

Drew University

UNREDEEMED:

A POLITICAL THEOLOGY OF AFFECT, TIME, AND WORTH

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Chair of Committee: Catherine Keller, Professor

Committee: Traci West and Stephen Moore

By

Karen Bray

New York, New York

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Abstract:

This dissertation is a queer feminist challenge to neoliberal narratives of redemption. Its methodology relies on reading political theology anew through feminist work on affect and disability. Employing contemporary affect and crip theories, I construct theological reorientations of time, feeling, and value. My research uncovers deep resonances between political theology's critique of the neoliberal economy and the rethinking of value endeavored by affect and crip theorists. Surfacing the importance of emotion, mood, feeling, and affect for constructions of the political and the theological I propose counter-redemptive narratives. This dissertation further understands affects such as madness, depression, mania, anxiety, and boredom as crip sensibilities and quotidian laments against systems that demand we feel good about being oppressed. A framing assumption is that neoliberalism relies on narratives in which not being in the right mood, means a cursed existence. Its opening provocation is a diagnosis of soteriological and theological impulses in neoliberalism that demand we be productive, efficient, happy, and flexible in order to be of worth and therefore get saved out of the wretched existence of being considered worthless. The theological underpinnings of neoliberalism offer a caged freedom in the guise of opportunity. Counter to this cage, affect theory helps me to offer a Holy Saturday theology that surmises that sticking with the moods of what it means to have been crucified by neoliberal capitalism is both an act of resistance *and* the refusal to give up on life in crucifixion's wake. Hence, this dissertation offers a critique of neoliberal redemption narratives through constructions of what it might look and feel like to go unredeemed. To go willfully unredeemed might be to stick with those who neoliberalism has already marked as irredeemable. In gravely attending--being brought

down by the gravity of what is and listening to the ghosts of what might have been--to what it is to go unredeemed it is my hope that new theological and political landscapes of becoming together differently might arise. At its core this dissertation attempts to construct a political theology attendant to moody and material life. It offers affect theory as a hermeneutical lens from which to read contemporary political and postmodern theologies. It asks what new questions, insights, sources and modes of doing political theology might take shape in an encounter with affect.

Chapter One: Unbegun Introductions

Scene 1: The Moment

“I’m exhausted.”

“What’s that?” I shout from Marie’s pre-fab kitchen where I’ve been making tea and sandwiches.

“I’m exhausted!” Marie, a family friend in the beginning stages of dementia, says, half hollering, half sighing.

“Oh, yes sure, why don’t you take a nap, we can eat later.”

“I’m not tired, I’m exhausted. This is exhausting.”

When I finally reach Marie’s side she is looking at, of all things, the social media site, Facebook. She has been scrolling through both democratic and republican political attacks. While Marie’s cogency of mind has begun to wane, her visceral awareness of the moods behind what she reads and what is said around her has amplified. She trembles more forcefully when there is a tone of anger in the conversation, she weeps more quickly at a touching moment. The breakdown of mind and the breaking-open of mood have been simultaneously illuminating and heart breaking.

“Yes, Marie, I’m exhausted too.”

One might have expected a scholar of affect employing the critical study of emotion to political theology to have found the intensity of moodiness that percolated to the surface in the early months of 2016 exhilarating. As we inched closer to November, 2016 had turned out to be a particularly poignant political moment in which the race for the presidency showed us not only what the American people had been thinking, but

much more so what we had been feeling. One might expect a sense of excitement at the fertile ground for a political theology engaged with affect such a prevailing mood had laid bare. But I, like Marie, did not feel exhilarated, I felt quite frankly and unceasingly exhausted.

I continue to feel worn down by the well of resentment tapped by Donald Trump. I cry over the explosive anger fueled by white rage and heteropatriarchal angst--emotions whose embers have been, for decades, stoked by right-wing pundits, Tea-Party candidates, fundamentalist religious thought, and neoliberal corporate managers, but whose blaze has now finally been set free by Trump. Such political moodiness, however, began long before any of the candidates declared their intention to run. Forces of public feeling, those I found exhilarating rather than exhausting, had already taken hold as what some have called the "New Civil Rights Movement," a movement animated by such demands as "Black Lives Matter" and "Say Her Name," spread across the country.

