). Sharp finds these concerns linked together because the desire for mastery and explicitly *human* sociality both leave behind the "**life itself**" of nature and animality.

Butler undoubtedly falls into the latter criticism of privileging the social, emphasizing the way human subjects filter and frame experience (though, I will ultimately argue, Sharp's account carries its own implicit framing). Against this Hegelianism, Sharp upholds Spinoza's **'*renaturalization*'** of ethics and politics. She adds

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[53] Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* (2011), 126, 129-130. Hegel's famous passage in the *Phenomenology of Spirit,* "Lordship and Bondage," is central to Sharp's critique; the *merely* biological desire to live must be overcome "a 'serious' encounter with death" for the immediacy of desire to be sublated through social institutions.

[54] Sharp, ibid, 150. Much as Spinoza found that philosophers who berate the passions are writing not political treatises but "satire" (TP I.1), Hegelian recognition is "**a self-hating endeavor**" because it affirms the exclusionary terms of humanism.

"re" to her project of naturalization out of respect for feminist, Marxist, and other strains of neo-Hegelian critical theory, but she follows Elizabeth **Grosz** in rejecting the **'personal politics'** of critical theory **for the *impersonal* Deleuzian terms of composition and decomposition**, cultivating imperceptibility below the radar of 'the hegemonic gaze,' where marginalized beings might develop mutually empowering styles of life.[55] Instead, Spinoza's re-naturalized sympathy for those "similar" to us generates "**a spontaneous libidinal economy**"—a "philanthropic posthumanism"—that Sharp notes could **include a wider range of enabling forces beyond the human**: "The principle of the imitation of the affects points only to a tendency for affects to circulate among those who perceive one another to be similar, however unconsciously and **by whatever criteria**" (ibid, 140). These questions, though phrased in the very new terms of posthumanism, are timeless questions: what are the limits of the moral community, and through what criteria can these limits be expanded? How do the theoretical terms we use shape what is possible for us to imagine, ethically and politically? By diversifying experiences, one could *compose* with a wider range of sympathetic characters. Sharp has in mind **an ecological sensitivity to enabling or disabling assemblages** such as "air, sound, and water quality, the organization of space, and the character of relations with nonhuman animals," forces in which we are immersed and interdependent (ibid, 153).

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[55] Hasana Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization,* 7, 169, 176-7; Grosz's "politics of imperceptibility" comes *un-cited* from Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*:, and Grosz's own view on Deleuze's work shifts over time: "In an early work, Grosz finds Deleuze and Guattari's affirmation of becoming-woman as a portal to becoming-imperceptible to be problematic…Today, however, she urges feminists and postcolonial theorists to embrace what once appeared to her as a mystical 'obliteration' of the demands, desires, and projects of women" (ibid, 167). Sharp finds this heritage important because it links Grosz to the Spinozist foundations of anti-humanism.

Yet, it is less clear that Butler falls into the criticism that Hegelian recognition justifies domination, though she finds concerns about domination inescapable for ethics and politics. Reading *Giving an Account of Oneself* or *Precarious Life*, among her recent works, **Butler shares Sharp's ethical and political concerns about the desire for recognition,** but she **does not share Sharp's insistence on the continuity of human with nature** because humans and other complex animals develop frames of identification and difference through which their responsiveness to affect is mediated; **a Butlerian ethics of affect must negotiate these failures of responsiveness to others**. In response to Sharp, then, I imagine that **Butler would criticize the criteria of adequate understanding, active power, and affirmation** because this Neo-Stoic configuration obscures the **histories, power relations, and perspectival frames** through which we sense and respond to the affect of others, through which we connect, come into conflict, comprehend and misunderstand one another. In what follows, I engage the limits of adequacy.

<div align="center">*</div>

According to Spinoza's *Ethics,* an **adequate idea** is fully **active** and "insofar as it is considered in itself without relation to its object, has all the properties—that is, intrinsic characteristics—of a true idea" (EIIdef4). **Activity** signifies a style of striving in which one's desires arise from **an adequate understanding of relevant causal factors**, such that one's endeavors follow more from one's own nature than from any external cause (EIIIdef.2). Maddeningly circular in their mutual reference, adequate ideas are fully active, and activity follows from an adequate understanding of the circumstances; these

find their resolution in the blessed state of intellectual love, *sub specie aeternitatis*. But what could **activity** and **adequacy** mean for a feminist post-moral ethics? Attempting to define this elusive postmodern sense of adequacy, Hasana Sharp (2007) has controversially claimed that ideas become true **when they gather the capacity to determine individual and collective action**.[56] Individuals acquire ideas as "**crystallizations**" of pre-existing affects, impressions, and everyday experiences; much as bodies move other bodies with causal force, so too do ideas support and oppose the movement of other ideas.[57] The critical attempt to alter ideologies, superstitions and other pernicious ideas requires "**a favorable affective environment**" and, without it, one will have to add to the *force* **of an idea** with more authoritative information, the confidence of examples, anecdotes and the sympathy of narratives, or simply the collective resistance of multiple minds in association. Ideology critique, understood as the accumulation of **force** behind an idea, requires an "enlargement of perspective" and an openness to *alternative* **configurations of ideas**; Sharp writes:

> I exhort my readers to **nourish** and **nurture counter-ideas** so that they may **become true** and powerful within a particular milieu...It remains necessary to displace, minimize, and **starve certain hegemonic ideas rather than to absorb and encompass them.** An adequate grasp of the causes and conditions that make oppression the case often emerges in the process of fighting it (146).

Amélie Rorty (2009) has disputed whether the **'starving'** of inadequate ideas could properly be called "Spinozist" and argues that, for Spinoza, "Enlightenment comes by enlarging the understanding...absorbing incomplete ideas rather than attempting to refute

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[56] Hasana Sharp, "The Force of Ideas in Spinoza," *Political Theory* 35.6 (2007): 732-755, later in her 2011 *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* (Chicago UP).

[57] Sharp 2011, 67

or overthrow them"; according to Rorty, Sharp's position bears more in common with that of Hobbes."[58] In reply, Sharp expresses her interest in **thinking *with* than thinking *about* Spinoza,** exploring what his epistemology, ethics, and politics can *do* for feminist philosophy toward a reformulation of 'ideology critique.' Explicitly less interested in "arriving at truth, or reason" than with "**dismantling an oppressing or disabling constellation of ideas, regardless of its truth or falsity**," Sharp claims that social movements need unifying ideas (slogans, mantras) to reach their collective ends: "For black to be beautiful, for fat to be fabulous, and for meat to be murder, for example, oppositional groups have **reconstructed the relationships and causal connections** that organize their own mental corporeal lives."[59] But **disabling to whom**, toward **what end**? In the 1960s, James Baldwin was critical of the emerging Black Power movement for finding strength in slogans, though they offered unparalleled force in building community, because he found the elevation of black over white **mirrored and reversed** the elevation of Self over Other that led to slavery, exploitation, and the European devaluation of black life.

While I find Sharp's emphasis on the transformative force of affect compelling, her account **implicitly frames empowerment and joy from the standpoint of the oppressed**. This framing matters because affects—shame, solidarity, etc—bear histories excessive of the self-contained individual. In the ethical and political negotiation of

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[58]Amélie Oksenberg Rorty. "The Politics of Spinoza's Vanishing Dichotomies," 131-141, *Political Theory* 2010, Vol. 38, No. 1, 139. The title refers to Rorty's observation that dichotomies of activity and passivity, internal and external, etc, are a step toward but not the end of truth.

[59] It is implied that Rorty does the former. Hasana Sharp, "Oppositional Ideas, Not Dichotomous Thinking: Reply to Rorty,": 142-147, *Political Theory* 2010, Vol. 38, No. 1, 146

affect, then, we affirm joy with attention to **the history—practices, relations, institutions—of that joy**: Has it come at the expense or marginalization of others? Does it subvert stuck habits, or reinforce emergent forms of flourishing? I find this Deleuzian-feminist turn generative for conceiving ethics beyond the human; yet, I wonder what '**joy**' means, **beyond the Neo-Stoic therapeutics of Spinoza**. Further ambiguities arise in the value of overcoming negative affects for a feminist ethics attentive to histories of oppression, **in relation to which anger, guilt,** and other **negative affects have provided the impetus** for personal and collective transformation.

Every situation bears a **frame** through which we perceive it, through which objects, images, and narratives **circulate and evoke affective responses**, a frame that shifts, loosens, tightens and sometimes **breaks** as it moves through space and time. Concretely, Judith Butler considers the ways in which "a **selective and differential framing** of violence" in popular media regulates affective and ethical dispositions.[60] Negative affects, while passive and joyless according to the Spinozist, prove necessary in the realization and breaking of toxic frames; hence, a photograph of tortured prisoners at Abu Ghraib can viscerally shift the frame of popular opinion about U.S. efforts in the Middle East. We might return here to Butler's question concerning vulnerability in Spinoza: "Whereas most positions derived from Spinozistic accounts of bodily

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[60] Judith Butler, *Frames of War* (2010), 1-6. The television screen feels too obvious a frame (yet we learn so much from them about who is and is not worthy of recognition) but framing happens in so many petty everyday ways, from the fears, hopes, and assumptions we bring to meeting someone new, the narratives and snapshot memories through which we recall those we know, the ways we occupy spaces, etc.

persistence emphasize the body's productive desire, **have we yet encountered a Spinozistic account of bodily vulnerability or considered its political implications**?"[61]

Reflecting on Butler's question, a Spinozist account of bodily vulnerability would build upon this **affective resistance of negative feelings** in relation to self-preserving desire. We find our feelings scripted-in-advance by the interpretive frames we inherit; yet, Butler argues that **Spinoza's conception of desire as *cōnātus***—though deterministic—provides a site of resistance to the taken-for-granted structures and sediment of domination: "If desire has as its final aim the continuation of itself...then **the capacity of desire to be withdrawn and to reattach**" is the Achilles' heel of any practice of subjection.[62] This relational self-preserving desire examines the implicit beliefs undergirding habits of feeling and alerts one *both* to **one's own bodily vulnerability**—vis-a-vis toxic narratives and practices—*and* to the **vulnerability of these practices of subjection themselves**, which may crumble with the withdrawal of desirous investment. Renouncing the eternal standpoint of the *Ethics*, *sub specie aeternitātis,* this negotiation —an indexical 'here' and 'now' between the **already-there** and **yet-to-come**—offers limited agency to shift toxic affect scripts, engaging the stories, stock characters, and expert discourses which negotiate (as they also arise from) a collective imaginary.[63]

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[61] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* Verso, 2010, 30. I will also be citing Butler's *Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford UP, 1997), *Undoing Gender* (Routledge, 2004), and "The Desire to Live: Spinoza's Ethics Under Pressure": 111-130, *Politics and the Passions 1500-1850*, ed. Kahn, Saccamano, & Coli (Princeton UP, 2006). Hereafter cited as Butler 2010, Butler 1997, Butler 2004, and Butler 2006.

[62] Butler defines 'subjection' as the "process of becoming subordinated to power as well as the process of becoming a subject." *The Psychic Life of Power,* 62. Butler's theory of subjection builds upon Althusserian *interpellation*—the linguistic production of the social subject as 'hailed' (often by an authority)—and Foucault's theory of *disciplinary power* as 'producing' the subject who would *resist*.

[63] Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power,* 18

Butler's attention to Spinoza is exciting because it asks how we might comprehend the **frames of intelligibility animating desire, and how these frames function as operations of power** to determine which lives matter, which lives can be recognized and collectively grieved. **Ethical responsiveness,** Butler insists, is a political matter of shifting (especially self-righteous, indifferent) patterns of feeling, accepting that "**affect is structured by interpretive schemas that we do not fully understand**" (ibid, 41-2).

Rather than a question of humanism vs. naturalism/posthumanism, I find in Spinoza an ethics of how we can come to change affect scripts, not exclusive to but particularly relevant for humans, who cause damage and suffering well-beyond other species. Spinoza uses two Latin words for power: *pŏtentĭa* in the *Ethics* and *pŏtestas* in his political works; the *social* and *historical* remediation of affect differs from the Neo-Stoic therapeutics of adequate understanding, empowerment, and joy in the *Ethics*.[64] Sharp's claims about the force of ideas, I argue, pertain less to **adequacy** in the *Ethics and* all the more to Spinoza's **social epistemology of constructive fictions** in his *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect,* as when she writes: "Certain ideas may be both true and pernicious, not from the absolute point of view of Nature but from the perspective of finite individuals and collectivities" (145). My second chapter connects Spinoza's social

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[64] Having denied a personal God—a transcendent juridical figure who would label some expressions of nature right and others wrong—Spinoza conceives of power in the *Ethics* as our participation in eternal substance (God-or-Nature), which carries with it inherent affirmation as 'natural right.' While he does not deny the aggression of power over others in the world of finite encounters, Spinoza finds that the more we are controlled by the passions, the more we will be drawn apart and subject to suffering (TP II.14).

epistemology of fictions to Michel Foucault's work on **power** (*pouvoir*) and **knowledge**

(*savoir*) and his 1980 claim that he has never written anything but fictions.[65]

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[65] Michel Foucault, "The History of Sexuality," *Power/Knowledge* [*Pouvoir/savoir*]*: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 193.

Chapter Two: "I Have Only Written Fictions"—

Spinoza, Foucault, and the Re-Scripting of Affect

> We must now proceed to consider those cases which are loosely called fictions in common parlance...[Fictions are] feasible for us as long as we see no impossibility and no necessity therein. — Spinoza, *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*[66]

> I am well aware that I have never written anything but fictions. I do not mean to say, however, that truth is therefore absent. It seems to me that the possibility exists for fiction to function in truth, for a fictional discourse to induce effects of truth, and for bringing it about that a true discourse engenders or 'manufactures' something that does not as yet exist, that is, 'fictions' it. One 'fictions' history on the basis of a political reality that makes it true, one 'fictions' a politics not yet in existence on the basis of a historical truth. — Foucault, "The History of Sexuality"[67]

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My first chapter addressed a tension in Spinoza's ethical and political writings concerning the meaning of **power** and, by extension, **affect** as power's felt register; Judith Butler touches upon this tension in a rhetorical question: "Whereas most positions derived from Spinozistic accounts of bodily persistence emphasize the body's productive desire, **have we yet encountered a Spinozistic account of bodily vulnerability or considered its political implications**?"[68] Following Butler, I argued that *sad passions* reflect the constitutively relational striving of the *cōnātus*; while unpleasant, sad passions enable one to recognize and transform toxic narratives, practices, and institutions. Building upon

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[66] Baruch Spinoza, *Complete Works*, trans Shirley, ed. Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), 55-56. For parenthetical citations, I follow the standard abbreviations. All citations of the *Ethics* are followed by the Part (I-V), definition (def.), axiom (ax.), proposition (p.), scholium (s.), corollary (c.), lemma (lem.), preface (pref.) or appendix (app.). Spinoza's *Political Treatise* (TP) is cited by Chapter (I-XI) and paragraph (1, 2, 3…), e.g. TP III.2, and Spinoza's *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (TIE) is cited by paragraph number. For the *Theological Political Treatise* (TTP), I primarily used the online translation by Jonathan Bennett (2007), with reference also to the *Complete Works* Shirley translation.

[67] Michel Foucault, "The History of Sexuality," *Power/Knowledge* [*Pouvoir/savoir*]: *Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (Pantheon Books, 1980), 193

[68] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* Verso, 2010, 30. Hereafter cited as FW.

Butler's Spinozist inquiry into **bodily vulnerability**, the **relational *cōnātus***, and **affect's mediation by interpretive frames**, I turn in this chapter to the work of Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd (1999) on the Spinozist collective imaginary and the circulation of fictions: "There is a layer of our collective imaginings that forms us...always there to be reckoned with."[69] In the unfinished *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (TIE), Spinoza distinguishes between fictitious, false, and doubtful perceptions. As an adjective in the Latin, *fictus -a -um* suggests that something is false and, as a noun, it denotes a falsehood; yet, the work of *fictioning* as a verb—*fingo fingere finxi fictum*—cannot be reduced to the binary switch of true and false: to fiction signifies not just to feign or to fabricate but to shape, fashion or form, arrange or put in order, represent, imagine.[70] Gatens and Lloyd persuasively argue that Spinoza's epistemology of constructive fictions tacitly frames the Biblical hermeneutics of his *Theological-Political Treatise* (TTP), offering self-consciously **inadequate causal explanations for historical phenomena about which we cannot have adequate understanding**, shifting from the hermetic pursuit of the eternal to the sticky symbols, allegories, parables, and other affective means of control circulating a collective imaginary.[71] In line with Judith Butler's insistence on the political framing of affect, fictions provide **interpretive schema**

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[69] Susan James, Genevieve Lloyd, & Moira Gatens. The Power of Spinoza: Feminist Conjunctions: 40-58 *Hypatia*, Vol. 15, No. 2, Going Australian: Reconfiguring Feminism and Philosophy (Spring, 2000), 53.

[70] The Latin verb is *fictūm, ī, n*; fingo fingere finxi fictum [to shape, fashion, form, mold]; also [to arrange, put in order; to represent, imagine, conceive; to feign, fabricate, devise]; 'fingere vultum', [to put on an artificial expression]. Hence partic. fictus -a -um, [feigned, false]; n. as subst. [a falsehood].

[71] "Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect" (TIE), 14. Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999).

through which we frame and negotiate scripts of feeling in the durational, contingent experience of finitude.

I contribute something to Gatens and Lloyd's insightful analysis by developing their occasional allusions to 'genealogy.' To this end, I bring Spinoza and Michel Foucault into conversation with Foucault's claim—spanning his archaeologies of *epistemes* and his genealogies of practices and institutions—that he has "**never written anything but fictions**."[72] Foucault denies the implication that "truth is therefore absent. It seems to me that the possibility exists **for fiction to function in truth**. One *'fictions'* **history on the basis of a political reality that makes it true; one *'fictions'* a politics not yet in existence on the basis of a historical truth**." The interweaving of historical memory and politics through fictions in Foucault's genealogical project resonates with Spinoza's political writings in compelling ways, addressing those narratives we are told and retell in duration, about things we cannot adequately understand. In what follows, I turn to the analysis of fictions in Spinoza's TTP and TIE; building from the insights of Gatens and Lloyd, I then critically engage their references (also in Gatens' independent work) to Spinoza's *Ethics* as a '**genealogy**' of our felt responses. I develop **what Spinoza and Foucault *do* indeed share in the reconstructive work of fictions**—the possibility of transforming patterns of thinking and feeling by evaluating the framing fictions through which we have been disciplined to comprehend ourselves—which enables the study and transformation of theological-political truth in perspectival and contingent encounters with others.

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[72] The French for "fiction" is the cognate, distinct from Foucault's double invocation of the story/history in the term *histoire*. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Gordon (Pantheon Books, 1980), 193.

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Spinoza begins the *Theological-Political Treatise,* or TTP, by laying out the tensions between adequate understanding through the intellect (**from the standpoint of eternity, *natura naturans***) and the confused, imaginative understanding of sensuous experience (**from the standpoint of duration, *natura naturata***). As finite beings desire to persist in collision with other bodies and ideas, they may be overwhelmed by **hopes** and **fears** about an **uncertain future**, "immodestly" desirous of "the goods of fortune" (TTP I.1). This passive heteronomy of desire makes one easily persuaded, all the more if amplified by fear, which generates mass superstition among the 'multitude' (I.5). Engaging the multitude thus requires: first, speaking through **the imagery of their shared experience** (all prophesies, aside from Moses and Jesus, varied by "the imagination and bodily temperament of each"); second, manipulating the negative affects of the multitude to safeguard the common good, as the impassioned mob "is terrifying, if unafraid" (EIVp54s). Historical narratives and prophetic revelations move hearts to obedience with the vividness of images, much as parents guide "**children who are lacking in all reason**" (TTP II.6/II.47). Thus, lawmakers must use **rewards** and **punishments** to create the affective conditions for living well together (TTP IV.6).

Writing condescendingly of the masses, for whom "faith in the historical narratives of Scripture is necessary...whose understanding is not able to perceive things clearly and distinctly," Spinoza finds that the **multitude** is "**not sufficiently capable of making a judgment**" about matters of **moral**—let alone **metaphysical—truth**, "since it takes more pleasure in the narratives and in the particular and unexpected outcome of things than it does in what the narratives teach" (TTP V.40, 44). Thus, his work is not

meant for "the common people," who need forms of obedience to live well together, and so it is not "in conflict with the laws...or harmful to the general welfare."[73] Spinoza himself was excommunicated for failing to maintain the teachings of the Synagogue; yet, he distinguishes the philosophical elite from the multitude, which cannot navigate the moral truths of these historical narratives without the **guidance** of "Pastors or ministers of the Church" (V.44).

Averroes (Ibn Rushd, 1126-1198) and **Maimonides** (Moses ben Maimon / Rambam, 1138-1204) prefigure this argument in their defenses of philosophy to religious critics in their respective Jewish and Muslim communities of Cordova, Spain. Like Spinoza, Averroes was banished for heretical views: defending philosophy as a "duty" for those capable of demonstrative reasoning, only in *apparent* conflict with revelation. Averroes argued for a doctrine of '**double truth**'—i.e. that esoteric philosophical readings must not reach the masses, who would lose faith without literal interpretations of Scripture.[74] Maimonides framed *Guide of the Perplexed* as a letter to an advanced student who cannot decide whether to follow philosophy or religion; he insists that the student must overcome the misstep of interpreting Biblical passages literally. Criticizing literal readings from within the terms of faith, Maimonides appeals to **allegory** to avoid the

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[73] TTP, Preface 34-35. Building upon Stoicism, Spinoza writes that "obedience does, in some manner, take away freedom; but it is not that aspect which makes the slave, it is **the reason for the action**" (XVI.33). The slave performs an action for the advantage of someone else; yet, "in a Republic," the *subject* follows its own advantage according to reason (XVI.25-6). The law-abiding subject acts to "the advantage of the collective body, and hence, also for his own advantage, in accordance with the command of the supreme power" (XVI.25-6, 35). Spinoza writes: "if men were so constituted by nature that they desired nothing except what true reason indicates, then of course society would require no laws," only moral lessons (TTP V.19).

[74] Averroes, *On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* (1179)*,* trans. George Hourani (Gibb Memorial Trust, 2012); LE Goodman, "Maimonides," E. Craig (Ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1998). Averroes claims the truth of a parable *differs* from that of a proof, but not thereby negated by the latter.

idolatry of describing God as **corporeally embodied**.[75] Spinoza similarly defends the difference and coexistence of these truths—adequate philosophical understanding and the fictions of theology/politics—and challenges theological resistance to philosophy as misunderstanding the difference.[76] **Religion** gains the force of law through the **decree of sovereign power** and ideally **provides the disciplinary-affective conditions for the "the peace and utility of the State,"** enabling "loving-kindness" through the ceremonies, prayers, and rules of the social order (XIX.1-2, 6). Prefiguring Kant's 1784 defense of public reason (even when fulfilling "private" duties),[77] Spinoza argues that one should be punished only for deeds that disobey the social order, not for words and thoughts critically engaging that order.[78]

Considering the disdain for "natural light" among religious groups, Spinoza proposes "a Method of interpreting the sacred books" with which he approaches religious

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[75] Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* (ed. Guttmann, trans. Rabin [Hackett, 1995]). Maimonides was a physician and writer of medical treatises, rabbinic authority, and philosopher influenced by Neo-Platonism, modifying the Aristotelianism dominant in Islamic circles by insisting on the limits of mathematical and metaphysical knowledge. Maimonides fled Spain for Morocco in 1148 when the Almohads demanded that non-Muslims convert, flee, or die. Maimonides' family went to Morocco in 1160, and he went on to Cairo, where he wrote *Guide of the Perplexed*.[10] Kenneth Seeskin, "Maimonides," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Jan 2006, rev. 2008

[76] The **narratives** of Scripture teach "**only very simple things**, which everyone could easily perceive, and that they embellished these things with that **style**, and confirmed them with those reasons, by which they could most readily move the mind of the multitude to devotion toward God." Scripture teaches obedience to basic principles upon which a stable collective life can be formed (Pref.27).

[77] Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" (1984) <http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html>

[78] The separation of Church and State, tenuously in place in the Dutch Republic when Spinoza published the TTP, would be necessary to preserve this distinction. Spinoza argues that freedoms of thought and speech not only do not harm "the peace of the republic and the right of the sovereign powers" but, furthermore, "cannot be taken away without great danger"; the loss of these freedoms threatens the peaceful state by denying the natural right of individuals, coextensive with their power (TTP Pref.29).

phenomena such as prophecies, divine laws, and miracles: "I resolved **earnestly to examine Scripture afresh**, with an unprejudiced and free spirit, to affirm nothing concerning it, and **to admit nothing as its teaching, which it did not very clearly teach me**" (TTP I.20). Countering the theological tendency to paint revelation as contrary to reason in appeal to the "force and violence of the affects,"[79] Spinoza resists these "theological prejudices," offering a method of interpreting Scripture in line with how one approaches nature: to study the evidence of the texts and their histories, "and to infer the mind of the authors of Scripture from it, by legitimate reasonings, as from certain data and principles" (TTP VII.7). **Philosophical works,** which seek universal demonstrations of reason in Nature, **do not require the framing information of authorship**, such as for "Euclid, who wrote only about things which were quite simple and...by their nature comprehensible" (TTP VII.67-8). Yet, to approach Biblical interpretation with the same discernment, one must contextualize the "**circumstances** by which a record has been **preserved**, viz. the **life**, **character**, and **concerns** of the author of each book, **who he was**,

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[79] On a Spinozist model, we defend what we conceive intellectually through intellect and reason while we defend what we feel affectively (TTP VII.5). Thus, in Chapter Six, Spinoza argues that "miracles" abstract God from the causal workings of nature as "a certain royal majesty, whereas they imagine nature's power as force and impulse," standing above the order of nature (VI.3); yet, according to Spinoza, "nothing happens contrary to the order of nature...it preserves a fixed and immutable eternal order" (VI.6.i)

on **what occasion** he wrote, **the fate of each book**. Moreover, the better we know someone's **spirit and temperament**, the more easily we can explain his words."[80]

Here we might provocatively link Spinoza's *Theological Political Treatise* to **Foucault's "What is an Author?" (1969)**: while writers in the Middle Ages legitimated their discourses with **authority** ("Pliny recounts," "Hippocrates said") and those following Galileo—in Spinoza's time—replaced these with the "**always redemonstrable truth**" of the scientific method, in the Modern Age turned to the **classificatory** and **proprietary** function of **the author**.[81] **Anticipating Foucault's insights in late modernity,** Spinoza notes the demand for truth in appeals to the author and acknowledges the impossibility of recovering "all the circumstances of all the books of Scripture," implying their inadequacy and, thus, **interpretive—fictional—status**:

> either we are completely ignorant of the authors (or, if you prefer, Writers) of many of the books, or else we have doubts about them...we do not know into whose hands all the books fell, nor in whose copies so many different readings were found...**For if we are ignorant of all these things, we cannot know anything about what the author intended, or could have intended** (VII.58-60).

Time, the "devourer of memory," renders ambiguous the historical and linguistic resonances of Scripture, thus lacking the clarity and distinctness of knowledge (VII.46).

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[80] TTP VII.23-4. Spinoza offers the theological explanation "that God accommodated himself to the imaginations and preconceived opinions of the Prophets" in order to formulate stories which would resonate with the people—e.g. stories of an emotional God wiping out populations for various sins, brief parables of virtuous behavior, images of God embodied on a throne beside Christ, etc—and which, through repetition, would sediment into collective memory (XIII.25) Spinoza writes: "Next, since Moses clearly teaches that God is jealous, and nowhere teaches that God lacks passions *or* passive states of mind, from this we must conclude without reservation that Moses believed this, or at least that he wished to teach it, however much we may believe that this opinion is contrary to reason. For as we have already shown, it is not permissible for us to twist the intent of Scripture according to the dictates of our reason and according to our preconceived opinions. The whole knowledge of the Bible must be sought from the Bible alone" (VII.22).

[81] Foucault, "What is an Author?": 205-222, trans. Hararai, *Michel Foucault: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology,* ed. Faubion (New Press, 1998), 211-2. Originally given as a lecture to the *Société Française de philosophie* in February 1969.

Centuries of persecution leave only fragments of the Hebrew language to posterity: "no Dictionary, no Grammar, no Rhetoric...For almost all the names of fruits, birds, fish, and a great many other things have perished in the unjust treatment of the ages" (VII.45). This **desperation to locate an author** suggests to Spinoza an **anxiety** about Biblical truth and the status of fictions in negotiating collective life, which **strangely anticipates Foucault's 1969 insights** into the modern bourgeois regulation of the fictive; Foucault writes:

> The question then becomes: **How can one reduce the great peril, the great danger with which fiction threatens our world?** The answer is: One can reduce it with the author. The **author** allows a limitation of the cancerous and dangerous proliferation of significations within a world where one is thrifty not only with one's resources and riches but also with one's discourses and their significations ("What is an Author?", 221).

Foucault finds it would be "**pure romanticism**" to envision a culture in which fictions operated without ordering constraints; yet, **we might imagine different constraints** than those presumed by the **author function**. At this level of historical, theological-political truth, Spinoza similarly suggests that we might conceive of Biblical truth differently, as a means of fictioning collective life rather than discovering its underlying truth. The implicit, heretical suggestion underlying Spinoza's hermeneutic method prefigures Foucault's genealogical method insofar as **the historical narratives of the Bible work to 'fiction' the background of our familiar,** the terms through which we view ourselves and our relations, which are nonetheless capable of transformation.

Fictions become useful for Spinoza in situations where we have knowledge of an object as existing but do not comprehend its essence; thus, a fiction arises in **the not-true and not-false space of "what is possible,"** in which neither existence or non-existence

implies a contradiction such that the necessity at stake is unknown to us (TIE 14). If our knowledge was fully adequate, there would be no space for fiction: "**the less the mind understands while yet perceiving more things, the greater its capacity to form fictions**; and the more it understands, the less its capacity to form fictions" (TIE 15-6). Myths about, say, thunder and lightning, are readily believable and not *false* when we lack scientific knowledge of storms; yet, when placed alongside adequate knowledge, Zeus throwing lightning bolts becomes a false idea, one which "implies assent," forgetting its own limits as mere possibility; the building dreamed but never to be realized by its architect is thus not a false idea but a fiction (TIE 19). Spinoza himself declared that **we need not be "apprehensive about engaging in fiction" provided that we could at any time subject the fiction to questions of how and why it came to be** (TIE, 17-8). Gatens and Lloyd argue that we empower ourselves "by coming up with more constructive fictions, which will themselves, in turn, become the precepts that shape social life."[82]

Of course, Spinoza cannot write that the Biblical narratives upon which religion grounds itself are **fictions**, that these fictions in practice can be **constructive** (offering spiritual guidance, comfort, objective moral principles, community, etc) or **destructive**, as when it cultivates animosity toward outsiders. Yet, he implies as much when he argues, controversially, that the historical narratives of the Bible offer nothing by way of knowledge concerning God-or-Nature, but "reading them is very useful in relation to civil

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82 Susan James, Genevieve Lloyd, & Moira Gatens. "The Power of Spinoza: Feminist Conjunctions": 40-58, *Hypatia*, Vol. 15, No. 2, Going Australian: Reconfiguring Feminism and Philosophy (Spring 2000), 53-54 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810654>

life (IV.18-19). That these narratives are ***fictions*** **does not make them** *false*; rather they **become true** in the sense of gaining theological and political resonance over time. Gatens and Lloyd write:

> The fictions which bind together communities are **not always deliberately fabricated falsehoods propagated by those who stand to gain by them.** Rather, social fictions may be distorted or imaginative but **genuine attempts** to grasp the complex relations within and **between collective bodies**, and **between the present and the past** history of those collective bodies (90).

Groups found their sense of identity on a shared history, generating a shared set of fictions; thus, the Bible expresses the history of a people and its guiding fictions, some of which can be universalized but much of which is idiosyncratic.[83] Thus, Spinoza finds imagery of God as a "lawgiver" is **fictional** at once in the sense of metaphysical falsity and yet also in the sense of a pedagogical web of characters and stories that preserve a collective. These are our fictions, our shadows on the wall; yet, they are **not therefore false, superficial, or irrelevant.**

The formulation of fictions offers critical access to our assumptions and implicit biases, allowing us to shift toxic ideas with new narratives. It is by sorting through this excess—through reconstructing our fictions—that we become capable of critical distance. We might consider U.S. founding documents as a fiction of freedom and equality, initially containing internal contradictions such as the "three-fifths" definition of

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[83] Gatens & Lloyd, 99; the Old Testament, on Spinoza's reading, addressed a people who, "accustomed as they were to slavery," needed the stability of law to instill discipline and community; thus "they were not permitted to eat anything, to dress, to shave their head or beard, to rejoice, or to do absolutely anything, except in accordance with orders and commandments prescribed in the laws" (TTP V.30). In Chapter Three of the TTP, Spinoza claims that the Biblical promised land can be read as the territory of the nation, the ground upon which social order holds, though it holds for only so long as the nation prospers (TTP III.22). Thus, the Old Testament laws held for the Jews, but only while they remained a unified nation, while the claim to love God and one's neighbor pertains universally for all nations (III.52).

black humanity and inadequacies such as the absence of women. Yet, through the reconstructive maintenance of freedom and equality as fictions, they became more and more true, less possible and more actual. **Fictions frame and delimit the affect scripts available within a given collective imaginary,** scripts which follow with a seemingly automatic intensity but which can be **modified by engaging these framing fictions**. We can think of racism, for instance, as a web of variably conscious affect scripts, maintained by toxic fictions in the collective imaginary and an associative logic that generalizes from individual encounters to a class or nation (EIIIp46); one fails to see that the negativity inheres in one's orientation rather than in the object itself. Gatens (1995) elaborates: "X pities indigenous peoples because of their colonized conditions of life; Y fears Germans because they are nationalistic; Z hates men because they are violent," and this flawed associative logic places the value of goodness or badness "in the object or class rather than in the *relation* between the object or the class and the person undergoing the affect."[84] By demonstrating fraught fictions—such as reproductive heterosexual marriage or normalized gender performance—*as fictions*, possibilities rather than necessities, we open space for more attuned and responsive fictions, for new scripts.

<div align="center">*</div>

As I argued in my first chapter, Continental approaches to Spinoza have tended to follow Deleuze, not only opposing Spinoza to Hegel but also reading him as a post-moral philosopher of immanence alongside Nietzsche. Deleuze admits the subversive status of his Nietzschean "Spinoza," noting that the **scholia** present a subterranean *Ethics* beneath

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[84] Moira Gatens. *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power, Corporeality (*Routledge 1995), 129.

"the continuous stream of definitions, propositions, demonstrations, and corollaries" as **an immanent 'unconscious' of the text**: "a discontinuous volcanic line...expressing all the angers of the heart and setting forth the practical theses of denunciation and liberation."[85] Nietzsche himself states his incompatibility with Spinoza even as he finds a kindred spirit; in the Spinozist project of adequately understanding affects by their causal necessity, Nietzsche diagnoses an instinctive effort of mastery: "And is **the jubilation of those who attain knowledge** not the jubilation over the restoration of a sense of security?"[86]

Michel Foucault rarely engages Spinoza in his work; yet, he addresses Spinoza in "Truth and Juridical Forms" (1973) only to **counter his conflation with Nietzsche on the nature of power and knowledge.**[87] Foucault emphasizes that **laughing, lamenting, and detesting express *bad relations* to objects:** "all these drives, which are at the root of

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[85] It is no coincidence that Deleuze's *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (1970) begins with "Nietzsche." He presents Spinoza's "scandal" in Nietzschean terms of "a triple denunciation: of '**consciousness**,' '**values**,' and '**sad passions**.' These are the three major resemblances with Nietzsche. And already in Spinoza's lifetime, they are the reasons for his being accused of ***materialism, immoralism, atheism***" (31). With the sad passions, Deleuze finds Spinoza also denounces the 'moralist trinity' of the slave, the tyrant, and the priest, each of whom **appeals to transcendent values in turning against life** (26).

[86] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (1882), trans. Kaufmann (Vintage, 1974), aphorism 355; of focus here are aphorisms 333 and 372. Nietzsche shares with Spinoza sustained attention to the affective underpinnings of reason; he honors this lineage in a letter to Franz Overbeck: "Of course the differences are enormous, but they are more of period, culture, field of knowledge. In summa: my solitariness which, as on very high mountains, has often, often made me gasp for breath and lose blood, is now at least a solitude for two. Strange!" Kathleen Higgins, *Comic Relief: Nietzsche's Gay Science* (Oxford UP, 2000), 149.

[87] Michel Foucault, "Truth and Juridical Forms," p. 8, collected in the third volume of Foucault's *Essential Works: Power*, pp. 1-90, ed. Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 2000), p. originally delivered at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro in May 1973. Instinct is a problematic word in the intellectual lineage between Nietzsche and Foucault, as Foucault argues in his *Abnormal* Lectures (1974-75) that it was an invention of early 19th century medico-juridical and emerging psychiatric discourses, first used in the 1826 trial of Henriette Cornier to make sense of a motiveless crime. Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France* (1974-5), trans. Burchell (Picador, 2004), 120-32.

knowledge and which produce it, have in common a distancing of the object" (ibid).

Knowledge becomes "a violation of the things to be known," replacing knowledge as

joyful congruence with "a relation of distance and domination." For Nietzsche, reason

has no claim above the instincts but is the provisional settlement of their conflict (hence

the *calmness* associated with rationality) as "a surface effect."[88] Nietzsche's ***amor fati***

transforms and mocks Spinoza's ***amor dei*** in its orientation to chance, having lost faith in

eternal orders: "What is *amor*; what *deus*, when they are missing every drop of blood?"[89]

Spinoza's atheism differs from that of Nietzsche, as the **denial of a personal God** and the

denial of eternal order are distinct claims. Nietzsche denies both while Spinoza denies

only the former, maintaining in his *Ethics* a logocentric unity (God-or-Nature), which

adequately understands affects in their causal determinations, accessible by the same

proof as lines, planes, and bodies (EIIIpref). Nietzsche hammers away at this blessed

unity, though he maintains ideals of 'strength,' 'activity,' and an understanding bound up

with joy.