A week after Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager was murdered by police officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, MO, I find an Obama "Hope" postcard in a desk drawer, the contents of which I am purging to make room for a new semester's worth of ephemera. The iconic off-white, blue, and red image created by street-artist Shepard Fairey during the 2008 United States presidential campaign strikes me, strikes at me, and stirs in me a particularly mournful melancholy. What has happened to the Hope? Or more precisely what might this feel-good-politics have been covering over, which the epidemic killing of black people by arms of a state we were supposed to have renewed hope in and for, now have revealed? Might the prevailing moods taking hold in both police brutality

and the march of resistance against such brutality mark how this hope, while certainly inspiring, has not been fulfilled?

My sense of melancholy on that day was not, I would argue, a rejection of the Obama-hope, but rather the insistence that it remains possible only if we let other emotions—those of grief, rage, depression, anxiety—flood the streets as reminders of how much farther we still have to go on the way to a promise/d land.

There is a not insignificant emotional difference between the mood captured by the Obama “Hope” poster and that revealed in the lyrics of Lauryn Hill’s song “Black Rage.” The song is sung to the melody of “My Favorite Things” from the sound of music and includes these excerpted lines:

Black rage is founded on blatant denial/sweet economics, subsistent survival,
deafening silence and social control, black rage is founded in all forms in the
soul...

Black rage is founded who fed us self hatred/Lies and abuse while we waited and
waited/Spiritual treason/This grid and its cages/Black rage was founded on these
kinds of things...

So when the dog bites/And the bee stings/And I’m feeling mad/I simply
remember all these kinds of things/And then I don’t fear so bad...

Victims of violence/Both psyche and body/Life out of context is living ungodly...

Try if you must but you can’t have my soul/Black rage is founded on ungodly
control/So when the dog bites/And the beatings/And I’m feeling so sad/I simply
remember all these kinds of things/And then I don’t feel so bad.¹

¹ Aura Bogado, “Listen: Ms. Lauryn Hill’s ‘Black Rage’ Responds to Ferguson.”
colorlines.com,
http://colorlines.com/archives/2014/08/listen_ms_lauryn_hills_black_rage_responds_to_ferguson.html (accessed August 29, 2014).

Black rage as expressed in this song embodies what Sara Ahmed has called “the political freedom to be unhappy,” with a society that causes such unhappiness.² It is a call--a lament-- that should provoke us to ask not why Hill isn’t more hopeful, but rather what her mood, her black rage might tell us about being forced to live a life out of context, one faced with blatant denial.

I played “Black Rage” for my students on the first day of a 2014 course on affect theory. The course began less than three weeks after Michael Brown’s murder. For many of my students the mood of the song concluded the first day of their first college course. The deep tie between feeling and fearing so bad set the tone. It defined, or rather reflected the atmosphere in which we would come to critically engage the study of affect, and what such a study might reveal about how we have been *affected* by political moods, and their emotional and ontological cultivation. Our collective study of affect began with the mood of lament over and so hope for black lives because I wanted to suggest to my students that lament against injustice and its concomitant hope for justice are where the affective and the ethical most clearly intersect. At these moody intersections—those where lament and hope meet--a political theology attendant to the prevailing mood of the late modern moment and the temporal, emotional, and value shifts that might arise in resisting violence to both psyche and body is birthed.

This is a dissertation about what it would mean to be moody in the midst of being theological and political. Its framing assumption is that neoliberal economics relies on narratives in which not being in the right mood means a cursed existence. Its opening

² Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 195.

provocation is a diagnosis of a soteriological and theological impulse in neoliberalism that demands we be productive, efficient, happy, and flexible in order to be of worth and therefore get saved from the wretched experience of having been marked as worthless. The theological underpinnings of neoliberalism offer a caged freedom in the guise of opportunity. Hence, this dissertation offers a critique of such redemptive narratives through constructions of what it might look and feel like to go unredeemed. It proposes that to go willfully unredeemed might be to stick with those whom neoliberalism has already marked as irredeemable. In attending to what it is to be materially and affectually unredeemed it is my hope that new theological and political landscapes of becoming together differently might be surfaced. At its core this dissertation attempts to construct a political theology attendant to moody and material life. It offers affect theory as a hermeneutical lens from which to re-read contemporary political and postmodern theologies. It does not offer a definitive account of religion and affect, nor does it propose a solution to all the ills within and troubled by political theology. Rather, it asks what new questions, insights, sources, and modes of doing political theology arise when we take affects seriously.