Like Spinoza of the *Theological-Political Treatise*, Foucault critically engages the

fictions through which we negotiate contingencies—histories of contact. Still, it is

important to note Foucault's **distance** from Spinoza's *Ethics* as his attention to the

inextricability of power-knowledge counters the mutually justifying Neo-Stoic

configuration of power-knowledge-joy, which carries from Spinoza to Nietzsche's will-

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[88] Nietzsche writes: "'Not to laugh, not to lament, nor to detest, but to understand,' says Spinoza as simply and sublimely as is his wont. Yet in that last analysis, what else is this 'understanding' than the form in which we come to feel the other three at once? One result of the different and mutually opposed desires to laugh, lament, and curse?" (*The Gay Science*, aphorism 333)

[89] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science,* aphorism 372

to-power and Deleuze's ethics-as-ethology[90]—empowered joyful understanding defines the good and provides the embodied-affective criterion for resisting the Judeo-Christian valuation of weakness.[91] *Strength*, "the beast within us," presents a physiological achievement formed in relation to the *quantity* of our "painfully affecting sights and impressions."[92] Yet if, quoting American Idol Kelly Clarkson, "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger," then **where**—in this line of thought—**can we find an ethics of affect that accounts for bodily vulnerability?**[93] Foucault pushes Nietzsche's wariness of origins [*Ursprung*] and emphasis on invention [*Erfindung*] further by historicizing not only 'good' and 'bad' but forms of 'passivity' and 'weakness' Nietzsche naturalizes. The will-to-power grows murky as a force of life when complicated by, as Foucault playfully and pointedly names it, *la volonté de savoir*: the struggle for mastery which animates the will to *know*.

The difference between Spinoza and Foucault, then, rests on the relation of **power and knowledge**; and we might read Deleuze's ethology and Foucault's genealogy as reinterpreting Spinoza's ethical and political projects respectively. Far from incompatible, these projects address experience at different registers; Deleuze engages power as a dynamic substrate of force relations while Foucault addresses histories and institutions,

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[90] For Deleuze, building upon Spinoza, ethics becomes a empirical study of "bad encounters, poisoning, intoxication, relational decomposition," in which there are ways of organizing our lives more joyfully, more interdependently, and "there is nothing more advantageous" to the human (1970, 22; EIVApp9).

[91] Thus, Nietzsche condemns pity for covering the rift between individuals in their "personal and profoundest suffering." Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, tr. Kaufmann, aphorism 269

[92] Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human* tr. Kaufmann, aphorism 35.

[93] Kelly Clarkson, "Stronger (What Doesn't Kill You)," written by Jörgen Elofsson, Ali Tamposi, David Gamson, Greg Kurstin, produced by Greg Kurstin, RCA Records, 2011 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xn676-fLq7I&feature=kp>

'molar' relations in Deleuze's terms. Spinoza himself, as I addressed in my first chapter, used two different words for power: in the *Ethics, pŏtentĭa,* or pure potential for activity in the order of essences; in the political works, **pŏtestas** (or *pŏstestas*), connoting strength and force, *potency* and ability in the order of encounters. Substance needs no transcendent judge to label some expressions of power right and others wrong; while some may be inconvenient or even mortal to finite individuals, these can never be evil (TP: II.2-4). **There is no inherent negativity in the natural world, only strivings which encounter other strivings in toxic and flourishing relations**.[94] Thus, Deleuze (1970) asks: "What is positive or *good* in the act of beating? What is good is that this act (raising my arm, closing my fist, moving rapidly and forcefully) **expresses a power of my body**" (35). This 'power' is equivalent to 'right' as an expression of nature.[95] Yet, in Spinoza's political writings, power becomes complicated because, **without laws and norms,** "**every man is subject to another's right** for as long as he is in the other's

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[94] Spinoza declares: "Nature's right and established order," far surpassing the scope of human understanding, "forbids only those things that no one desires and no one can do; it does not frown on strife, or hatred, or anger, or deceit, or anything at all urged by appetite" (TP II.8). Spinoza finds that the more we are controlled by the passions, the more we will be drawn apart and subject to suffering, dominant and dominated; humans, "more cunning and astute than other animals," ought especially to fear one another without the laws of the state (TP II.14).

[95] TP II.2-4; Personal appetites may appear to us "ridiculous, absurd, or evil," but this is because we know them partially, "ignorant of the order and coherence of the whole of nature" (TTP XVI. 9-11). In our "natural" state, Spinoza finds we are determined by desire and power rather than reason (as the 'multitude' remains throughout their lives); thus, "no one can doubt how advantageous it is to man to live according to the laws and certain dictates of our reason" (TTP XVI.12-14).

power (*sub pŏtestate habere*)" and regains that right only by repelling force.[96] But by what measures and what vision can we reconstruct these contingent relations, without the adequate grasp of *sub specie aeternitatis*? Where, in Spinoza's account of social and historical power, can we find an account of bodily vulnerability?

Continental philosophers have tended to import Marxian and Nietzschean theories of history into their Spinoza, which makes sense when we consider the postmodern difficulty of establishing 'adequate knowledge' while denying an ultimate order. Moira Gatens (1995) expresses this tension when she claims that Spinoza "**offers a genealogical account of our consciousness of our power to affect and be affected** in ways that cause joy or sadness, that is, in ways that involve an increase in **our feeling of power**" (130). Referencing Michael Hardt's 1995 essay, "Spinoza's Democracy,"[97] Gatens and Lloyd find both Nietzschean genealogy and Deleuzian ethology in Spinoza's ethical *and* political projects (107):

> The theologies, moralities, and imaginaries of various forms of sociability thus offer a record, of sorts, of the development and history of this or that complex body. Indeed...**the TTP may be read as a genealogical account of the formation of the Jewish people.** Perhaps unlike Nietzsche, our reading of Spinoza's philosophy may be seen to provide not simply an account of how a people came to be who they are (a genealogy of Judaism) but also an account which offers, **given a knowledge of that genealogy**, what a people may **become**

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[96] TP II.9; Spinoza lists four ways in which humans hold this aggressive power-as-*pŏtestas*: by imprisoning another, by depriving another of self-defense or escape (both of which capture the body but not the mind), by terrorizing and inspiring fear in another, or by so attaching another to oneself that the other is dependent and must live according to one's will; in the latter two, one "has made the other's body and his mind subject to his own right, but only as long as fear or hope endures" (TP II.10). Thus, if one can overcome hope and fear, one is in theory always capable of freedom, placing relevant events in their causal nexus and so coming to understand them adequately (TP II.11).

[97] Michael Hardt, "Spinoza's Democracy: The Passions of Social Assemblages," in A. Callari, S. Cullenberg, and C. Biewener, eds, *Marxism in the Postmodern Age: Confronting the New World Order:* (New York: Guilford Press, 1995), 26. Cited in Gatens and Lloyd, 107.

through gaining a reflective knowledge of their capacities. Spinoza's ethical and political writings, in other words, may be seen to suggest both a method of understanding what one is on the basis of one's past (**genealogy**) *and* a knowledge of what one may become on a basis of an increase in the knowledge of one's powers and capacities (**ethology**).

Bringing together genealogy and ethology, Gatens and Lloyd argue that this methodological combination enables a "reflective knowledge of [one's] capacities": genealogy tells us how we came to be, while ethology informs us as to what we might become. Compellingly, Gatens and Lloyd quote **Deleuze** on **Foucault** (1988) to describe their Spinozist project: thought thinks its history "in order to free itself from what it thinks (the present) and be able finally to 'think otherwise' (the future)" (7). Again, I suggest that Deleuze and Foucault offer two trajectories of thinking about affect which are not incompatible but which address different registers of relations. This tension reemerges in Gatens (2000) as she describes molecular assemblages of "sex, gender, race, and class distinctions" and finds these remain in place by **three forms of practices**: "**discursive** (e.g. the human sciences), **normative** (e.g. medical and legal 'codes'), and **subjectifying** (subjects designated as 'woman,' 'native,' 'mentally ill')" (65). That **this tripartite distinction so closely resembles Foucault's own categorization of his work might give us pause**: when we destabilize and recreate new **molar** configurations from the **molecular**, what frames this reassembly in place of an eternal standpoint? How does genealogy translate Spinoza's concerns about fictions into late modernity, and what does it miss?

It is important to note that the word 'history' is not to be found in Spinoza's *Ethics,* though it appears plenty (over thirty times) in the TTP. While attractive to

feminists because Spinoza values the vast spectrum of affect (including emotions, among other forms), the body, nature, and democratic politics, the *Ethics* cannot be read as **genealogy** because Spinoza **associates knowledge with joyful affects** and because he **dismisses contingency** as a mere word "without any corresponding idea" in a universe that admits of no rupture (EIIp31). The word '**contingency**' comes from the Latin *contingo, tĭgi, tactum,* connoting touch—**the accumulation and negotiation of histories of contact,** always perspectival.[98] **Historical narratives,** from the standpoint of Spinoza's *Ethics*, address our partial, imaginative, inadequate knowledge, full of ambiguities in the causal chain. Yet, if an active 'understanding' addresses the self in relation to the infinite, what of finite social and environmental relations in which our knowledge is inevitably partial? Here we might productively turn to Foucault, for whom it is in **recognizing the gaps and opacities of our knowledge**—without forcing silence to speak—that we cultivate **an ethical orientation to the web of affects** in which we find ourselves, with a **curious** and **caring** interest toward that which we do not (or cannot) fully understand. Foucault's genealogies share with **Spinoza's TTP a critical project of attunement** to the **contingencies** of **sensory, affective,** and **cognitive frames**. For Foucault, the recognition of these contingencies enables new "**affective and relational virtualities**."[99]

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[98] While affects circulate and motivate action, they carry implicit associations and narratives that often demand genealogical unpacking; as Sara Ahmed writes, emotions are sticky orientations to objects that carry histories of contact with them: "whether something feels good or bad *already* involves a process of reading, in the very attribution of significance." Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh Press, 2004).

[99] EW1 138; in the new discursive space opened by homosexuality, for example, Foucault expressed disinterest in identity-claims, i.e. the "intrinsic qualities of the homosexual," and instead emphasized "the diagonal lines he can lay out in the social fabric [which] allow these virtualities to come to light."

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Genealogy cultivates this limited agency through attention to the body "the surfaces of the inscription of events," which "manifests the stigmata of past experience and also gives rise to desires, failings, and errors" (375). We might recall that, in Chapter One, Judith Butler sought a Spinozist affect theory which could account for **bodily vulnerability**, which I take to signify pain, suffering, dependency, incoherence, the inheritance of norms that render one monstrous and/or invisible.[100] In his appeal to affects and relations that open with care for what exists and what might exist, **Foucault** resonates with Butler, who finds that responsiveness to vulnerability—both one's own and that of others—can instigate the redeployment and transformation of norms, stock characters, fictions we did not choose.

Yet, in *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997), Butler claims that the possibility of subversion in Foucault implicitly relies on a psyche to redeploy signs (or norms) against their original purposes, an unconscious "bodily remainder" which loosens our hierarchies of normality and deviance, exceeding and resisting sublimation (87). But when she states that Foucault remains "notoriously taciturn on the topic of the psyche" (18), **Butler overlooks Foucault's critique of psychic interiority in *History of Madness* (1961),** which retells the *histoire* of the psyche through the archival records and traces of its constitutive outside, *unreason*. Psychiatry and psychoanalysis, as discursive configurations of power-knowledge, sought to diagnose and control these bodily

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[100] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* Verso, 2010, 30. I will also be citing Butler's *Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford UP, 1997), *Undoing Gender* (Routledge, 2004), and "The Desire to Live: Spinoza's Ethics Under Pressure": 111-130, *Politics and the Passions 1500-1850*, ed. Kahn, Saccamano, & Coli (Princeton UP, 2006). Hereafter cited as Butler 2010, Butler 1997, Butler 2004, and Butler 2006.

remainders, compressing and internalizing cosmic questions of unreason within the confines of the skull, the abyss within. **Rather than appealing to a psychic unconscious,** *History of Madness* engages the limits of intelligibility through which the psyche emerged, an irrecoverable *outside* which—in its strangeness—**enables a shift in the fictions framing present patterns of feeling** and, in that shift, **the limited agency to redirect toxic affect scripts** that render oneself and/or others vulnerable to suffering.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Madness **engages framing fictions and affect scripts in their historical singularity;** for instance, in the eighteenth century, as spaces of confinement moved inward from the edges of town (to the abyss within), Foucault observes a "strange return" of Renaissance cosmic unreason in the '**Great Fear**,' cast in Classical terms of impurity—"evil-rot contagion"—and treated with a mix of **pity** and **revulsion**: "It was a fear formulated in medical terms, but deep down it was animated by a whole moral mythology" (HM 355-6). The medical expert gained authority as a "guardian," protecting others from "the confused danger that emanated from inside the walls of confinement" (HM 358). These experts dreamed of asylums that would at once contain madness and render it visible: "The moral dream was to tame them, but there was something in man that dreamt of *living* them, or at least of getting close to them and liberating fantasies" (HM 360). Much as he begins *History of Sexuality* (1976) with the spectre of Queen Victoria, here Foucault upholds **two stock characters in the *histoire* of the asylum**: Samuel Tuke, founder of the Quaker 'Retreat,' and Phillipe Pinel, who unchained the mad at Bicêtre: "the fear was no longer of what lay on the other side of the prison door, but what raged instead beneath

the seals of conscience."[101] It would be easy to believe, as the *histoire* we tell ourselves tells us, that confinement "and the curiosity that was born there (soon to become pity, then humanitarianism and social concern)" arose in a context of "well-meaning neutrality" (HM 358). Yet, medical-moral progress breaks down; in their **motivational complexity**, these moments grow murky, insidious (HM 394). The problem of madness concerns our relation to alterity—**unreason**—once cosmic and, in the Modern Age, confined, miniaturized, internalized, and forced into discourse.

Distinct from psychoanalytic models of subjectivity, I argued in my introduction that "**affect**" enables us to reframe Foucault's attention to 'feelings,' which he deems the substance (or material) of ethics today.[102] **Affects are not products of a singular mind but emerge in relations, in spaces and institutional configurations of power.**[103] While 'feelings' might appear to resonate with the sentiment tradition (which I address in my third chapter), Foucault treats 'sentiment' as one of the phenomena which genealogy engages in its appearances and its absences, one of the seemingly ahistorical scripts

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[101] HM 484-5. Thus, Tuke *organized* the madman's identity as "self-consciousness in a non-reciprocal relation with his keeper," generating 'guilt'—a toxic relation to the self—and 'shame'—a non-relation to others—in the rise of "humane" modes of confinement (ibid). As an object of punishment, the madman was forced to recognize his own guilt, thus—in a play on Hegel's master-slave dialectic—able "to return to his own consciousness as a free, responsible subject" through the gaze of the doctor.

[102] Foucault claims: "Whereas the Christian ethics of a former age worked on desire and Kantian morality worked on intention," today "the part of ourselves most relevant for morality is our feelings." (Michel Foucault, On the Genealogy of Ethics, *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Rabinow (Pantheon, 1984), 353

[103] *History of Madness* (1961) begins not with raving subjects but with an empty placeholder—the lazar houses—and a societal function waiting to be filled by a new fearsome figure. It was not until the Great Confinement (1656) that the madman came to fill these spaces. Thus, the royal decree to establish the Hôpital Général became a pivotal step toward the establishment of *modern* subjectivity (HM 47).

through which we have come to express ourselves.[104] **Affects such as pity, disgust, fear, and interest can attach to any number of objects depending on historical circumstance**; Foucault addresses affect in its contingent and relational register, full of absences, gaps, opacities, felt on the surface of the body, disciplined through institutions. *Madness* captures a *histoire* of encounters with strangeness, **old riverbeds of feeling**—their taxonomies and fearsome *others*—shifting the proximity of events, unsettling fixations, bringing objects into focus: steps toward 'getting free of ourselves.'

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Madness has traditionally been included in Foucault's "archaeological" period (studying the interaction of fields of knowledge at a historical moment), **but it bears significant traits of a genealogy:** an analysis of the effects of disciplinary and normalizing power on abnormal bodies as well as an ethical problematization of discursive and non-discursive practices.[105] Turning to "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (1971), Foucault claims that genealogy rejects the search for origins, which seeks a "vantage point of absolute

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[104] Foucault writes that 'sentiment' arose with the dissolution of classical spaces of confinement. Poverty and illness, "previous companions in misery" with madness, became private matters, without the religious charity that once motivated care: "Only the movements of the heart could demand it...the organization of feelings of solidarity and pity, sentiments more primitive than the social body..." (HM 413).

[105] As Lynne Huffer (2009) writes, "the late Nietzschean (ethical, genealogical) dimension of *Madness* throws into question (in true Nietzschean, Foucauldian fashion) the clean continuities this periodization assumes" (88). Genealogy, the second of Foucault's historical methods (archaeology, genealogy, problematization), builds upon the archival work of archaeology by incorporating analyses of non-discursive power on the body, using the contingent stuff of history to disrupt toxic patterns of attachment.

distance" preceding and justifying our terms.[106] Yet, "the distant ideality of the origin" is clouded by the excess of subsequent discourses that would recover it. Thus, genealogy finds values "**fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms,**" from lowly [*bas*] beginnings, reactive affects, struggles for power (EW2 374).

Genealogy thus attends to **what *passes* for static, eternal, or ahistorical** [*dans ce qui passe pour n'avoir point d'histoire*]; or, in the English translation, "those things we tend to feel are without history—in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts."[107] Pointedly, Foucault insists, the recurrence of these affective phenomena does not evolve in a gradual trajectory: **rather than a line or curve**, Foucault observes them **in different scenes with difference roles, sometimes missing** or unrealized. Their lacunae—gaps, ruptures, intervals—defy the smooth continuity of a narrative. In this sense, he follows Nietzsche's second *Untimely Meditation* in viewing history as a critical intervention, "a 'history of the present' that, in effect, seeks to diagnose and suggest alternative avenues of behavior, or at least their possibility."[108] Foucault wrote genealogies "to incite rebellions against pernicious disciplinary productions, to produce an experience of their costs, and to open the space for an alternative tradition of critique as well as a revised understanding of

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[106] Such a standpoint would make "possible a field of knowledge [*savoir*] whose function is to recover it, but always in a false recognition due to the excesses of its own speech. In "What is an Author?" (1969) Foucault describes the search for origins generated by "founders of discursivity," preeminently Marx and Freud, who generate the possibility for "something other than their discourse...[and] made possible a series of divergences" (218). With this proliferation of meanings comes an inevitable need to "return to the origin," a return which "is part of the discursive field itself, never stops modifying it" (219).

[107] EW 2 369; Michel Foucault. Nietzsche, la généalogie, l' histoire: 145-172, *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite,* Paris, P.U.F., coll. «Épiméthée», 1971.

[108] Thomas Flynn. "Foucault's Mapping of History": 29-48. *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, Second Edition, ed. Gutting (Cambridge UP, 2005), 45. Flynn cites Foucault here: *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews of Michel Foucault*, trans. Bouchard & Simon (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977), 156.

autonomy."[109] This analysis "permits **the dissociation of the Me**, its recognition and displacement as an empty synthesis, **in liberating a profusion of lost events**" (374). Stated differently, the genealogy of *how one has come to be*, in its incompleteness and expansiveness, fractures the coherence of *the self* and reframes our relation to that which is incoherent. The impossibility of total knowledge, Foucault concludes, "does not rule out...the rigorous economy of the True and the False" but reveals that this economy "is not the whole story."[110] **Hence, the import of stories, *histoires.***

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

As noted earlier, Foucault claimed in an interview that he has "**never written anything but fictions,**" but this does not imply that truth is absent; Foucault continues that he see the possibility for fictional discourses to function in truth, "**to induce effects of truth**," such that "a true discourse engenders or manufactures something that does not as yet exist, that is, 'fictions' it," or makes it true.[111] Foucault's two examples of 'fictioning' are telling when we relate the term to the work of critique: "one 'fictions' history on the basis of a political reality that makes it true, one 'fictions' a politics not yet in existence on the basis of a historical truth" (ibid). Rejecting any fixed binary between the imaginary and the real, Foucault instead describes fiction as emerging through the productions of a distance-taking exercise, an **experiment** in imagining.

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[109] Jana Sawicki. "Queering Foucault & the Subject of Feminism": 379-400. *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, Second Edition, ed. Gutting (Cambridge UP, 2005), 392.

[110] Michel Foucault, "For an Ethic of Discomfort" *Essential Works: Power* (EW3), ed. James Faubion (The New Press, 1998), 448

[111] Michel Foucault, "The History of Sexuality" ["*Histoire de la sexualité"*] *Power/Knowledge* [*Pouvoir/savoir*]: *Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (Pantheon Books, 1980), 193

Lauren Guilmette

Judith Butler, Thomas Flynn, Timothy O'Leary, and others have argued that Foucault's attention to the fictive relates closely to his notion of *expérience* (experience/ experiment), which includes both "**everyday**" institutions, practices, orders of thinking and feeling, as well as "**transformative**" experiences which show the contingency of **knowledge**, **power**, and **subjectivity** as they have been configured. The Latin root *expereri*—to try or to test—is linked to the Latin word for danger, *periculum***,** and O'Leary draws from the etymological connection that this experiential/experimental openness will be "**a perilous encounter with the world—or with the strange and the foreign**."[112] Butler argues that critique is a form of fiction, much as writing a critical history produces a fiction.[113] Flynn observes the role of 'experience' in his archaeological, genealogical, and ethical problematics, quoting Foucault's description of his **experience book**:

> "...to construct myself, and to invite others **to share in an experience of our modernity in such a way that we might come out of it transformed**. Which means that at the end of the book we would establish new relationships with the subject at issue: **the I who wrote the book and those who have read it would have a different relationship with madness**, with its contemporary status, and its history in the modern world"[114]

Having de-centered the author from the transformative capacity of the work, Foucault's fictions engage "**lines of fragility**" in the accepted order; as Foucault claimed in "Friendship as a Way of Life," we might follow these lines "to grasp those elements of

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[112] Timothy O'Leary, "Foucault, Experience, Literature": 5-25, *Foucault Studies*, No 5 (January 2008), 19

[113] Judith Butler, "What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue," The Political: Readings in Continental Philosophy, ed. Ingram (London: Basil Blackwell, 2002).

[114] Thomas Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault and Historical Reason, Vol. 2: A Poststructuralist Mapping of History*, University of Chicago Press, 2005, 227. Quoting Foucault, *Essential Works* Vol. 3: 242.

our present which are open to change...**that fiction** (in the broadest possible sense) **relates to reality by opening up virtual spaces** which allow us to engage in a potentially transformative relation with the world." Foucault calls his works "**experience books**" (rather than "truth books") to suggest this dual attempt to capture and to transform the background of the familiar. O'Leary writes:

> Hence, his books on madness, the prison and sexuality not only examine our forms of knowledge and our practices, they also try to transform them. But running alongside this dazzling use of the concept is **a more mundane sense in which experience is taken to mean the general, dominant background structures of thought, action and feeling** that prevail in a given culture at a given time.[115]

Structures of experience produce "certain ways of sensing, seeing, feeling an object," framing the sensible order through which one thinks and feels. Further, the French *faire une expérience* suggests "an **activity** of the individual, rather than something that happens to the individual" (ibid, 20). Explaining how experience can be at once "accepted background and transformative force," O'Leary gestures to the "outside" that haunts Foucault's texts: "**There is nothing constant or universal about this outside, however, since it is always relative to the dominant forms of thought and practice**" (ibid, 15). Though Foucault hypothesizes that a new order will emerge from the shifting ground of his historical moment, this new relation to the murmuring excess of imaginings—*fictions*, *histoires*—cannot be prefigured but "will have to be determined, or perhaps, experienced [*expérimenter*]."

The ground of historical change is not a matter of law but of scripts in a collective imaginary. Foucault asks: how might we retell this story along a different

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[115] Timothy O'Leary, "Foucault, Experience, Literature," *Foucault Studies*, No 5, pp. 5–25, January 2008.

thread, attuned to the non-discursive affective remnants of pain and trauma? Yet, our patterns and presuppositions are not so malleable that we could "change them like arbitrary axioms." Rather, one must be "**mindful that everything one perceives is evident only against a familiar and little-known horizon**" (EW3 448). Foucault continues that even the "most fragile instant has its roots"—an unexplored ground which frames and sifts it.

Chapter Three: Sympathy and the Limits of Identification

> The nation can grab people's hearts and imaginations because of its eudaimonistic connections (we might say): it is "**us**" and "**ours,**" and thus it enables, as Mazzini says, **a transition from narrower sympathies to more extensive sympathies**. — Martha Nussbaum (2013), 207

> This is love as empathy: I love you, and imagine not only that I can feel how you feel, but that I could feel your pain *for you.* But I want that feeling only insofar as I don't already have it; desire **maintains the difference** between the one who would 'become' in pain, and another who already 'is' in pain...**empathy remains a 'wish-feeling'**... — Sara Ahmed (2004), 30

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In my first chapter, I engaged recent feminist attention to Spinoza on the remediation of affect; while I find Deleuze-inspired "posthumanist" work of Braidotti, Sharp, and others compelling ontologically and meta-ethically,[116] I worry about the coherence of "joy" to navigate historical relations of power and domination, particularly given the tendency to implicitly frame joy from the perspective of historically marginalized groups. Distinct from "**joy**" as the intuition of eternal substance—blessedness—in the *Ethics*, my second chapter turned to Spinoza's political writings and—as Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens (1999) underscore—his social epistemology of "**constructive fictions**" in the

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[116] Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: To wards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Polity, 2002); Moira Gatens, "Feminism as "Password": Re-Thinking the "Possible" with Spinoza and Deleuze," 59-75, Hypatia, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2000); Hasana Sharp, "The Force of Ideas in Spinoza," *Political Theory* 35.6 (2007): 732-755, later *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization* (University of Chicago Press, 2011). Influential for this cutting-edge trajectory of feminist philosophy, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari write: "Affects are becomings. Spinoza asks: What can a body do? We call the *latitude* of a body the affects of which it is capable at a given degree of power" (*Thousand Plateaus,* tr. Massumi [Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1987], 256). See also Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, tr. Joughin (Zone, 1992[1968]) and *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2001[1988]).

unfinished *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (TIE).[117] Here, I explored resonances between what Spinoza and Foucault each call "**fictions**," which resist or reinforce patterns of feeling (often in service of the collective) and which, over time, work themselves as fragments into the background of the familiar; like memory, an image or an anecdote comes to stand for a person or place and, at first, holds such significance until it too fades. Fictions offer implicit guides, tools for coping with spontaneity which, following the psychologist Silvan Tomkins, I call **affect scripts**—narratives and habits of coping we learn often without knowing we have learned them, not inherently unexamined, though often followed with uncritical acceptance. This effortlessness helps us to function efficiently; yet some frequently-traveled scripts, in their seeming inevitability, act to naturalize histories of domination (e.g. *fear* of men in turbans at airports, *disgust* with non-normative families), as though feelings preceded historical relations of power as stable measures of merit. **Affect scripts exceed the individual**, bearing **transpersonal** and **trans-generational resonances** as **the felt register of power relations**; hence, Foucault engages affective phenomena by showing how the formative institutions and practices shaping those patterns of feeling are not inevitable.

How might we formulate this **ethical negotiation of fictions**, the modification of collective patterns of feeling, attuned to persisting histories of marginalization and disempowerment? In *Foucault and Fiction* (2009), Timothy O'Leary distinguishes two approaches to the relation of ethics and fiction. The first he associates with feminist philosopher Martha Nussbaum, who finds in literature a "supplementary component" to

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[117] Baruch Spinoza, "Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect," *Complete Works*: 3-30, trans. Shirley, (Hackett, 2002), 14.

moral reasoning; the realist novel presents an exercise in **imaginative identification**, a testing-ground of perspectives—a walk, so they say, in another's shoes—which cultivates "empathy and compassion in ways highly relevant to citizenship."[118] O'Leary attributes a second approach to Foucault and Deleuze, for whom fictions can "**pierce the veil** of our ordinary experience of the world and of ourselves," opened to modification through "an experimental engagement with one's own modes of behavior."[119] O'Leary's brief engagement with Nussbaum as a constructive foil to Foucault offers a rich starting-point for thinking about the role of fictions as a means of shifting collective patterns of feeling. Are 'fictions' the means by which we train the young (and/or delinquent) to be compassionate citizens? Or by 'fictions' do we imply the realization—akin to Foucault's shattering laughter at that Borges passage about the Chinese encyclopedia[120]—of desubjectivation, an arbitrariness in *all the familiar landmarks* of our thought?

Foucault troubles the ethical value of identification; his genealogies work to *undo* the fixity of binaries, grids, and other schema through which the subject has come to identify and understand itself. My fourth chapter turns to Foucault's explorations of the dynamics of **curiosity**—as a potentially-transformative engagement with difference—in its violent and caring dimensions, developing a Foucauldian affective ethics of curiosity-as-care. In this chapter, I critically engage Nussbaum's claim that literature serves to cultivate sympathy—a deep identification with those unlike oneself—following a sense

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[118] Martha Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (Beacon Press, 1997), 10.

[119] Timothy O'Leary, *Foucault and Fiction: The Experience Book* (Continuum, 2011), 139-141.

[120] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (Vintage, 1994[1966]), xv.

of shared humanity. Fictions can serve to **reinforce** or to **disrupt** the guiding norms and values of a community, and O'Leary distinguishes Nussbaum and Foucault respectively; yet, **Foucault**—and, I argue, Judith Butler—does not quite *oppose* Nussbaum but addresses **a meta-level question about identification—about the "we"—concerning its implicit maintenance of a constitutive outside,** as well as the nationalist resonances of this "we." Engaging Nussbaum's literary cultivation of sympathy as a constructive foil, my Foucauldian-Butlerian critique finds that **our identification is always far from complete**, and it is only when we recognize and honor the limits of what we do not understand in the experiences of others—the gap between one's sympathetic feelings and the lived experience of another's pain, **refusing to project** one's own **joys** and **sorrows** —that one can respond with an **affective-ethical orientation** appropriate to the **pluralism** of **political life**.

<div align="center">*</div>

Nussbaum's work on the emotions borrows from Aristotelian and Stoic views of emotions as *cognitive judgments* about our flourishing; distinct from "thoughtless natural energies," emotions express "**intelligent responses to the perception of value**" as they register contact with "external goods," appraising the world in terms of flourishing: one's own and that of those within one's "circle of concern."[121] Nussbaum distinguishes her view from the ancient Stoics, such as Seneca or Epictetus, by revaluing non-cognitive, cultural, and historical influences on emotions, as well as the dependency on "external

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[121] Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge UP, 2001), 1-2. Hereafter UT.

goods" the Stoics would have us overcome through reflection upon stable things (e.g. one's own virtue in relation to the macrocosm). She questions this extreme voluntarism of attention: "habit, attachment, and the sheer weight of events may frequently extract assent from us" without deliberation; furthermore, the peaceful state promised by deliberation (much like Spinoza's blessedness) offers a form of joy "that isn't really emotional" (UT 38-40). While she takes issue with this **extirpation of emotion,** Nussbaum **affirms the Stoic model for respecting the significance of emotional life,** in much the same way **Plato's banishment of poets** from his ideal city **recognizes the seriousness of the poet's affective pull:** "Plato...saw this clearly: epic and tragic poets lure their audience by presenting heroes who are not self-sufficient, and who therefore suffer deeply when calamity befalls" (53).

Reading the Stoic therapy of the passions and Plato's banishment of the poets against their stated conclusions, Nussbaum appeals to Walt Whitman to claim that the poet acts as "an arbiter of the diverse" in public discourse, "the equalizer of his age and his land" who perceives each life as an eternity unto itself.[122] While the "uneconomical activities of fancying and feeling" may seem at odds with practical concerns for the greater good, Nussbaum appeals to "the most distinguished **philosophical economists**," **Adam Smith** of the Scottish Enlightenment and, today, **Amartya Sen**, to claim that democratic equality demands the **cultivation of imagination as a *supplement* to rational judgments**, with impartiality rooted in the concrete effort of perspective-taking

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[122] Martha Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (Beacon Press, 1995), xiii. Hereafter PJ. Here, Nussbaum explicitly counters her colleague at the University of Chicago, Richard Posner, who holds that people are "rational maximizers of satisfactions" (PJ 54).

(PJ 3).

More than Stoicism, Nussbaum's thinking resonates with Smith's (arguably Neo-Stoic[123]) *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), which brings together the ancient cultivation of self-command with the concern among his contemporaries (e.g. Hume and Rousseau) of sympathy toward others.[124] Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* begins from the empirical fact of a fundamental human interest "in the fortune of others," that, when cultivated, can come to find the happiness of others necessary and their suffering painful (I.i.1). His figure of the "**impartial spectator**"—which few achieve—desires not only the praise of others but to live in ways worthy of that praise*,* balancing **sympathy** and **self-command** through exercises in perspective-taking. Especially powerful as such as exercise, Smith argues that **literature sensitizes us to lives different from our own**: "Our joy for the deliverance of those heroes of tragedy or romance who interest us, is as sincere as our grief for their distress..." (I.i.1). Nussbaum expands upon Smith to claim that literary works bear the task of expanding the moral imagination; humanizing narratives extend compassion to—not just the oppressed characters of a story but—people we meet who resemble these characters in reality.

In her discussion of literature's cultivation of moral sentiments, Nussbaum's choice of examples is compelling. Teaching Law and Literature at the University of

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[123] For instance: Norbert Waszek, "Two Concepts of Morality: A Distinction of Adam Smith's Ethics and its Stoic Origin, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (1984), pp. 591-606 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2709375>; Harold B. Jones, "Marcus Aurelius, the Stoic Ethic, and Adam Smith," Journal of Business Ethics, Vol. 95, No. 1 (August 2010), pp. 89-96 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40784940>

[124] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), ed. Hanley, intro. Sen (London: Penguin, 2010).

Chicago, Nussbaum uses **Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940),** which she finds especially resonant because it is set in Chicago and because it contextualizes Bigger's criminal act in broader crises of racism and poverty. Nussbaum finds literary works to be irreplaceable tools for educating future lawyers and judges, sensitizing them to the **realities** of individual lives they might **someday prosecute, defend, or judge**; at the University of Chicago, this means thinking outside the gates of a pristine campus to the surrounding blocks, the experiential context of "criminals" they will encounter, a "tragedy of social helplessness" which deforms "the emotional lives of the hated" (PJ 94). Discussing *Native Son* in a room of, as she puts it, mostly other Mary Daltons —"well-meaning, but grossly ignorant and undeveloped in sympathy, desirous of knowing what it is like to live [sic] the other side of 'the line', but unable or unwilling to carry that desire into action"—Nussbaum suggests that the imaginary space of the novel enables her (white) students to "**develop a knowledge of their ignorance**" (PJ 93). "The reader," Nussbaum claims, will be "inclined to mercy" given this understanding of "the world in which Bigger Thomas actually lives—with its institutional and legal barriers to mobility, with its racial estrangement and mutual fear and hate—this world, unlike the world of novel-reading, makes the novel-reader's empathetic individualizing stance unavailable across racial lines" (PJ 95):

> We cannot follow the novel without trying to see the world through Bigger's eyes. As we do so, we take on, at least to some extent, his emotions of rage and shame. On the other hand, we are also spectators. As spectators we recognize the inappropriateness of some of his emotions to their object...These emotions are all too plausible given his situation, and yet the novel shows their cruel and arbitrary social basis (PJ 94).

The "judicious spectator" cannot identify with Bigger's emotions; yet, this "unlikeness" inspires a *deeper* sympathy based on the recognition of our shared human capabilities for a flourishing life; **that Bigger "repels identification" becomes "the chief object of our concern,"** turning the (white) reader's attention to the structural and systemic factors denying Bigger's fulfillment of basic functions.[125] According to Nussbaum, the *deeply* sympathetic reader will recognize a "**deformation**" of Bigger's "choices...emotional and intellectual capacities" but, contextualizing these capacities in terms of his circumstances, this reader will feel *anger* at the "**terrible deprivation and racism" that "have made [Bigger] as he is**," as well as *hope* that these conditions might change (ibid). Nussbaum finds that the novel enables one to feel—for a time—with the joys and sufferings of others, such that one will be more compassionate toward lives different from one's own: "by identifying temporarily with the suffering of characters unlike oneself—one forms "a kind of **intimacy with the lives of people in different groups or classes**, something that would be hard to attain through social science data alone, given existing separations" (PE 290). Nussbaum distinguishes the *facile sympathy* **of thinking-one-understands** (e.g. Mary Dalton) from a less sentimental awareness of our common humanity, understanding that "circumstances form the psyche."[126] Rather than claiming another is "like" oneself, Nussbaum is after a *deeper* **sympathy** in which, recognizing the gaps between us, our

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[125] In "Women and Cultural Universals," (1999), Nussbaum articulates global justice away from preference-maximization to an Aristotelian conception of flourishing in which women and other marginalized groups must be provided at least the capabilities for a good life: health and bodily integrity, literacy, outlets for the senses, imagination, practical reasoning, etc. Without these capabilities, marginalized groups may come to internalize this second-class status, adapting their preferences and expectations to what they've been told they deserve.

[126] Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Belknap Press, 2013), 291. Hereafter PE.

shared humanity provides a commonality across differences. Repeating these claims more or less verbatim in *Political Emotions* (2013), Nussbaum deepens this sympathy by mediating emotion with the rational pursuit of justice; hence, feeling oneself at odds with Bigger's experiences, the reader will reflectively engage and attempt to come to terms with this difference, with care for the material conditions of vulnerability that shape Bigger's tragic experience.

Yet, we might ask, how are stories of pain and marginalization expressed and delimited through "complex relations of power"?[127] To the extent that Nussbaum considers the role of power in her cognitive theory of emotions, she orders and values expressions of affect according to a **liberal normative conception of justice**, i.e. **beyond aggression**, toward the well-being of the largest possible unit of the "we," the nation.[128] Claiming allegiance with Rawls' *Theory of Justice* (1971), **Nussbaum shifts the prevailing script of liberalism away from each citizen's rational autonomy to a public love for each in their vulnerabilities and capabilities**. Healthy psychosocial development requires opportunities to practice imaginative identification as well as the

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[127] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh Press, 2004), 22; *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006);*The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (hereafter cited as CP), Ahmed's phenomenological account of orientations to objects uses the terms 'emotion' and 'affect' interchangeably; she argues that orientations emerge over time through viscous affective relations between words and objects, in a circulating economy of feelings that accumulate and stick.