Affect Theory: a Brief Introduction

According to *The Affect Theory Reader*, a collection published in 2010 and edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth:

Affect arises in the midst of *in-between-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon...affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about,

between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, *and* in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves.³

Affect theory might be considered the critical exploration both of what types of acts, knowledge, bodies, and worlds are produced in this in-between space *and* of how we might better attend to affect's role in such a production. Think for example of the force of feeling produced when standing on the top of a mountain or in front of your favorite painting. Think of that first ineffable moment of terror that arises when you *feel* like something is off in your environment. Think of the spark, the tingle of expectation, before a first kiss. These pulsations for which we do not have appropriate language: it is the study of them that affect theorists engage.

However, affect theory is also the study of those feelings for which we have many names: rage, anger, madness, envy, anxiety, boredom, joy, happiness, optimism, pessimism, depression, and ecstasy. The study of affect is also about how these feelings get coded within cultures or how they come to stick to certain types of bodies, objects, and choices. We can think for instance of which objects and subjects get coded as happy in the context of the American Dream. Here a blonde, white, able-bodied spouse (of the “opposite” gender), a white picket fence, a suburban home, 2.5 kids, and a golden retriever all become shorthand for happiness. Happiness, in this sense, while not being inconsequential to those ineffable pulsations we feel atop the mountain, takes a very particular shape, one that gets narrowly defined and associated with particular people. For instance we might here call to mind the figure of the Happy Housewife versus that of the

³ Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, “An Inventory of Shimmers”, in *The Affect Theory Reader*, Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds. (Durham and London: Duke University, 2010), xi.

Angry Black Woman. Affect Theory in this sense can be considered the critical investigation into how others assume we should feel and how we are actually feeling.

There are multiple strains of affect theory one might take up in the study of affect and religion. Various theorists map the study of affect in various ways. According to Seigworth and Gregg, “There is no single, generalizable theory of affect: not yet, and (thankfully) there never will be. If anything, it is more tempting to imagine that there can only ever be infinitely multiple iterations of affect and theories of affect: theories as diverse and singularly delineated as their own highly particular encounters with bodies, affects, worlds.”⁴ For Gregg and Seigworth, affect inherently contains a multiplicity of forces, forces whose effects multiply within bloom spaces created by interactions with diverse and particular forms of bodies, other affects, and worlds. Hence, a generalizable or singular theory of affect cannot suffice. Such a theory would indeed rob affect of the slipperiness of its own stickiness, or in other words of that part of affect that while sticking to certain bodies or worlds, and so threatening certain bodies and worlds, also contains the promise that such bodies and worlds might get unstuck.

While resisting a generalizable theory, Gregg and Seigworth still offer a preliminary typography of the field. Their map includes eight approaches to affect theory, which can be summarized as follows: (1) phenomenologies and post-phenomenologies of “sometimes archaic and often occulted practices of human/nonhuman [interaction]” (Vivian Sobchack, Don Ihde, Michel Henry, Laura Marks, Mark Hansen, and others); (2) theories of assemblage that engage the ontological entanglement of the human/machine/inorganic, which include, for Gregg and Seigworth, cybernetics,

⁴ Seigworth and Gregg, *Affect Theory Reader*, 3-4

neurosciences, and bio-informatics/bio-engineering; (3) nonhumanist philosophies centered on “linking the movements of matter with a processural incorporeality (Spinozism),” particularly in critical stances that seek to move beyond “various cultural limitations” in philosophy through feminist theory (Rosi Braidotti, Elizabeth Grosz, Genevieve Lloyd, and Moira Gatens), Italian autonomism (Paolo Virno or Maurizio Lazzaratto), cultural studies (Lawrence Grossberg, Meaghan Morris, Brian Massumi), and political philosophy (Giorgio Agamben, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri); (4) psychological and psychoanalytic inquiry (early Sigmund Freud, Silvan Tomkins, Daniel Stern, Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen); (5) politically engaged critiques of the normativizing power of affect, which view affects more as collective than as individual (often undertaken by queer theorists, subaltern peoples, feminists, and disability theorists); (6) critical, often humanist, turns away from the “linguistic turn” in order to explore non-discursive and ethico-aesthetic forces of feeling (Raymond Williams, Frantz Fanon, Walter Benjamin, Susanne Langer, John Dewey); (7) engagement with affect to interrogate subject or self-based philosophies (often comes from postcolonial, hybridized, and migrant voices); (8) science studies, often drawing on the work of Alfred North Whitehead, that embrace a pluralistic approach to materialism and ontology (Isabelle Stengers).⁵ Beyond this map, Gregg and Seigworth list others that could have been included, but whose work, according to Gregg and Seigworth, is not definitive of the field: Donna Haraway, Erin Manning, William Connolly, J.K. Gibson-Graham, Lisa