[128] Nussbaum lists three problems with nationalism: the imposition of "ritual performances" on minorities, "exclusionary values," an emphasis on "solidarity and homogeneity [such] that [it] threatens to eclipse the critical spirit" (PE 218-9).Yet, she finds the lack of national identity a greater concern and cites Aristotle's criticism of Plato's *Republic* that we cannot love all fellow citizens: "To make people care...you have to make them see the object of potential care as in some way 'theirs' and 'them'" (*Politics* 1262b15). This requires a sense of *mine*-ness without which we have only "watery motivation" (PE 219).

overcoming of "aggression with reparative efforts."[129] According to Nussbaum's

emotional "tool-kit" of liberalism, which both maintains the stability of political order

and questions that order when it fails its founding values, a "decent society" will protect

its citizens from **shame** through anti-discrimination and privacy laws, as it will also curb

laws based on **disgust**, which have historically taken root in homophobic, racist, ablest,

misogynist and other illiberal patterns of feeling toward limits and ambiguities.[130]

Through the arts, Nussbaum adds that **comedy mitigates the harms of disgust,** turning

the "messy smelly, uncomfortable body" into a site of shared laughter, sensitizing us to

human frailty and imperfection (PE 272). Framed by a **liberal** conception of justice

valuing inclusivity and equality, Nussbaum argues in *Political Emotions* (2013) as in

earlier work that some emotions are more **"worthy of being followed"** than others (ibid).

Accordingly, she diagnoses **shame** and **disgust** as ethically and politically toxic, erosive

of compassion.

Nussbaum describes emotions as human universals, the ground of our

commonality; rather than unthinking impulses, emotions are **cognitive judgments**

corresponding to one's relative flourishing in the world. Thus, she analyzes habits of

emotion as **improved through subjection to a normative model of healthy**

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[129] In *Upheavals of Thought* (2001), Nussbaum speculates that the infant's imperialistic desire comes up against the realization of its caretaker's independence: "a cause for furious anger," envy, shame, and guilt, as it also generates desire to incorporate the caregiver, i.e. "love." Morality arises from a "feeling of safety" in the "**mother's** nurturing embrace," encouraging the child to repair "damage with loving deeds" (UT 13, 210, 215-6). Nussbaum finds guilt more useful than shame, judging actions rather than the self; similarly, anger bears a constructive potential that is not shared by disgust.

[130] Martha Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law* (Princeton UP, 2004).

development that deems some emotions more productive than others. Yet, these claims about shame and disgust are framed by the historical associations to the degrading institutional treatment of "deviant" bodies and sexualities; **it is not, then, affects themselves** (capacities for feeling and responding, i.e. shame, interest, joy, anger) **but affect scripts** (socialized habits of feeling, the trans-generational sediment of power relations) which can be **productive or toxic.**

On a Foucauldian **approach to affect** and the transformative power of **fictions,** the concern is **not to make normative claims** (e.g. to curb aggression and promote compassion) **but to unwind the contingencies of toxic affect scripts,** the persistence of past oppressions. While Nussbaum returns to American founding ideals to describe the continual progress of freedom for various oppressed groups, a Foucauldian analysis questions the ease of applying a juridical model which, under the banner of liberty and equality, channeled illiberal feelings—intolerance, disgust, aggression—into **non-juridical administrative projects** and filed them under **feel-good headings** like hygiene and public health, the school and correctional facility. In *Frontiers of Justice* (2006), Nussbaum criticizes the social contract tradition—including Rawls—for excluding from the founding moment of justice people with disabilities, non-human animals, and the larger global community; yet she does not engage the messy social relations of power that shape the institutions of collective life. From Rawls' *Theory of Justice,* Nussbaum envisions **a pluralistic "we" beyond exclusion and stigma**; while she stands out in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy for taking seriously the value of emotions, their cultural mediation by images and stories, and their ethical and political remediation

through the arts, Nussbaum's cognitive theory of emotions overlooks the opacities of affect scripts, the murkiness of one's own feelings let alone the feelings of others. In Nussbaum's pluralist "we," joy and inclusion merge in knowledge of our shared humanity, having properly harnessed aggression, disgust, and other divisive emotions. In this sense, though vastly different from the Deleuzian feminists in her approach to reason, freedom, power, and the human relation to nature, Nussbaum shares with Rosi Braidotti, Hasana Sharp, and others a valuation of positive emotions as inherent goods.

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On the limits and relative transparency of sympathetic identification, Nussbaum diverges from Adam Smith. Nussbaum praises Smith for valuing—against the grain of the Western canon—compassion and other affective phenomena "with which we are, in a manner, passive" (LK 336). Her point of contention turns on erotic and romantic love, specifically Smith's claim that we cannot enter into the desire or love experienced by others (LK 340). Smith writes of love: "The imaginations of mankind, **not having acquired that particular turn, cannot enter into them**...All serious and strong expressions of [love] appear ridiculous to a third person" (I.ii.2). Here Smith considers the limits of identification; Nussbaum, taking issue with his comment about love's absurd appearance,[131] misses the claim that we never feel with others except "by representing to us what would be our own" response. Focusing on Smith's dismissive line about love, Nussbaum overlooks his point that some experiences remain **inaccessible** (or **only**

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[131]Nussbaum turns in reply to Dickens' *David Copperfield*: "there is, somehow, morality *in* the willingness to enter into that world of love...as a coherent movement of one and the same heart." Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford UP, 1992), 359.

imaginatively accessible) to the observer, and the observer's imagination often gets it **wrong.**[132]

But Nussbaum's ethics of the "realist novel" requires that these sympathies are not wrong, that they reflect **the *real* suffering of others**.[133] What follows from **sympathy demanding the truth of its feelings**? Resonant with Smith's claim that we cannot enter into the erotic lives of others, Ahmed (2004) finds that an ethical engagement with the "**sociality of pain**" demands recognition of pain's contingency and opacity—the "impossibility of fellow-feeling" with regard to that pain—as well as a "politics based not on the possibility that we might be reconciled, but on learning to live with the impossibility of reconciliation" (39). Ahmed insists that the recognition of a **gap** in understanding "sustains the very difference that it may seek to overcome: empathy remains a 'wish-feeling' in which subjects 'feel' something other than what another feels in the very moment of imagining they could feel what another feels" (30). Sympathetic identification, while sometimes transformative for the one who feels it, **risks misunderstanding and projection by mystifying the gaps in our capacity to feel what others feel**: gaps such as **pain**, which refuses full communication; gaps in **memory**; gaps produced by **shame** and its accompanying reduction of interest, retracting into the self.

Leading up to the one-year anniversary of the Sandy Hook massacre in a

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[132] Smith writes: "Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations" (I.i.1).

[133] Lester Hunt claims that the realist novel for Nussbaum describes "concrete reality as it really is...[akin to] the virtues of good journalism."   Lester H. Hunt, "Sentiment and Sympathy," 339-354, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 62, No. 4 (Autumn, 2004).

Connecticut elementary school, Newtown's First Selectman Pat Llodra asked sympathetic outsiders who might want to visit or send gifts to please stay away and allow families to grieve. MSNBC's Rachel Maddow contextualized this desire for privacy with the complications of interest in the suffering of others. Regarding Newtown, Maddow asks: "If you want to reach out to them, to try to help them, is there a way to do that without causing harm?"[134] This came shortly after the community lost a law suit with the Associated Press (AP) for rights to air the 911 tapes from inside the school; given the availability of transcripts as well as journalists' descriptions of the tapes, the desire to release **the actual audio exemplifies a violent curiosity complicating interest in the pain of others**.[135] While different that the AP's cruelty in acquiring the tapes, this projective identification shares with violent curiosity a lack of sensitivity to its object, enacted by *not* asking questions. Images of unused toys and gifts by the stockpile draw forth the failure of sympathetic imagining, and Maddow draws the lesson that "your need to *express yourself* in reaction to this tragedy is not more important than the material

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[134] Maddow highlights an outlet for this interest, mysandyhookfamily.org, which allows visitors to click on the name of each victim, where the families offer personal anecdotes and pictures. For instance: six-year-old Ben loved dinosaurs, lighthouses, and anxiously awaited the loss of his first tooth; seven-year-old Grace, an aspiring artist and inseparable best friend of her brother, Jack; forty-seven-year-old Dawn, the school principal, had two daughters at a young age and raised them on her own while also building her career; six-year-old Dylan found lightning "beautiful" but feared the sound of thunder. Some pages read: "Thank you for respecting our privacy." Francine Lobis-Wheeler, mother of six-year-old Ben, explains that the site offers space for sympathetic attention to the victims and their families that does not encroach on that pain: "We are in control of the information that is released to the public. *The Rachel Maddow Show*, MSNBC, "Sandy Hook parents strive to 'be loving,'" 12/10/2013, <http://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show/watch/sandy-hook-parents-strive-to-be-loving-86960195795>

[135] NBC and ABC refused to air the tapes; CBS and FOX aired parts. Katherine Fung, "Networks Grapple With Whether To Play Newtown 911 Tapes On Air," *The Huffington Post,* 12/4/2013, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/04/newtown-911-tapes-media_n_4384440.html>

effect that your expression may have on the people still surviving this."[136] In Ahmed's words, the difficulty of regarding the pain of others ethically follows from its opacity; one can sit with another person, wipe the sweat from his or her brow, touch the place where it hurts, and yet one can only observe that pain insofar as it surfaces on the body; regarding pain, "**I must act about that which I cannot know, rather than act insofar as I know**" (2004, 31).

Nussbaum's *deeper* sympathy can do justice to Sandy Hook insofar as her position maintains the distance between one's own feelings and the pain of others; yet, in the transparency of sympathy as a cognitive judgment, Nussbaum's ethics and politics cover over the non-discursive, partially opaque, fragmented and partial nature of affect scripts. Again, Nussbaum is undoubtedly one of the most influential feminist philosophers writing today, and her valuation of emotion, animality, vulnerability, disability, and other historically excluded or degraded terms stands out in the Anglo-American contemporary scene. **Nussbaum is right that novels bring us to identify** with characters unlike ourselves; yet, **other novels bring us to the limits of our capacity to feel with others**; and some poems offer nationalist sites of identification while others disrupt our sense of language and meaning as well as of social norms. The efficacy of these various strategies can only be determined in concrete historical relations of power. Shifting away from Nussbaum's cognitive theory of emotion, the cultivation of sympathy and its mediation by the stability of reason, I turn to Foucault and Butler to emphasize the

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[136] *The Rachel Maddow Show*, MSNBC, "No news value to Newtown 911 tapes," 12/4/13 <http://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show/watch/maddow-no-news-value-to-newtown-911-tapes-80747587870>

limits of identification and the beginning of a response ethics in this dis-identification.

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In her rather notorious critique of Judith Butler, "The Professor of Parody" (*The New Republic*, 1999), Martha Nussbaum dismisses as fatalistic and relativistic the tendency of "French postmodernists" such as Foucault to claim "that we are **prisoners of an all-enveloping structure of power, and that real-life reform movements usually end up serving power in new and insidious ways**."[137] Relativistic because it questions the progress-narrative of social reforms, fatalistic because it finds resistance futile, Nussbaum argues that Butler's "Foucauldian" critique of **real-life** reforms finds resistance futile and, ultimately, fails feminism: it does not help women who are hungry, abused, raped, or marginalized, turning instead to aesthetic questions of self-cultivation and style (which Nussbaum takes to be distinct from and opposed to **real-life suffering**). Butler's early works argued that gender is performatively-constituted: by speaking, dressing, and otherwise *doing* gender, we posit gender as our *being*; one can never get outside cultural norms of intelligibility, but one can subvert these norms through parodic acts (famously, drag).[138] Nussbaum finds Butler's early work not only *unoriginal* (feminist theorists have claimed gender is a powerful social construct for over a century) but badly written and

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[137] Martha Nussbaum, "The Professor of Parody: The Hip Defeatism of Judith Butler" (*The New Republic,* 1999), <http://www.tnr.com/index.html> Nussbaum skips over *Subjects of Desire* (1987), which may account for the absence of Hegel—certainly as influential on Butler as Foucault (whom Nussbaum mentions six times) or Freud (three times). Butler's use of dense continental philosophers appears to Nussbaum as sophistry and intimidation; yet, her failure to engage the figures Butler addresses—while evaluating their worth for social justice—seems to me as sophistical as Butler's jargon.

[138] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 1990); *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (Routledge, 1993).

politically empty because it lacks normative parameters for parodic subversion. Butler—following **Foucault**, as Nussbaum mentions numerous times[139]—**valorizes subversion without "a normative theory of social justice and human dignity.**" This absence of a normative theory leaves "a void...at the heart of Butler's notion of politics," which may look "sexy" to "talented young women" who would rather remain "on the symbolic level, making subversive gestures at power through speech and gesture" than actually engage problems "**real**" women face. Nussbaum concludes that Butler and other feminists following Foucault fail to create "lasting changes" in the world and "therefore find comfort" in the **subversive use of words**.

Sara Ahmed (2004) cites Nussbaum's evocations of "**the suffering of ordinary women**" as a prime example of feminist theory's tendency to **fetishize shared pain** toward the possibility of **identification**. In the 1990s, Wendy Brown provocatively argued that feminist discourses have tended to locate a "we"—a collective identity—in their shared subordination; replying to Nussbaum, Ahmed cites Brown to claim that the invocation of *real* women's suffering fetishizes shared pain as the site of political organizing and, in so doing, abstracts from power relations shaping the lives of differently situated women. The invocation of *real* women's suffering to ground feminism "cuts the wound off from the complex histories of 'being hurt' or injured, histories which cannot be gathered together under a singular concept such as patriarchy";

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[139] Nussbaum skips over Butler's first work, *Subjects of Desire* (1987), which may account for the absence of Hegel—certainly as influential on Butler as Foucault (whom Nussbaum mentions six times) or Freud (three times). According to Nussbaum, Butler's use of dense continental philosophers is exemplary of her sophistry, a tactic intimidation to bully the reader into agreement; yet, Nussbaum's own failure to engage the philosophical figures and ideas Butler addresses—while evaluating their worth for social justice—seems to me more sophistical than Butler's jargon in *Gender Trouble*.

Nussbaum presumes "that feminism *could* simply represent the suffering of ordinary women, which could then be the foundation of political action, without the work of translation" (Ahmed 2004, 173). This work of translation—arguably the work of Foucauldian genealogy—is no small feat; affect may well be universal of sentient interactive beings, but historical perspectives mediate their objects, expressions, and their processes of remediation. To be sure, it cannot be overstated that Nussbaum's attention to vulnerabilities and material conditions for choice has **enriched liberal political theory**; yet, in her insistence upon "real" (i.e. thinkable) improvements within a normative framework of human dignity, Nussbaum dismisses the project of thinking at the limits of the frame, the limits of identification.

While Nussbaum rightly notes that Butler advances "a highly contestable interpretation" of Foucault, to call Butler's work a narcissistic turn from social justice, or to say that it "collaborates with evil" in theorizing the "immovability of power," is **to silence the possibility of thinking outside reforms to the present order.** *Contra* Nussbaum's 1999 claim that Butler offers only "fancy words on paper," at stake for Butler is "the 18 year old guy in Maine" attacked for the *swish* of his walk: "The question that community has to deal with and the entire media that covered this event was: **how could it be that somebody's gait, that somebody's style of walking could engender the desire to kill that person?**"[140] Butler (2002) implicitly replies to Nussbaum: "One does not drive to the limits for a thrill experience, or because limits are dangerous and

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[140] Astra Taylor, dir., *Examined Life* (2008)

sexy...[but] because one has already run up against **a crisis within the epistemological field** in which one lives."[141]

Especially during the fifteen years since Nussbaum's 1999 critique, Butler's work 1) has been all-the-more concretely concerned with social justice and 2) offers an implicit counter-critique to Nussbaum regarding emotion, interest, identification, and the limits of transparent self-understanding (let alone comprehension of others). Some of that work addresses the "selective and differential framing of violence" in popular media, arguing that our interpretive schemas function as operations of power to determine which lives can be recognized and collectively grieved.[142] Asking "When is Life Grievable?" in the midst of U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and decades of bloodshed between Israel and Palestine, Butler finds that **our very capacity to feel horror** at the suffering of others is shaped by **"elaborate social interpretations" which dispose us to feel and to perceive** in contingent ways:

> "Affect depends upon social supports for feeling: we come to feel only in relation to a perceivable loss, one that depends on social structures of perception; and we can only feel and claim affect as our own on the condition that we have already been inscribed in a circuit of social affect" (FW 50).

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[141] Judith Butler, "What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue" (2002). <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0806/butler/en>

[142] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (Verso, 2010), 1-6. Hereafter cited as FW.

Systems of interpretation, narratives, networks of norms and habits shape one's capacities to feel with (let alone respond to) the pain of others, and one becomes response-able by **engaging these inherited frames and scripts** in their seeming transparency.[143]

Contesting Nussbaum's ever-expanding identification of the "we", Butler problematizes its coherence in ethics and politics, quoting Adriana Cavarero on the seeming *intrinsic morality* **of pronouns**: "The **we** is always positive, the **plural you** is a possible ally, the **they** has the face of an antagonist, the **I** is unseemly, and the **you** is, of course, superfluous" (GA 32). Cavarero argues that the "you"—the exposure of one's non-substitutable singularity to others—precedes the "impersonal perspective of the norm" by which the self is exchangeable, substitutable, judged according to various terms of cultural intelligibility (GA 34-3). Building upon Cavarero's attention to the "you," Butler appropriates from psychoanalytic theories of primary trauma and the unconscious as well as from Emmanuel Levinas' response ethics to claim that encountering the lives of others **in their vulnerable singularity** can shift the affective filter through which those others are viewed, while also drawing attention to the presence of interpretive matrices at work in our feelings about others. Butler shifts 'responsibility' from the traditional sense—an ability to give an account of oneself—to a sense of **one's own foreignness and opacity** which is in fact "**the source of [one's] ethical connection with**

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[143] Simone de Beauvoir wrote that Man views "his body as a direct and normal connection with the world, which he believes he apprehends objectively," whereas it is often said of Woman that "she thinks with her glands." Introduction to *The Second Sex* (1949), trans. Parshley <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/2nd-sex/introduction.htm>. From a feminist perspective, we might ask of Nussbaum's cognitive theory of emotion: How has one's relative authority within networks of power shaped the confidence of one's judgment that one's emotions accurately reflect the way things are? Historical relations of power are intimately related to forms of knowledge, whether through access to texts (or the lack thereof), the production and circulation of stereotypes, the delimitation of the canon.

others," a response-ability that cannot itself be thought apart from the Other and the scene of address (GA 81-2).

Distinct from Nussbaum's claim that literature expands our capacity to sympathize with others, **Butlerian recognition of one's own opacity builds humility and generosity toward others**; her response ethics begins with bodies *in media res*, in relation to which our accounts of ourselves are "partial, haunted by that for which I can devise no definitive story" (GA 39). The 'I' can never tell the story of its own emergence, "since the conditions of formation are not always recuperable and knowable, even as they live on, enigmatically, **in the impulses that are our own**."[144] Along the same lines, queer theorist Sara Ahmed's writes of Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* that Clarissa—the unhappy housewife—and Septimus—the traumatized war veteran—have no access to one other's pain; **yet, in their proximity, their worlds connect through "the very jolt of unhappiness," the "ripple effects" of suffering beyond self-containment**. Ahmed describes Clarissa's encounter with this spectacle of suffering: "...he appears to be a madman, at the edge of respectable sociality, a spectacle. To encounter him on the street, you would not know the story behind his suffering. To be near to suffering does not necessarily bring suffering near."[145] The problem of our interest in the lives of others rests not primarily on our capacity for sympathy but on **our willingness to engage the limits**

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[144] Judith Butler, *Giving An Account of Oneself* (Fordham UP, 2005), 134. Hereafter GA. To view the self as fundamentally relational and, at times, **dispossessed** of itself might seem to make one less than morally responsible; yet, Butler claims that this failure generates "another ethical disposition in the place of a full and satisfying notion of narrative accountability" (GA 40).