⁵ Seigworth and Gregg, *Affect Theory Reader*, 6-9

Blackman, John Protevi, Sianne Ngai, Ghassan Hage, Jane Bennett, Paul Gilroy, Karen Barad, Steven Shaviro, Elizabeth Wilson, Alphonso Lingis, and Michael Taussig.⁶

I am drawn to such a comprehensive mapping and to such an attractive collection of thinkers. And yet, there are ways in which Gregg and Seigworth's genealogy feels at once too expansive, and simultaneously includes confusing cuts. The list of thinkers collected under the Spinozist approach feels particularly unwieldy as a clear category, and perhaps includes theorists whose work affect theorists might wish to engage, but who do not always class themselves as theorists of affect or emotion (this critique is also true of others of Gregg and Seigworth's categories, but it feels most profoundly so with this approach). Further, it seems unclear both as to why Gregg and Seigworth suppose that such thinkers should not be categorized separately, in the same way as Gregg and Seigworth separate out subaltern positions within the Spinozist approach from those listed under the category of postcolonial critiques of subjectivity in what they list as the seventh approach to Affect Theory. Further, several of the thinkers Gregg and Seigworth mark as ancillary to affect theory, like Sianne Ngai and Steven Shaviro, I would class as central to the development of the field. Hence, while I find Gregg and Seigworth's introduction to affect theory invaluable, their typography must be adjusted for the sake of this project's clarity of thought.

In *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* (arguably the first monograph on contemporary affect theory and religion), Donovan Schaefer takes a more pared-down, but no less complex, approach in his mapping of affect theory. Drawing on genealogies of affect theory proffered by Gregg and Seigworth, Ann Cvetkovich, and

⁶ Ibid., 9

Jasbir Puar, Schaefer identifies two primary currents in affect theory: the Deleuzian mode and the phenomenological mode.⁷ Acknowledging that these modes do often converge, Schaefer's work proceeds to mark for us the key divergences. According to Schaefer: "for some [Deleuzian] affect theorists such as Brian Massumi, Patricia Clough, and Erin Manning, the term affect rigidly excludes what are called emotions—felt experiences that are the pieces of your personhood. But others [working in the phenomenological mode] such as Silvan Tomkins, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Sara Ahmed, Teresa Brennan, and Ann Cvetkovich, suggest that the consideration of emotions falls under the purview of affect theory."⁸ The key distinction between the two modes hinges on whether affects are engaged as metaphysical or cultural phenomena.

I am convinced by Schaefer's (and Moore and Koosed's) streamlined, yet complex, genealogy of affect. However, I find the division into only two modes insufficient for the purposes of this dissertation. I worry that settling on two categories risks, despite best intentions and precautions against simplistic divisions, creating a binarism insufficient for containing the shifting flows of convergence and divergence between theories of affect. For instance, while upholding the distinction between affect and emotion, Patricia Clough simultaneously writes, contra Massumi, that "affect is not 'presocial' ... There is a reflux back from conscious experience to affect, which is

⁷ Donovan Schaefer, *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution and Power*, (Durham and London: Duke University, 2015), Kindle Location 542. A categorical division supported by the mapping work proffered by Stephen Moore and Jennifer Koosed, editors of the 2014 special edition of the journal, *Biblical Interpretation*, on affect theory and biblical study, also have recourse to this categorical division between the Deleuzian and Phenomenological or Tomkins-influenced strains.

⁸ Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, Kindle location, 571-574.

registered...as affect.”⁹ In other words the social affects the metaphysical. Similarly, placing both the Tomkins-inflected psychoanalytic approaches to affect and those theories coming from within what Sara Ahmed has called, “feminist cultural studies of emotion and affect”¹⁰ under the phenomenological mode risks eclipsing the key convergences of the psychoanalytic approach with the Deleuzian approach (including a certain resistance to the culturally discursive production of affect as a locus of investigation) *and* eclipsing the key divergences between psychoanalytic approaches to affect and those of queer and feminist cultural theorists for whom the cultural production of emotion is crucial, outweighing any search for what affect is as such. While Schaefer avoids these risks through a slow and nuanced mapping of the complexities within and between his two modes, I have found a slightly modified genealogy more helpful for understanding the streams of affect theory crucial to this project.