[145] Sara Ahmed, "Killing Joy: Feminism and the History of Happiness," *Signs,* Vol. 35, No. 3 (Spring 2010), pp. 571-594 Published by: The University of Chicago Press <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/648513> 586.

of our own constructed bearings, the frames and scripts through which we attempt, fallibly, to persist and to connect. As Ahmed writes: "The sorrow of the stranger" does not teach us what it is like to be a stranger, a wretch, an outcast; yet, engaging these limits, we might return to ourselves **estranged** and **transformed**; it is in **the transmission of Septimus's suffering, his proximate bodily vulnerability,** that Clarissa self-reflexively comes to feel ill-at-ease. Resonant with Ahmed's reading of Woolf, a **strange "we"** animates Butler's ethics in shared dispossession: a fallible "we" which turns reflexively inward to the interpretive frames through which it has come to comprehend itself. In the following chapter, I supplement Butler's response ethics with Foucault's analysis of interest—particularly curiosity—in its violent and caring dimensions.

Lauren Guilmette

Chapter Four: Curiosity-as-Care—

Foucault, Butler, and the Ethics of the Will-to-Know

"As for what motivated me, it is quite simple; I would hope that in the eyes of some people it might be sufficient in itself. It was curiosity—the only kind of curiosity, in any case, that is worth acting upon with a degree of obstinacy: not the curiosity that seeks to assimilate what it is proper for one to know, but that which enables one to get free of oneself." — Michel Foucault (1984)[146]

"The world's definitions are one thing and the life one actually lives is quite another. One cannot allow oneself, nor can one's family, friends, or lovers—to say nothing of one's children—to live according to the world's definitions: one must find a way, perpetually, to be stronger and better than that." — James Baldwin (1985), epigraph to Janet Mock's *Redefining Realness* (2014)[147]

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In a June 2012 conversation with Isis King (the first trans* woman to compete on America's Next Top Model), Janet Mock makes a striking claim about the **ethics** of **curiosity**. She describes conference panels and everyday conversations in which people *read* her as a trans* woman of color and ask questions, questions affectively tinged with disgust, fear, discomfort with ambiguity; Mock says: "**They're curious, and curiosity is the first step to understanding someone**."[148] Mock's response to treat discomfort and ignorance as expressions of *curiosity* is gracious and brave. While I find it problematic to suggest an obligation on the part of marginalized groups to teach privileged groups about

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[146] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume Two: The Uses of Pleasure,* trans. Hurley (Vintage, 1990[1984]), 8.

[147] James Baldwin, *The Evidence of Things Not Seen,* Forward by Derrick Bell & Janet Dewart Bell (Henry Holt & Co, 1995[1985]), 86. Janet Mock, *Redefining Realness: My Path to Identity, Love & So Much More* (Atria, 2014), 13.

[148] "A Conversation with Isis King and Janet Mock," June 2012 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rk2U0Lbv7g> I use "trans*" to signify transgender and transsexuality; the asterisk bears a silence. While "transsexual" signifies reassignment surgery and transgender suggests gender performance more broadly, I find that listening for this distinction tends to a toxic curiosity, seeking knowledge about sex organs that distracts from cultural and economic issues at stake.

themselves—to use expressions of ignorance as teachable moments—I also find that

Mock's *patience* with 'the curious' is a virtue; **virtue in the critical register** described by

Michel Foucault in his 1978 lecture "What is Critique?": not compliance with but a

critical relation to established norms, the work of intervening on patterns of thinking and

feeling.[149] Regarding that lecture, Judith Butler claims that critique is a form of fiction—a

site of retelling, reframing, resistance within the discursive terms of power-knowledge

"**without assuming that there is a source for resistance that is housed in the subject**

or maintained in some foundational mode."[150]

This chapter critically engages Judith Butler's 1990 critique of Foucault's edited

volume, *Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth*

Century French Hermaphrodite (1978/1980),[151] for failing to meet the rigor of *History of*

Sexuality Volume One (1976)*,*[152] romanticizing a pre-discursive emancipatory

heterogeneity that his critique of the repressive hypothesis was supposed to deny. Butler's

early critique, in its emphasis on law and discourse, **misses the historical specificity of**

biopower and the non-discursive operations of affect—especially, of curiosity—at

stake in Foucault's account. I find that Butler's recent works—*Precarious Life* (2004),

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[149] Butler, "What is Critique?: An Essay in Foucault's Virtue" (2002) <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0806/butler/en>; Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" *Essential Works: Ethics,* ed. Rabinow (The New Press, 1998); Foucault, "What is Critique?" in *The Politics of Truth*, eds. Lotringer & Hochroth, (Semiotext(e), 1997), lecture to the French Society of Philosophy, May 1978, published in *Bulletin de la Société française de la philosophie* 84:2 (1990) 35-63; 21.

[150] Judith Butler, "What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue," The Political: Readings in Continental Philosophy, ed. Ingram (London: Basil Blackwell, 2002).

[151] Michel Foucault, ed., *Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite*, trans. McDougall (Vintage, 1980). Hereafter cited HB.

[152] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume One: The Will to Knowledge*, trans. Hurley (Vintage 1990[1976]). Hereafter cited as HS1.

Frames of War (2010), *Dispossession* (2013)—resonate with Foucault's ethical project as explorations of the affective framing of knowledge; indeed, I wonder how Butler might approach *Herculine Barbin* two decades later, through thematics of **violence** and **vulnerability** rather than **sex** and **gender.** Yet, the early Butler, committed to interrogating the Anglo-American sex/gender distinction and emphasizing a limited reading of the "repressive hypothesis," **misses the ethics of curiosity** to which Foucault (re)turns in the late 1970s, following his 1977 return to the archives of *History of Madness* (1961). **I expand Butler's recent response ethics to include Foucault's insights into the curious and caring affective dynamics of interest in others**, and I develop these Foucauldian and Butlerian insights through recent interviews with trans* women of color—Janet Mock, Laverne Cox, Carmen Carrera, Isis King—**as they negotiate the violence and transformative potential of curiosity**.

Tensions emerge in a Foucauldian interpretation of Mock's activism; on a cursory read, Mock's 2014 memoir,[153] particularly her insistence on **telling one's story,** falls into **the trap of the repressive hypothesis** which Foucault criticizes in *History of Sexuality One* (1976): the belief that power exists in a negative relation to sexuality, a nay-saying constraint that "silences" or "represses" desire, against which one must declare one's sex as one's truth. Foucault counters that power **incites the ritual compulsion** "to articulate [one's] sexual peculiarity," which is "so deeply ingrained in us that we no longer perceive

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[153] Janet Mock's *Redefining Realness* (2014) recounts her adolescent transition, her experiences with sex work to fund hormones and surgery, and her move from Hawaii to New York, where she could easily "pass" as a cisgendered woman. Against a reading of Mock's narrative as one of one's sex as one's truth, we might read *Redefining Realness* as an effort to shift the affective fabric of a given reality—to deconstruct what it means to "pass" as a "real" woman, to redefine that reality.

the effect of a power that constrains us; on the contrary, it seems to us that truth, lodged

in our most secret nature, 'demands' only to surface" (HS1 61-2). Do LGBT coming-out

narratives, then, mimic the confessional? Tim R. Johnston argues that coming-out

narrative operates on different register of truth from those "truths"—fictions of biopower

—which trans* people must reiterate to access "the material means of transitioning."[154]

Johnston turns to Foucault's later writings on "fearless speech" (*parrhesia*) and defends

coming-out as a different game of truth, one which externalizes deeply held convictions,

particularly those which put **the speaking subject at risk** (ibid). I follow Johnston's

reading of Foucault against the grain of the over-cited "repressive hypothesis"—as well

as his insistence that one may speak of one's own experiences "fearlessly"—but **my own**

account shifts the emphasis from "speech" to "affect," specifically to the framing

curiosity with which one approaches personal revelations of struggle. From a

Foucauldian perspective, we may worry that this emphasis on marginalized speech fails

to acknowledge and **disrupt "the inquisitorial roots of biopower's empiricist**

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[154] Tim R. Johnston, Transgressive Translations: Parrhesia and the Politics of Being Understood: 84-97 philoSOPHIA, Vol 3, No 1, Winter 2013, 89 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/phi/summary/v003/3.1.johnston.html>. Johnston engages Julia Serano's 2007 contestation of "performativity" for its failure to speak to "wrestling with the inexplicable feeling that I should be female." While Johnston defends performativity, he turns to *parrhesia* to do "justice to the strength of our internal convictions." This distinction mirrors Foucault's parrhesiatic and performative utterances (92-3). Foucault, *Government of Self and Others: Lectures, Collège de France, 1982–83* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 65-6.

methods," the complex curiosity animating the desire to hear and understand.[155] When we read Foucault's *Sexuality One* too narrowly through the critique of the "repressive hypothesis"—as I argue in what follows that Judith Butler does in *Gender Trouble* (1990), we miss **the middle-ranges of agency** to which his genealogies of affect and power address themselves, as well as the **possibility of shifting these patterns and relations** by engaging their contingencies.

Thus, we might note Mock's own framing of her narrative, as when she insists her time as a sex worker in high school is not "a confessional matter," disputing the shamefulness surrounding poor and marginalized people who use their bodies— sometimes their only available asset—to support themselves; **the object of shame** is more appropriately, as she writes, "**a culture that exiles, stigmatizes and criminalizes those engaged in underground economies like sex work as a means to move past struggle to survival**."[156] Johnston's Foucauldian defense of coming-out is eloquent and laudable, yet, it seems to me Janet Mock's writing and activism to "redefine realness" does both: it falls into the repressive hypothesis as it also intervenes (via Twitter, Tumblr, and other social media outlets) on habits of curiosity, shifting away from the transphobic

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[155] Concerning Foucault's involvement with the GIP (whose anti-prison efforts coincided with the revised reprinting of *History of Madness* in 1972), some (e.g. Spivak) have argued for the limitations of these efforts, as French intellectuals *spoke for others*. Yet, Huffer challenges the transparency of speaking for oneself, claiming this empirical inquiry finds its historical roots in the power-knowledge relations of the Inquisition, betraying silence by making it speak. Lynne Huffer, "'One of the Black Boxes of Our Life': *History of Madness* and the GIP Counter-Archive" (forthcoming in a volume on Foucault's Anti-Prison Activism). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?": 120-30, *Wedge* 7/8 (1985) <http://postcolonialstudies.emory.edu/gayatri-chakravorty-spivak/#ixzz2yELFauci>

[156] Janet Mock, Writings and Reflections: "My Experiences as a Young Trans Woman Engaged in Survival Sex Work," January 30, 2014 <http://janetmock.com/2014/01/30/janet-mock-sex-work-experiences/>

cultural fixation with genitalia and toward the persistence of violence, harassment, discrimination against trans* people. **Mock thus attempts to shift curiosity about trans* lives from anxieties about bodily ambiguity** (rooted in a desire to maintain one's familiar bearings of what it means to be sexed and gendered), **to what Foucault would call curiosity-as-care:** interest in how we might transform the toxic affect scripts and framing fictions that have historically labelled trans* lives—in Butler's words—ungrievable.

<center>*</center>

Why curiosity? Maligned in the history of philosophy, **curiosity has long been the inquisitive, nosy little sister to wonder's awestruck calm.** Plato and Aristotle claimed that philosophy begins in **wonder**, and Descartes wrote in *The Passions of the Soul* (1649) that **wonder** is the first of all the passions: an experience of the limits of one's comprehension accompanied by a desire to understand.[157] "Wonder" originates from the Old English "wundor," signifying something marvelous;"[158] it tends to accompany awe where "curiosity," interested in particulars, seeks after secrets and gory details and accompanies condescension, even disgust. Curiosity finds its root in the Latin *curiosus,* an etymology suggesting care and diligence but which, in its medieval and modern incantations, has been eclipsed as nosiness and impatient prying, mediated by connotations of 'curiosity shops'—collections of quirky objects on display. Curiosity

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[157] Plato, *Theatetus* 155d2; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A2, 982b11; Descartes, *On The Passions of the Soul* (1649), Art. 53.

[158] *Online Etymology Dictionary.* Douglas Harper, Historian. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/wonder>.

marks an engagement with difference—that with which "we" do not identify, whoever this "we" might be.

Unlike sympathy or empathy, which find their grounding in identification, curiosity invests in that with which we do **not** identify, arising as a mode of **interest** in encounters with **difference and ambiguity**. In this moment of instability, the curious gaze might fit its new object **into pre-existing frames**, patterns, pathologies, or this curiosity might become transformative, opening the sedimented background of the familiar. Thus, in his Preface to *Sexuality Two*, Foucault writes that curiosity has been central to his work, **negatively** through his attention to **the cruel excesses of the medical-moral gaze**, but also **positively** as an unsettling and potentially transformative mode of attention which Foucault calls *curiosity-as-care*—"the care one takes of what exists and what might exist; a sharpened sense of reality, but one that is never immobilized before it; a readiness to find what surrounds us strange."[159] For Foucault, this curiosity extends to those judged and forgotten by history, attending to **what is silenced under the weight of the present**, a "**curiosity which enables one to get free of oneself**."[160]

Exemplary of this curious attunement, I engage Foucault's unfinished project in the years following the first *History of Sexuality* (1976), preceding his explorations of Greco-Roman antiquity. In the late 1970s, Foucault produced a prefatory essay and a single volume of what he titled *Parallel Lives* after those ancient biographies of the same

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[159] Michel Foucault, "The Masked Philosopher" (1980), *Essential Works: Ethics* (EW1), ed. Paul Rabinow (The New Press, 1997), 325

[160] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume Two: The Uses of Pleasure,* trans. Hurley (Vintage, 1990[1984]), p. 8.

name, such as Plutarch's pairings of famous Romans and Greeks to study the influence of virtue on destiny, such as Theseus and Romulus, Alexander and Caesar, Demosthenes and Cicero—the parallel trajectories of great men. By contrast, Foucault's 1977 preface to *Parallel Lives*, "**Lives of Infamous Men**," considered those that "no longer exist except through the terrible words that were destined to render them forever unworthy of the memory of men."[161] These "poem-lives" barely murmur; enigmatic, their records tell only of their collisions with power, their casting out**. Infamy,** a euphemism for what the Modern Age calls "homosexuality," **recalls the liminal figures against whom** the Classical Age—from Descartes to the Enlightenment—**defended and defined itself**. Returning to the archives of Parisian hospitals where he researched his first major work, *History of Madness* (1961), Foucault wrote "Lives of Infamous Men" about **the curiosity drawing him to those judged, scorned, and forgotten by history**, and the **affective transformation of this engagement.** The only realized volume of the *Parallel Lives*, *Herculine Barbin* (1978/80), collected the memoirs, medical and legal documents of a female-identified intersex adolescent who went by Alexina until s/he found h/erself the object of medical-moral inquiry.

Foucault's *Parallel Lives* project has been **overshadowed by Judith Butler's 1990 critique,** widely accepted in an academy where students are far more likely to read

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[161] Michel Foucault, "Lives of Infamous Men" (1977): 157-175, *Essential Works: Power* (EW3), ed. James Faubion (The New Press, 1998), 164

Gender Trouble than *Herculine Barbin*.[162] Butler finds that Foucault romanticizes an emancipatory ideal of *bodies and pleasures* beyond or beneath the discursive register, a "**happy limbo of non-identity**" in which Alexina's pleasures need not correspond to a 'sex' for their meaning: "**here we see Foucault's sentimental indulgence in the very emancipatory discourse his analysis in *The* [*sic*] *History of Sexuality* was meant to displace**"; one would be better served, Butler insists, to turn to *Sexuality One*.[163] Yet, this "**law**," blurring the legal and the psychoanalytic, is difficult to find in Foucault's texts; similarly absent, "**biopower**" is not found in *Gender Trouble*.

The early Butler appeals to **an older juridical model of power** and thus misses the historical specificity of Alexina's moment, **the 1860s, "perched the edge of an emerging dispositif"** in which the curious medical-moral gaze sought to anatomize bodies, psyches, and sexualities.[164] Earlier, hermaphrodites could pick a gender at the time of marriage as long as they kept "the sex they had then declared until the end of their lives"; it was changing one's mind, an impurity of will and "not the anatomical mixture of

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[162] Thus, Robyn Wiegman describes Butler's engagement with Herculine Barbin and "the failure of the body to function as gender's founding alibi" without noting the critique of Foucault, and M.E. Bailey writes of Butler, "her reading of Foucault's Herculine Barbin is critical and exhaustive. I consent to it. The History of Sexuality One offers a more wide-angle-lens view of the construction of sexuality." Robyn Wiegman, "Object Lessons: Men, Masculinity, and the Sign": 355-388, *Signs,* Vol. 26, No. 2 (2001); Bailey, "Foucauldian feminism: contesting bodies, sexuality, and identity": 99-122. *Up Against Foucault: Some Tensions between Foucault and Feminism*, ed. Ramazanoglu (Routledge, 1993).

[163] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 1990), 123. Hereafter cited as GT. Here, Butler claims that Foucault resembles Marcuse's pre-discursive *eros*—repressed by civilization—or even Rousseau's binary of "an artificial cultural law that reduces and distorts... a natural heterogeneity" (GT 129).

[164] Colin Koopman was recently among the first to respond to Butler's critique of *Herculine Barbin*; he notes that Butler takes Foucault's descriptions as normative claims and nostalgic laments, obscuring the historical specificity of Alexina's life, "perched on the edge of an emerging dispositif." Colin Koopman, "The Gain of History in Genealogy: A Reply to Butler's Reading of Foucault's Reading of Herculine Barbin," Presented at SPEP, October 2013, Eugene, OR.

Lauren Guilmette

the sexes," that led to the condemnations of hermaphrodites in Medieval and Renaissance-era France (HB viii). By contrast, the subject of these new techniques of power is not the juridical subject of law, not the "guilty" moral monster but **the biopolitical patient of psychiatry and medicine**, the "Tom Thumb" whose symptoms fall on a grid of abnormality.[165] This figure **emerged in sphere of law with the "motiveless crime" but could not be contained there**, as this "absolutely new object" of instinct—the modern vector of abnormality—became intelligible only under the pathologies of psychiatric power and its biopolitical siblings, psychoanalysis and eugenics.[166] Rather than a marginal or sentimental project, as Butler suggests, I read *Herculine Barbin* as continuous with *Madness* and *Sexuality One* in its concern with the affective framing of *la volonté de savoir*, as Foucault playfully and pointedly names the interest animating knowledge. Following *History of Madness*, the desire to understand cannot be separated from the struggle of **reason** for mastery over **unreason**, from relations of power proliferating discourses and maintaining institutions.

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Butler admires Foucault's attention to practices—to the deployment of sexuality within a given regime of power-knowledge—through tactics and strategies, techniques, networks, interchanges; power signifies **enabling and constraining networks of activity**, not

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[165] Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France* (1974-5), trans. Burchell (Picador, 2004), 114, 120-130. Hereafter cited as AB.