My focus on a political theology of affect, one concerned with the ethical resistance to neoliberal capitalism, has led me to more fully separate out (while recognizing key entanglements between the cultural studies and biopsychological approaches to affect, in particular in the interdisciplinary work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick) the biopsychological approaches to affect and the cultural studies ones. Hence, in an attempt to strike a balance between Gregg and Seigworth’s blooming list of approaches and Schaefer’s streamlined binary, I frame affect theory through three interconnected and yet distinct lenses: the biopsychological lens, the prepersonal lens, and the cultural lens. I suggest, differently from Schaefer, that each of these strains has

⁹ Patricia Ticineto Clough, “Introduction” in *The Affective Turn*, ed. Patricia Tincineto Clough and Jean Halley, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), 2.

¹⁰ Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 13.

phenomenological inclinations; the key divergences I find stem from the interpretive schema with which they approach the phenomena engaged.

The biopsychological lens represented in the works of such thinkers as Sedgwick, Adam Frank, and Tomkins looks to how feelings are biopsychologically structured in ways that shape human (and sometimes intra-human/nonhuman) experience.¹¹

Biopsychological approaches can be, but are not always, investigations of affects that cut across histories and cultures. The pre-personal lens, found in work that draws on the philosophies of Baruch Spinoza and Gilles Deleuze (Massumi, Clough, Manning, Shaviro) takes affect as a force or an intensity: that moment on the mountaintop or before the first kiss.¹² Affects are what we feel before we code them as emotions. It is important here to note that to understand affects as prepersonal is not to understand them as inconsequential to the social, or as unaffected by postpersonal emotion, but rather to understand affect as that which overflows the discursive production of emotional codes. And finally, the cultural approach to affect, which is most readily found in the work of queer and feminist cultural studies and critical race theory, resists categorizing affects as presocial and focuses instead on how affects are produced through cultural and historical

¹¹ See for example: Silvan Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness Volume 1: The Positive Affects* (New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1962); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank eds., *Shame and Its Sisters: a Silvan Tomkins Reader*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995); and Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003).

¹² See for example: Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002); Steven Shaviro, *Post Cinematic Affect*, (United Kingdom: O-Books, 2010); and Patricia Clough, *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007).

structures of power.¹³ Cultural theorists of affect investigate which bodies and which choices, which feelings stick (again, think here of how some figures get coded as happy and others as disruptive--the Happy Housewife versus the Angry Black Woman).

Feminist and queer thinkers of affect, such as Ann Cvetkovich, Sara Ahmed, and Lauren Berlant depathologize and deindividualize “negative” feelings. Instead of viewing these feelings as signs of sickness in the individual they ask us to examine the diagnostic potential of such moods. How might envy, for instance, disclose the mentality created in a society in which we are always striving, but failing to “keep up with the Joneses”? How might depression diagnose a society that asks us to be ever more efficient and productive, but cares little for the necessities of rest and reflection? How might rage diagnose what it feels like to have your life under threat or your intelligence under suspicion because of your race or gender? How might anxiety diagnose a society taught to be afraid of anyone who worships your God? It is this strain of affect theory, the critical examination of culturally produced emotions, that the current project most forcefully takes up as its guide for the rethinking of political theology. To understand such potential it is important both to introduce key cultural theorists of affect, and to lay out the contributions such theory might make in the fields of religious, biblical, and theological study. We begin with the latter.

Affecting Religion

It is my contention that affect theory makes at least four key contributions to religious study. First, it helps us to resist what Schaefer calls, “the linguistic fallacy.”

¹³ See for example: Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011); Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, (New York: Routledge, 2004); and Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: a Public Feeling*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012).

According to Schaefer, “the linguistic fallacy [is] the notion that language is the only medium of power.”¹⁴ Affect theory reminds us of the ontological and epistemological significance of the non-linguistic and the non-rational. Further, while as Schaefer reminds us, we must stay vigilant against the study of affect and religion slipping too quickly into “the ahistorical metaphysical essentialism of Eliade or the politically attached individualism of James,”¹⁵ this does not mean we must assume that critical investigation into the socio-political aspects of religion come only from the linguistic or discursive. For Schaefer, rather, the phenomenological approaches to affect achieve a proper investigation into how the non-rational works from within and also shapes modes of power.