[166] AB 114, 130, 132, 168; psychiatry created a new domain of modern objects: "impulses, drives, tendencies, inclinations, and automatisms," which differ from the "passions" of the classical age because they do not fall under a representation but operate on a "dynamic in relation to which representations, passions, and affects have secondary, derivative, or subordinate status" (AB 131).

something *possessed* by the powerful but, rather, a "**moving substrate of force relations**" deployed from below and above. *Sexuality One* attends primarily to discourse as the realm in which "power and knowledge are joined together," a fractured realm of stories we tell about ourselves and the operations these stories conceal. One such story we tell about ourselves, the "repressive hypothesis," claims we must seek our social-sexual liberation through exposing what has been *silenced* by our prudish Victorian morality; yet, Foucault finds this move toward exposure is complicated by the incitement to discourse, **further entrenching ourselves under the curious gaze**—the biopolitical desire to pin down every anomaly, every deviation on a grid. *Yet,* discourses and silences are tactically polyvalent; what was once an instrument of power can become "a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (HS 101). We might think here of the redeployment of words, as when diagnostics of perversity in the nineteenth century produced the reverse-discourse of homosexuality, in which a disparaging word for a marginalized identity-category came to speak in its own name. This resistance is not free of power, not separate from power, but a redeployment, reconfiguration, a subversive *performance* of what was there.

Applying this account of power and resistance to the sex/gender distinction in Anglo-American feminist theory, Butler (1990) asks: "What is the peculiar alliance presumed to exist between a system of **compulsory heterosexuality**[167] and the discursive categories that establish the identity concepts of **sex**?" (GT 24). Always discursive, sex is

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[167] Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" *Blood, Bread, and Poetry* (New York: Norton Paperback, 1994). Recently re-used in Kristen Schilt & Laurel Westbrook. "Doing Gender, Doing Heteronormativity: 'Gender Normals,' Transgender People, and the Social Maintenance of Heterosexuality." *Gender & Society* Vol. 23, no. 4 (2009): 440.

"constructed through a historically specific mode of sexuality," ***produced* rather than discovered and deemed 'natural' "as part of a strategy to conceal and, hence, to perpetuate" norms** (31, 121). Anatomy is not destiny, and 'identity' never becomes fixed except by great effort and self-deception. There is no doer behind the deed for Butler; there is no sex behind the gender. Referencing Irigaray, Foucault, and Wittig, among others, Butler finds central to each **a rejection** of 'sex' as a self-identical substance and of 'gender' as a form of *being,* always instead a *doing*. The seeming stability of sex and gender "is achieved through a performative twist of language and/or discourse that conceals the fact that 'being' a sex or gender is fundamentally impossible" (25). She challenges French feminists and poststructuralists who **fail to go far enough in questioning a pre-discursive reservoir of meaning**, a reservoir which too often carries the promise of 'liberation' from the present order.

Thus, in her critique of Julia Kristeva—which precedes her treatment of Foucault's *Herculine*—Butler finds an emancipatory reserve in Kristeva's maternal-poetic terrain of the 'semiotic', which supposedly "escapes the paternal law" by displacing "the univocal signifier, the law of identity" (112, 114). Critical of this "trope of pre-discursive libidinal multiplicity," she turns from Kristeva's 'semiotic' to the place of 'sex' and 'pleasure' in Foucault, Butler reflects:

> If subversion is possible, it will be a subversion from within the terms of the law, through the possibilities that emerge when the law turns against itself and spawns unexpected permutations of itself. The culturally constructed body will then be liberated, neither to its 'natural' past, nor to its original pleasures, but to an open future of cultural possibilities (GT 119).

Butler declares that, for the Foucault of *Sexuality One* (1976)**, 'sex' is a discursive formation,** an effect rather than the origin of pleasures; she writes that *sexuality* presents "an open and **complex historical system** of **discourse** and **power** that produces the **misnomer of 'sex'** as part of a **strategy to conceal** and, hence, to **perpetuate power relations**" (GT 121). Butler lauds Foucault's renunciation of a freedom beyond or before the given order of sexual intelligibility, and finds that we can **extrapolate from Foucault, though he does not write of sex and gender, that the sexed body cannot escape power-knowledge; that the gestures of postmodern theorists to pre-discursive polymorphous multiplicity fall flat as romantic and unrigorous**. To be sexed, for Butler's Foucault, is to be subjected to a set of social regulations: both in how we are taught to comport, discipline, and enjoy ourselves and in the frame of our respective self-interpretations. **Butler concludes that when we take sex for granted as the backdrop of our politics, we further naturalize our regime of power-knowledge**. Having adopted Foucault as a new possible orientation to rethink resistance, Butler then assumes his terms and follows him to (what she perceives as) his own critical failure in romanticizing the journals of Alexina Barbin.

Butler distinguishes what she calls the "**official**" Foucault of *Sexuality One*—the Foucault who **rigorously resists sentimentalizing a pre-discursive realm of meaning**—from, as she writes, this "**sentimental indulgence** in the very **emancipatory discourse** his analysis in *The History of Sexuality* was **meant to displace**," an "unnameable libidinal heterogeneity" not far removed from the 'eros' of Marcuse and 1960s sexual liberation (repressed by 'civilization'), nor even from Rousseau's eighteenth century

appeals to a benevolent nature corrupted by cultural artifice.[168] Butler claims that Foucault finds in this intersexed body the implicit refutation of "the regulatory strategies of sexual categorization" in (as Butler writes) "a happy dispersal of these various functions, meanings, organs, somatic and physiological processes." Yet, the early Butler, in her emphases on discourse and law, misses the non-discursive, affective range of Alexina's narrative—the weight of a gestures, gazes, touch, a triple exclamation point—enable so much to be communicated without needing to be verbalized. Foucault writes, in a turn of phrase for which the early Butler takes him to task (and which Butler today might embrace):

> One has the impression, at least if one gives credence to Alexina's story, **that everything took place in a world of feelings**—enthusiasm, pleasure, sorrow, warmth, sweetness, bitterness—where the identity of the partners and above all the enigmatic character around whom everything centered had no importance. It was a world in which grins hung about without the cat" (HB xii-xiii).

Butler concludes: "The sexual world in which Herculine resides, according to Foucault, is one **in which bodily pleasures do not immediately signify 'sex'** as their primary cause and ultimate meaning; it is a world, he claims, in which 'grins hung about without the cat'" (GT 123/HB xiii). From Butler's reading of Foucault's reference to the Cheshire Cat in *Alice in Wonderland*—that he sentimentalizes "Herculine's" adolescence as one of pleasures (**grins**) beyond the discursive register of power-knowledge, without the categorical impositions of sex (**the cat**) as their cause and their significance. But what else, other than expressions of gender without a sexed body behind them, could be meant

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[168] GT 123-4; Butler writes: "In an almost Rousseauian move, Foucault constructs the binary of an artificial cultural law that reduces and distorts what we might well understand as a *natural* heterogeneity..." (GT 129).

by the grin hanging about without the cat? Turning to Butler's recent ethics of responsiveness, dispossession, and vulnerability, **we might complicate Butler's early critique with the role of non-discursive relations and the affective investments of the will-to-know.** Perhaps the grin—which conveys feeling without words, without need for an explanation of its origins—signifies the circulation of affect in that "relatively obscure area of tolerance" Alexina found in the convent in the historical moment just before her "discovery" by authoritative men (HS 101). Foucault writes that "nobody in Alexina's feminine milieu consented to play that **difficult game of truth which the doctors later imposed** on h/er indeterminate anatomy, until a discovery that everybody delayed for as long as possible was finally precipitated by two men, a priest and a doctor..." (HB xii).

Before this discovery, the "strange presence" of Alexina "was welcomed by everybody with a tenderness that was all the greater because **no curiosity mingled with it**." Perhaps due to Victorian modesty, perhaps due to the conventions of the boarding school, perhaps because Alexina was an exceptional and docile student,[169] no curiosity mingled with their fondness for h/er. Thus, while Alexina experienced h/er body as sexually different (constantly trimming body and facial hair), s/he also found h/erself "generally well liked" (HB 27). The threat lurked in what the "charitable busybodies" of the town would think of her intimacy with Sara, believing it their duty to warn Sara's mother "in the name of morality... *their curiosity was on the alert*" (HB 56-7). Nevertheless, the institutional presumption of femininity "**provide[d] for relatively**

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[169] Alexina's aptitude got her a spot in a boarding school for wealthy girls; out of place, she sought solace in books. Her own insatiable curiosity sought *histories*: "I found in it satisfaction for that urge to know, which was invading all my faculties...distracting me from the vague sadness that dominated me completely" (8).

obscure areas of tolerance" (HS 101), spaces of resistance hovering at the register of discourse.

Regarding the feminine space of the convent—internal to the Church and yet obscured from the gaze of men—we might recall the shifting figures Foucault traces in his February 1975 lecture on witches and convulsing nuns. The **witch**, a bad Christian, lives on the outskirts of the village; **the juridical subject of "guilt" and "evil," she may be burned at the stake** for exchanging her soul for power (AB 205, 210). By contrast, the **convulsing nun**—who emerges through new techniques of spiritual direction following the Council of Trent as a site of "carnal disorder" (AB 215)—**resists the occupation of the devil and seeks spiritual guidance,** confessing all indecent (especially sexual) thoughts. The convulsing nun is **not a juridical subject**; rather, her body "counters the rule of obedient direction with intense shocks of involuntary revolt or little betrayals of secret connivance" (AB 213). With the reformation of the confessional, the Church transferred the problem of convulsion to secular medicine in the eighteenth century, "an institution claiming scientific status for its hygienic control of sexuality only inasmuch as it inherited the domain of the flesh demarcated and organized by ecclesiastical power" (223). This control further consolidated in the nineteenth century through the psychiatric study of impulses; under the gaze of these experts, the convulsing nun is not condemned (unlike the witch), not responsible for her convulsions, **but subject to the subtlest interventions of experts on behalf of her condition.** Here, Alexina's historical moment becomes all the more important: in the early years of psychiatry, the transfer of power from the priest to the doctor, Alexina occupies a fading site of

obscurity. **A convulsing nun in h/er relation to institutional experts, Alexina is not condemned but rather *studied*.**

Yet, because Butler's early work leaves out the emergence of **biopower** for disciplinary regimes of normalization, she misses the historical singularity of Alexina's position in the convent. Rather, she interprets this "happy limbo of non-identity" to suggest that **Foucault** joins with "**Herculine**" in taking h/er sexuality to be "**outside all convention**," even as it is mediated by conventions: female homosexuality, regulations of the convent and school, literary conventions of French Romanticism, "ill-fated saints" of Christian legend and Greek myth (GT 126-7). Butler's references to the subject of these memoirs as "**Herculine**"—a name which Foucault does not use, nor does Alexina[170]— signal a distance from the text, the name of a case study but never of the living person. This distance is all the more apparent in Butler's interpretation of the Plutarch epigraph to the French edition, as a parallel between the lives of "**Foucault**" and "**Herculine**." When Butler reads the Plutarch reference, she misses the context of Foucault's *Parallel Lives* as an exploration of **violent curiosities animating the will-to-know.** Furthermore, in speculating about the "parallel lives" at stake, Butler suggests this volume is **Foucault's own confessional moment**—as one who spoke little of homosexuality and even less of his intimate life—**which frames "Herculine's confession to us in an unabashedly didactic mode. Is this a displaced confession that presumes a continuity between his**

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[170] In h/er memoirs, Alexina refers to h/erself as either Alexina, Abel (h/er name after the change in civil status), or a made-up name, Camille.

life and hers?"[171] (129). Butler poses the question and moves on, but as with so many of the rhetorical questions she poses, the answer is presumed from the start. **What, precisely, does Butler imply that Foucault is confessing?** Butler leaves it ambiguous, but it seems too have something to do with Foucault's intimate sexual practices. I find that this gesture, in its suggested exposure of Foucault as sentimental confessor, repeats the violence of curiosity that the *Herculine* volume works to displace by imposing a limited reading of *Sexuality One's* "repressive hypothesis," missing the non-discursive affects and loaded silences of Alexina's narrative.

Contra Butler's critique, I argue that Foucault's preface emphasizes the **biopolitical relation between sex and truth** emerging in the **1860s**, the same decade as Alexina's coming-of-age, not just to describe h/er life but to bring **the violence of curiosity** in h/er story—so visceral in h/er medical reports—to bear on our historical present. He offers an unexpected history in which, rather than becoming more tolerant of difference in modernity, legislators, bureaucrats, judges, priests and doctors grew all the more attached to categories and scales of diagnosis, pinpointing the patient / defendant / delinquent / confessor variously on a pre-existing grid.[172] With the rise of "[b]iological

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[171] GT 129; Butler never says exactly what this confession is about, though she claims that Foucault only did one interview on homosexuality, in which he responded with laughter to a question about caricatured differences of male and female homosexualities—the kind of laughter, she notes, which upsurges in his treatment of Borges in *The Order of Things*. Reflecting on laughter, excess, and the descriptive paucity of Same and Other, with reference to Cixous and Irigaray, Butler reminds us that "Herculine" feared the laughter of others, "unambiguously related to a damning law" (132), before moving into a psychoanalytic reading of "Herculine's" melancholic attachments to h/er mother's abandonment.

[172] Before the modern age, hermaphrodites were socially acceptable as long as they picked a gender at the time of marriage and kept "the sex they had then declared until the end of their lives, under pain of being labeled sodomites"; it was changing one's mind, "not the anatomical mixture of the sexes," that led to the condemnations of hermaphrodites in Medieval and Renaissance-era France (HB viii).

theories of sexuality, juridical conceptions of the individual, forms of administrative control in modern nations" **ambiguous anatomies could not rest unexamined,** demanding further investigation into the "true" sex of the individual: the medical, moral, or juridical expert "had, as it were, to strip the body of its anatomical deceptions and discover the one true sex behind organs that might have put on the forms of the opposite sex" (viii-ix). While 'tolerating' a wider range of 'abnormal' identities, **the discourses of our historical present nevertheless perceive them as an affront to** *truth***:**

> "...we may be prepared to admit that a 'passive' man, a 'virile' woman, people of the same sex who love one another, **do not seriously impair the established order; but we are ready enough to believe that there is something like an 'error' involved in what they do.** An 'error' is understood in the most traditionally philosophical sense: a manner of acting that is not adequate to reality. Sexual irregularity is seen as belonging more or less to the **realm of chimeras**. That is why we rid ourselves easily enough of the idea that these are crimes, but less easily of the suspicion that they are **fictions**, which whether involuntary or self-indulgent, are useless, and which it would be better to dispel. Wake up, young people, from your illusory pleasures; strip off your disguises and recall that every one of you has a sex, a true sex" (x).

Today, Foucault writes in the late 1970s, we can tolerate 'abnormal' presentations of gender, and **yet we tacitly maintain a sense of error in these presentations**, as imagined, chimerical, less a **crime** than a **fiction**. Building upon Foucault's treatment of fictions in my second chapter, we might say that all gender presentations are fictions; yet, these expert discourses in *Herculine* obstinately return to "this question of a **'true sex'** in an order of things where one might have imagined that all that counted was the reality of the body and the intensity of its pleasures" (vii). Here, Foucault does not suggest a pre-discursive realm free of regulation; rather, **he pushes against the designation of an**

error in an economy of truth which renders some lives invisible and ungrievable. Here, regardless of her early critique, Foucault's *Herculine* volume can be reframed as deeply resonant with Butler's response ethics.

Alexina writes of her memoirs: "I have to speak of things that, for a number of people, will be nothing but incredible **nonsense** because, in fact, they go beyond the limits of what is possible (HB 15). H/er relation to Sara skirts below speech, most noticeably when Alexina confesses h/er love: "I feel that from now on this affection cannot be enough for me! I would have to have your whole life!!!" (HB 50). Sara, "**struck by the strangeness**" of this declaration, does "not try to give them an impossible meaning," instead expressing concern that Alexina might awaken the students: "She squeezed my hand, letting me understand that I was pardoned" (ibid). Attending to this non-discursive register, we might further note **the pain suppressed and displayed** in these medical and legal documents. Within the selected documents, medical experts repeat: Alexina's life presents a "cruel and painful example of the fatal consequences that can proceed from an *error* committed at the time of birth in the establishment of civil status" (HB 122). While Foucault includes these accounts of poking and prodding Alexina's insides to locate "a hidden womb," nowhere in h/er memoirs does Alexina h/erself write of these examinations, except to suggest shame at their invasiveness. **This *silence*, alongside blood and violation, capture the insidious pull of the desire to understand.**

All categorizations contain reductive impositions; scientific curiosity, in the effort to pin down the truth of the matter, bears the potential for violence against the singular

individual. For what purpose was Alexina anally and vaginally probed, judged, secluded? **To correct an error?** These studies of Alexina-turned-Abel's body generated hopes of a new teratology, a handbook of monstrous diagnoses to pinpoint every possible anomaly; in E. Goujon's post-mortem study of Alexina-turned-Abel's body, he insists—with certainty beyond any demonstration—that "hermaphroditism **does not exist** in man and the higher animals" (139-40), and claims that Alexina must be male because h/er sexual organs follow predominately male functions, disguised though they are by deceptive bodily appearances (143). **Goujon, who examines Alexina, comes up against the logical impossibility of what he sees and claims this evidence is a play of illusion, simply false. Can the contours of a body be false?** Under the gaze of medical curiosity, Alexina's ambiguities are flattened to the binary switch of truth, while the idiosyncrasies of h/er anatomy are subject to the most thorough of investigations.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

As I noted in my first two chapters, the affective turn in feminist and queer theory has been, in part, a turn **away from historical analyses of discourse and power— associated with Michel Foucault**—toward psychological, biological, and posthuman structures of affect. Reading him alongside Spinoza's political writings, my second chapter argued that Foucault's genealogies study the historical contingencies of patterns of feeling—what we fear, hate, love, and, central to this chapter, **what excites our curiosity**; these scripts become, for Foucault, the non-discursive material upon which an

ethics "today" must work.[173] In what follows I explore and extend the relevance of Foucault's ethics of curiosity to contemporary discourses of transphobia and the rescripting of affect, reframing *Herculine Barbin* as resonant with Butler's contemporary ethics.

It was through the curiosity production-machines of reality television (*I Want to Work for Diddy*, *America's Next Top Model, RuPaul's Drag Race*) and women's magazines (*Marie Claire*) that actress Laverne Cox, fashion models Isis King and Carmen Carrera, and writer Janet Mock came to be heard in a cultural imaginary that had allotted no room for them. **What does it mean to occupy the space of public curiosity —an often violent curiosity—subversively?** Some control in the framing of one's representation is a significant piece; for instance, Laverne Cox, the first trans* woman of color to appear on reality television, describes her initial negotiations with *I Want To Work For Diddy*: "I was clear with the producer and VH1 that I did not want my representation to conform to the stereotypical and disparaging representations we so often see of trans people…it is so important that transgender stories are told…in humanizing and three-dimensional ways."[174] Other examples are more ambivalent. In January 2014, Carmen Carrera and Laverne Cox appeared on Katie Couric's new ABC show.

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[173] Michel Foucault "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," *Essential Works*: *Aesthetics, Method, Epistemology*, ed. James Faubion (The New Press, 1994), 369; Nietzsche, la généalogie, l' histoire: 145-172, *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite,* Paris, P.U.F., coll. «Épiméthée», 1971. Foucault claims in a 1983 interview: "Whereas the Christian ethics of a former age worked on desire and Kantian morality worked on intention, Foucault claims that, today, "the part of ourselves which is most relevant for morality is our feelings." Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (Pantheon, 1984), 353

[174] Cox's 2009 GLAAD Award acceptance speech: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2sbsMZujtvU

Reflections on Carrera's modeling career quickly turned to questions about her medical history, including direct questions about whether her "private parts" are "different now."[175] Carrera, mortified, shushed Couric, explaining that the question is "really personal." Media engagements with trans* people tend to, as Carrera put it, "focus on either the transition or the genitalia, and I think there is more to trans people than just that."[176] Turning to Laverne Cox, after the usual promotional niceties **Couric asked if she agrees that cisgendered persons uneducated in trans* issues tend to fixate on "the genitalia question."** Couric specifies that her inquiry arises not from "a sort of prurient interest" but a desire to be *educated*: "**Now, I'm *curious* because, you know, all of us want to be educated,** and Carmen recoiled a little bit when I asked her about her transition…Do you have the same feelings about this?" As I noted earlier with reference to Janet Mock, Cox's response underscores **how this fixation on genitalia separates curiosity from care concerning persistent and everyday forms of violence, discrimination, and homelessness:** "When we focus on transition, we don't get to talk about those things." Couric simply states "So well spoken" before the commercial break.

A similar negotiation of curiosity occurs in Isis King's appearance on *The Tyra Banks Show* in November 2008, following her time on America's Next Top Model.[177]

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[175] Clip from Katie Couric's January 2014 interview of Laverne Cox and Carmen Carrera: <u>Watch Katie Couric's Offensive Attempt to Interview 2 Transgender TV Stars</u> [Mother Jones]

[176] "Flawless Trans Women Carmen Carrera and Laverne Cox Respond Flawlessly To Katie Couric's Invasive Questions," posted by Mey, *Autostraddle,* January 7, 2014: <u>http://www.autostraddle.com/flawless-trans-women-carmen-carrera-and-laverne-cox-respond-flawlessly-to-katie-courics-invasive-questions-215855/</u>

[177] In a flashback to Isis' farewell from the show, following her rejection, Tyra hugs Isis and says: "If you want to be a model you can, and you're already an inspiration for the [*her eyes roll up and her brow furrows conically, with vaguely theatrical intonations on each of the following*]: gay lesbian, transgender, bisexual community. Good luck!" <u>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WkDHy2d65o</u>

Tyra discusses the non-traditional path by which Isis became a contestant: "I wanted to show that homelessness can happen to anyone," so she put her *models* in "homeless" clothes and *homeless girls* in "couture" fashion. Tyra describes her reaction to the poses of the "homeless girl" in the back: "Who is this girl?… and that's when they told me, she wasn't born a girl, and I said, I want THAT girl on my show [*applause*]." Tyra adds, "**How did you end up in that photo? Because that means... [*pause*] that you were homeless**." Isis clarifies the details of her experience in assisted living, addressing problems facing trans* low-income women with employment, housing, vulnerability to violence. Tyra skips past these structural issues, instead reassuring Isis—"When I look at your face and see your cheekbones, big eyes, and those lashes, I see femininity"— insisting, much as Piers Morgan recently insisted of Janet Mock (2/4/14), that because Isis King *looks* like a woman, she must truly be one. The stability of identity ensures that everything will be alright.

If, for Alexina's medical experts, her ambiguous genitalia **did not and could not exist,** today it is that genitalia which fascinates so many consumers of "reality"; the genitalia not only **exists** but obscures the *caring* interest in structural issues that delimit trans* lives, which Janet Mock, Laverne Cox, Isis King, and Carmen Carrera have fearlessly and eloquently demanded. I address my work on Foucault to these televised scenes because they dramatize the harm and the promise of curiosity in our historical moment. The desire to know seeks after celebrities, "abnormal" bodies, medical and legal 'cases', produces reality shows to harness more bodies for display. And yet, following Janet Mock, curiosity presents the first step in coming to understand another person

across difference, though this transformative moment is so often lost to the security and comfort of accepting the status quo.

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Herculine Barbin is a misunderstood volume about a misunderstood person; it is a concrete case study of the affective register, of relations between curiosity as a mode of interest, power, and the margins of resistance (only temporarily) beyond its reach. The early Butler of *Gender Trouble* misses the affective workings of curiosity and care at stake in Alexina's story. Foucault's sparse preface was not intended as an interpretation of Alexina's experience—*that* was promised in a later *Sexuality* volume he did not live to write—so to call Foucault's Preface "cursory" (as Butler does)[178] misses what he is doing: asking his readers to extend a *different curiosity* than the medico-legal curiosity that sought to know Alexina's true sex. This curiosity does not seek to identify, pin down, or erase ambiguity; rather it involves "**the care one takes of what exists and what might exist; a sharpened sense of reality, but one that is never immobilized before it; a readiness to find what surrounds us strang**e."[179] *This* is what interests Foucault, and this is what he implies when he claims that curiosity has always been at the center of his work.

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[178] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 123

[179] Michel Foucault, "The Masked Philosopher," EW1, 325.

Conclusion: Toward a Feminist Ethics of Affect

My project begins from the need for ethics to speak to the messy, relational space between freedom and determinism through which histories persists in us. I bring together Spinoza's ethics and politics of affect, Foucault's genealogies of 'abnormals' (and the *will to know* them), and Butler's response ethics to develop a language for these affective mediations—scripts, fictions, frames—and consider how such an understanding of affect could enrich and concretize a response ethics: beyond the call to respond to another sentient being in its 'otherness,' its overflow of what we could conceptualize or thematize, an 'ethics of affect' addresses the concrete and historically singular ways in which we approach this unbridgeable gap. I am particularly concerned with 'interest,' and with sympathy and curiosity as modes of interest in the lives of others, because these modes negotiate forms of identification, difference, and spectacle that animate this gap. My aim is to develop terms to help us to articulate and counteract the persistence of racism, homophobia, transphobia, and other stuck cultural patterns of association which delimit what it is possible to think and feel. By way of concluding this dissertation and gesturing toward the larger project it initiates, I first define some terms I've appropriated from the history of philosophy and then briefly summarize the trajectory of my dissertation and conclude with how this dissertation might translate into two book projects.

Affect names a broad category which includes the emotions/moods/feelings of human beings but—following Spinoza—extends to animals and all finite modes as they

respond to other modes. While I value the post-humanist ethical inclusiveness of affect, my own project follows Foucault and Butler in engaging our weighty *human* inheritance: histories of exploitation, marginalization, confinement and exclusion, histories sedimented into interpretive frames and scripted responses, obscured by liberal fictions of progress. By 'frames' I follow Judith Butler (2010) in noting that our responses are mediated by interpretive schemas which shape what we are capable of sensing and perceiving. Affective experiences can reinforce as they can also disrupt and "call into question the taken-for-granted character of those frames, and in that way provide the affective conditions for social critique" (35). By 'scripts,' I mean the habituation of response as one learns to interact with a shared and contingent environment. According to Silvan Tomkins (1995), scripts are "sets of ordering rules for the interpretation, evaluation, prediction, production, or control of scenes" (181). Often we perform but do not write our lines, and with such frequency that they join the background of action. By 'fictions,' I mean the guiding images and narratives, often fragmentary and half-remembered, through which we have come to understand ourselves. Spinoza writes that when we cannot have an adequate understanding of something—such as what is interpersonal or historical and thus inevitably perspectival—we should develop more constructive fictions for dealing with it in everyday life (TIE 14). I noted in my second chapter that, while the noun and adjective forms of Spinoza's Latin term *fictus -a -um* denote falsehood, as a verb—*fingo fingere finxi fictum*—'fiction' means to shape, fashion or form, arrange or put in order, represent, imagine. Fictions may often feel more real than empirical reality because they frame our experiences of it. Here we might think of of

'gender' and 'race,' 'disability,' and other human taxonomies that enable and justify ways of life, but also 'America,' 'law,' 'morality,' and other fictions which are not thereby *false* because they are fictional, nor do they suggest a *truth* to be uncovered.

The terms of affect productively shift the ethical and political frame of reference from the autonomous subject to a responsive vector of affect transmission and circulation. This matters because ethics addressed to the subject of reason misses the ways in which affect scripts bear the sediment of histories of oppression. The U.S. prison-industrial complex is different from Jim Crow as it is also different from slavery, yet these different institutions manifest more or less the same racialized scripts and denials of rights; as Michelle Alexander (2010) writes:

> In the era of colorblindness, it is no longer socially permissible to use race, explicitly, as a justification for discrimination, exclusion, and social contempt. So we don't. Rather than rely on race, we use our criminal justice system to label people of color "criminals" and then engage in all the practices we supposedly left behind.

Colorblindness is a bad fiction because it obscures power relations and because it denies (rather than works through) histories of cruelty, violence, and pain sedimented into the present. The neoliberal celebration of 'diversity' in representative institutions—the university, government, media—works to conceal the racial caste system which persists by coding black men as 'criminals' and black women as hyper-sexual 'welfare queens' among other stock characters in the American cultural imaginary. These caricatured and fragmentary fictions have for decades (re)generated scripts of fear and violence toward black bodies. And yet, we live at a moment in which the normalized subject *knows better* than to affirm racism as a valid means of engaging with others. There are culturally

tolerated forms of xenophobic release: jokes, horror movies, crime dramas, political rhetoric, and these can often be prefaced with "I'm not a racist, but...." The 'educated' subject may well sincerely believe herself free of such antiquated and ignorant views; and yet, it is not enough to disavow them. What are the mechanisms through which these sedimented histories continue to shape the present, even against one's 'good intentions'? How might our understanding of this persistence be enriched by critically engaging the inheritance of affective mediations such as frames, fictions, and scripts? How might be *undo* or transform our scripts, and toward what end should they be transformed?

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I summarize my project in what follows by engaging the questions I take myself to be exploring, the answers I find in the history of philosophy, and the ways in which I criticize, synthesize, or otherwise modify these answers. The overarching question of my work is that of how we revise affect scripts when they perpetuate toxic relations with others or with oneself. Western philosophy has largely understood this overcoming as rational self-control, but my project departs from Stoic therapeutic models by which positive affects are mobilized to overcome vulnerabilities, dependencies, weaknesses. Affect overflows the autonomous self, which cannot then be invoked to manage these excesses. An ethics grounded in the mobilization or manipulation of our affective inclinations must then account for these means of transmission, whereby the attempt to control the self enters into ethical and political contexts which overflow that self. I identify frames, fictions, and scripts as those sites of affective mediation between the individual and its community, which bear the sediment of histories as they also enable us

to sort through the persistence of histories. These mediations, to some extent alway opaque to us, are also in flux; through a genealogical inquiry into their contingent histories and an ethological inquiry into how they manifest in contemporary relations, we can refine our responses to pain and suffering, whether of of others or ourselves.

Rather than overcoming these attachments, desires, aversions, how might we study these affective mediations of experience and come to—in some as yet unspecified way—feel *better*? What sorts of reflective exercises and practices enable this feeling-better? Spinoza answers this in the *Ethics* by connecting joy and empowerment to adequate understanding. Spinoza criticizes the Stoic and Cartesian models of overcoming because, as he writes, only a stronger affect can check a passive or reactive one (EIVp7). For Spinoza, one must study emotional life with the same causal necessity that one studies lines, planes, and bodies (EIII.pref). Emotions should be viewed not as vices of human nature but as properties pertaining to it in the same way as heat, cold, storm, thunder, and such pertain to the nature of the atmosphere" (TP I.4). The *ethical* project for Spinoza becomes one of overcoming passivity through understanding the causal nexus behind an encounter (EVp3); this overcoming increases our power (*pŏtentĭa*) and our joy, culminating in intellectual love: acceptance of one's place in the eternal order, *sub specie aeternitātis*. As a post-Nietzschean (having fractured the harmony of knowledge/power/joy as the *telos* of inquiry), Deleuze translates Spinoza's monist God-or-Nature into the plural dynamism of immanence; the method of remediation remains one of causal understanding, reframed as an ethology of behaviors, experimenting to discover which relations generate flourishing and which are toxic. Judith Butler, who

surprisingly claims (2004) that Spinoza has long been central to her work, provocatively asks but does not answer: what is the place of bodily vulnerability in Spinoza's ethics of affect? Here, she emphasizes a value which gets diminished in the Deleuzian literature, which tends to value activity, empowerment, and flourishing relations. Spinoza does not lack an account of vulnerability, but such an account emerges less in his *Ethics* than in his political writings, which address our relational experiences of passivity and contingency. Hence, my second chapter develops Spinoza's social epistemology in conversation with Foucault.

Michel Foucault—also post-Nietzschean but building from his critical histories— offers something under-emphasized in the Spinozist-Deleuzian trajectory. An ethology of present-tense behaviors must incorporate a genealogical perspective on the contingencies of, for instance, what we take to be joyful, how we respond to suffering, which lives we consider "grievable" (to quote Butler), etc. Foucault's genealogies are histories of the present; troubling the neutral progress narrative of the *will-to-know*, he engages the subtle intertwining of knowledge and power through discourses and institutions (medical, juridical, educational, etc). My second chapter brings together Spinoza's social epistemology of fictions with Michel Foucault's claim (1980) that he has "never written anything but fictions," but this does not mean that truth is absent: "One *'fictions'* history on the basis of a political reality that makes it true; one *'fictions'* a politics not yet in existence on the basis of a historical truth" (193). Foucault critically and constructively re-fictions the history of the present through genealogy; this disruption enabled the refinement of perceptual frames and scripts as well as better fictions, attending to those

things "we tend to feel are without history," more properly translated as *what passes for being ahistorical*: in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts (EW2 369). Whereas the Christian ethics of a former age worked on *desire* and Kant's Enlightenment morality worked on *intention*, Foucault (1983) finds that today "the part of ourselves which is most relevant for morality is our feelings" (EW1 353). Much like power for Foucault, affects may reinforce the background of the familiar through practices, relations, institutions, or they may also disrupt and subvert this habituated range. I am especially compelled by the reinforcing and disruptive functions of interest - of which sympathy and curiosity are varieties: whereas sympathy finds its grounding in identification, curiosity stretches toward that with which one does not identify. Foucault designates curiosity at the center of his work, as a mode of interest which approaches the constitutive limits of the self, those threats of the unintelligible and abject. A Foucauldian post-moral ethics complicates our interest in the lives of others my making experience (one's own and that of others) *strange*, balancing curiosity with care toward the differences between us.

How can an ethics of affect refine our responsiveness to the vulnerabilities and pain of others, particularly when this pain is largely incommunicable and incomprehensible to us? How do we work on these feelings? I turn to Martha Nussbaum because, among Anglo-American feminist philosophers, her work has been prominent in theorizing the relation of emotion, literature, and ethics, taking emotions seriously as judgments about flourishing. Following the liberal "sentiments" tradition, Nussbaum finds that literature cultivates a sympathy which expands one's circle of concern with compassion for those historically outside it. When identification is not possible,

Nussbaum finds, we turn to the deeper identification of our common humanity, and assess what the lives of these characters are *lacking* such that we cannot understand them. Yet, engaging the limits of articulating pain and trauma, I find that Nussbaum minimizes the necessary gaps and opacities between one's sympathetic feelings and the lived experience of another's pain.

In contrast to Nussbaum's ethics of literary sympathetic cultivation, I am compelled by Judith Butler's contemporary response ethics of framing our attention to suffering. Much as my own work attempts to do, contemporary continental response ethics following Levinas turns away from the autonomous subject toward responsiveness to the alterity of the 'Other.' For Levinas in *Totality and Infinity* (1961, trans. Lingis), this responsiveness is grounded in the infinitude of the Other which exceeds our conceptual grasp; the Other is "infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign" such that, "the facing position, opposition par excellence, can only be a moral summons" (194). Whereas ontological arguments move by reasoning, this realization of alterity—ethical rather than ontological—transcends reason as *epiphany* (196). Butler (2005) reinterprets this transcendence through psychoanalytic theories of subject formation—realizing oneself through the impingement of otherness, and a resulting opacity of the self to itself. In the ethical scene of the address (to "you") which Butler takes as her model, the ethics of this encounter becomes a matter of generosity toward the opacities and vulnerabilities of others (as toward oneself). Yet, when we concretely engage this unbridgeable gap of alterity between ourselves and others, how do we concretely respond? Here I find that an ethics of affect can supplement the demands of response ethics.

While I find Butler's ethics of generosity and humility compelling for my own work, I pull its Spinozist and Foucauldian threads beyond Butler's formulations--particularly beyond what I argue are misreadings of Foucault--by considering, first, a Spinozist-Foucauldian account of fictions and, second, a Foucauldian account of the historical configuration of interest as the 'will-to-know,' which delimits our responsiveness. Butler (1997) finds that Foucault's theory of resistance implicitly relies on a psychoanalytic account of psychic resistance—a bodily remainder exceeding the subject—but this account underemphasizes the non-discursive aspects of the reproduction and disruption of power-knowledge. Turning to misreadings of Foucault in Butler's early work, my fourth chapter works to recuperate these Foucauldian contributions for Butler's later response ethics, particularly the affective work of curiosity.

As I noted in my fourth chapter, whereas sympathy and empathy find their grounding in identification, curiosity invests in that with which we do not identify, as a mode of interest in encounters with difference and ambiguity. In this moment of instability, the curious gaze might fit its new object into pre-existing frames, fictions, and scripts of responsiveness, or this curiosity might become transformative, opening the sedimented background of the familiar. I engage curiosity because it accounts for the messiness of negative affect (disgust, contempt, fear, shame, etc) in these engagements, whereas wonder--a suspended sense of awe--has been the celebrated mode of interest in the history of philosophy, a contemplation of eternal things. Curiosity acknowledges the messiness of the desire to understand that with which we do not or cannot identify. Thus, in his Preface to *Sexuality Two,* Foucault writes that curiosity has been central to his

work, negatively through his attention to the cruel excesses of the medical-moral gaze, but also positively as an unsettling and potentially transformative mode of attention "which enables one to get free of oneself" (8). Foucault calls this mode of interest *curiosity-as-care*—"the care one takes of what exists and what might exist; a sharpened sense of reality, but one that is never immobilized before it; a readiness to find what surrounds us strange" (EW1 325).

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This dissertation has within it at least two possible books, each of which would be better books if they weren't jumbled together in one document. It also contains four articles, two or three of which will certainly come before a book. On the one hand, there is a project on Judith Butler's response ethics, drawing upon and interrogating the Spinozist and Foucauldian dimensions of her thought through bodily vulnerability, opacity, and the constitutive outside of sympathetic identification. This project would engage Deleuzian feminist critiques (e.g. Braidotti, Sharp) of "the negative" in Butler's work, reframing 'affect' in relation to histories of oppression, engaging the ethical and political negotiation of affect and power in framing one's attention to suffering. Here, I would also draw upon theories of pain and trauma (Elaine Scarry, Susan Sontag, Sara Ahmed) toward a feminist response ethics of what I am calling affect scripts: seemingly automatic responses through which we navigate complex relations. Another book project would center on Michel Foucault as an affect theorist, interpreting his absence in all camps of the affective turn and arguing for his rich contributions to thinking affect in its historical singularity and contingency. Here, I would engage Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise* and Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* to consider more closely how Foucault's

attention to marginalization and confinement shift the critical lens of genealogy. I would also develop further the social epistemology of fictions that ties Foucault to Spinoza and explore what Spinoza's political writings can illuminate in Foucault's historical projects. A third project, which I imagine first becoming an article, will be to read Foucault's *Herculine Barbin*—and Butler's critique in *Gender Trouble*—in conversation with contemporary trans* discourses, developing Foucault's curiosity-as-care in connection with Butler's response ethics.