Affect theory implores religion scholars to read texts, rituals, and doctrines not only for what they claim to be saying or doing, but also for how they feel, what emotions they reveal, and how such emotions might complicate interpretation. Additionally, it is my contention that the queer, feminist, and critical race approaches to affect theory most successfully engage non-rational forms of power production, because such cultural lenses forcefully interrogate what affects *do* more so than what affects *are*. Theorists working in these modes, such as Ahmed, Puar, Cverkovich, Hartman, and Berlant, remind us that such emotive epistemologies are also tied up with particular histories that must be addressed if we are to take seriously how different subjects have been formed in moody encounters with religious texts and practices.

¹⁴ Schaefer, *Religious Affects*, Kindle location, 258

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Kindle location, 256

Second, affect theory asks us to re-attend to material encounters. For instance, instead of beginning an investigation into how a religious tract, such as a historical pamphlet for prosletyizing, should be interpreted we might ask how the encounter of being given the tract felt to particular people in particular moments in history (we can think here of the New Materialist approaches to history endeavored by religious scholars like Sonia Hazard and John Modern). Indeed, phenomenological approaches to affect theory that engage a New Materialist lens (Chen, Bennett, and Connolly), one which looks to ways we are affected by nonhuman bodies (both organic and inorganic), further remind us that encounters with nonhuman religious material carry theological weight.

Third, reading for affect, and recognizing religious sensibilities in certain affectual modes, like a religious sense of prayer or lament within the moods of secular protests, helps us to rethink where today ritual and faith are practiced. For instance, might we name Hill's poetics of black rage as prophetic liturgy? Finally, affect theory returns us to that fourth source of theology, after scripture, tradition, and reason, that of experience. Affect theory reminds us that non-rational encounters with the sacred and the mundane have epistemological force.

As the above list illuminates, there is fertile ground for the theological study of affect and for the construction of affect theology. And yet, while there are hints of entanglement between these fields of critical inquiry and philosophy of religion, affect theorists have rarely sojourned into the sacred sphere, nor necessarily wished to tangle or be tangled with God. Additionally, theological, biblical, and religious studies have only recently begun to fruitfully engage the web of critical theory illuminated above. This dissertation hopes to supplement other projects, like that of Schaefer, to confront these

lacunae, and, particularly through engagement with queer, affect, and crip theories, to refigure theologically the political, the holy, and the salvific.

Queer and Feminist Affect Theory, a Brief Introduction

The work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has cleared fertile ground from which queer and feminist affect theory, the strain of theory that serves as the primary hermeneutical frame of this dissertation, has grown. Sedgwick has long been a foundational thinker in queer theory, and her turn to affect is representative of the field's turn as well. In *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* Sedgwick argues for the interesting and pedagogical character of affects—the ability for affects to break open binary thought. Significantly, the turn toward affect allows Sedgwick to break open the binary between performativity and essentialism, grappled with in queer and gender theory, and between the linguistic and nonlinguistic, grappled with in poststructuralist thought. Hence, “*Touching Feeling* wants to address aspects of experience and reality that do not present themselves in propositional or even in verbal form alongside others that do, rather than submit to the apparent common sense that requires a strict separation between the two and usually implies an ontological privileging of the [propositional over the nonverbal].”¹⁶ For Sedgwick the study of the material and non-rational does not preclude philosophical thinking. Rather, “[Sedgwick assumes] that the line between words and things or between linguistic and nonlinguistic phenomena is endlessly changing, permeable, and entirely unsusceptible to any definitive articulation.”¹⁷ Sedgwick refutes

¹⁶ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham and London: Duke University, 2003) 5.

¹⁷ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 5.

an assumption that a turn to material life would imply a dogmatic allegiance to concrete and closed meaning; instead it is in attention to affect and materiality that meaning becomes more complex. This opening up of binaries is emblematic of what the turn toward affect in critical theory accomplishes. Additionally, Sedgwick's queer engagement with affect brings together parts of the field that are concerned with the biopsychological aspects illuminated in Tomkins's affect theory with those investigating the ways in which the felt experience of being queer, and in particular the feeling of shame, shapes subjectivity. Sedgwick's queer feeling, in many ways, inaugurates the now prolific subfield of feminist and queer affect theory.

For instance, Heather Love convincingly argues that queer folks are often faced with the choice to move on to a *happier* future or to cling to the past, yet even as they are beckoned forward, they can't help but *feel* 'backward.'¹⁸ These backward feelings then could be reframed such that one need not overcome them as much as learn from them, feel them in order to feel a different kind of future, what Love ventures to call a 'backward' future.¹⁹ This sense of feeling 'backward,' taps into the critical potential of negative feelings such as depression, anxiety, envy, boredom, and despair each engaged to varying degrees by contemporary theorists of affect (Ahmed, Berlant, Ann Cvetkovich, and Ngai). This dissertation argues that such negative feelings might help us to reconsider and theologially rethink redemption in ways similar to those in which contemporary queer theorists have rethought capitalist success and optimism.

¹⁸ Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

¹⁹ Ibid.

Queer and feminist affect theorists such as Love, Berlant, Ahmed, Cvetkovich, and Michael Snediker approach affect through an epistemological lens; they seek to diagnose how both “positive” and “negative” affects shape our ways of being, knowing, and moving in the world. They identify how certain affects mark those that do not go with normative emotional flow as failures or threats. In the critical examination of the cultural production of affect and emotion we are able to identify how options and spaces for becoming are opened or closed off through the interactions of affects not only between humans, but also within the matrixes of relations between food, labor, people, zoning laws, and aesthetic production. For instance, Berlant’s *Cruel Optimism* interrogates neoliberal narratives of promissory fulfillment, which as promissory are always delayed. We are told we should be optimistic about the future, but as Berlant suggests, when such optimistic feelings prevent our present flourishing, such promise becomes cruel. According to Berlant:

A relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing. It might involve food, or a kind of love; it might be a fantasy of the good life, or a political project. It might rest on something simpler, too, like a new habit that promises to induce in you an improved way of being. These kinds of optimistic relation are not inherently cruel. They become cruel only when the object that draws your attachment actively impedes the aim that brought you to it initially.²⁰

Continuing from this definition, *Cruel Optimism* traces the affective resonances projected by capitalism, which shape our relations to self, other, and the world. The structuring of the affect of optimism not only is cruel in that that which is promised is rarely available or actually able to provide us with the kind of joy we think from such optimistic objects we might find, but also as a future promise it blocks us from having a life in the present.

²⁰ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 1.

The idea that one-day we will be saved enchains us to current oppressions; the very object of desire in this case actively blocks its fulfillment. Berlant's work, like many contemporary affect theorists within cultural studies, reveals the tie between cruel optimism and White Supremacy and Heteropatriarchy. For instance, one such object of cruel optimism might be the heteronormative nuclear family, for which we all must strive, and without which we might be damned.

Sara Ahmed's work, like that of Berlant, crucially resides within queer and feminist affect theory. For the purposes of this dissertation, her work in *The Promise of Happiness* is most salient. In order to explore the ways in which the promise of happiness shapes ontology Ahmed looks to what she refers to as "affect aliens."²¹ Affect aliens are those who do not fit the affectual script handed down by society. For instance, Ahmed notes, that, "to be a good subject is to be perceived as a happiness-cause, as making others happy. To be bad is thus to be a killjoy."²² The killjoy is an affect alien because she is unable to live up to the script of being happy so that others may be happy. Ahmed asks us to consider what might be learned from pausing a while and inhabiting the terrains tread by affect aliens: by the killjoy, the queer, or the revolutionary. This is a question that haunts the dissertation, but to which we most significantly turn in chapter four.

Ahmed is critical of "happiness" in its contemporary shape, but she by no means eliminates the possibility of joy. For instance, she warns that "to become pessimistic as a

²¹ Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*

²² Ibid., 20.

matter of principle is to risk being optimistic about pessimism.”²³ Rather than resting clearly in support of a particular feeling or its counter, pessimism or optimism, happiness or melancholy, Ahmed seeks to learn what might be found when we take more seriously the complexity of feeling. Methodologically, while this dissertation at times must tarry longer with negative moods than their positive counters, it is not my wish to become optimistic about pessimism. Rather, following Ahmed’s lead I look to what moods have been covered over and which new places, including what joys, we might encounter when we let these moods—depression, melancholy, mania, anger, anxiety—reorient to whom and to what we pay attention. Such reorientation opens us to the possibility of wandering away from demands to be happy with a system that has caused such unhappiness.

Revolting against demands to be happy is just one way *The Promise of Happiness* aims to tap into bad feelings as creative responses to an unfinished history.²⁴ It is in such creative responses where we might begin to both diagnose and theologially and ethically rethink the neoliberal narratives of redemption that keep us chained to our misery, while promising us we will through them be happy and free.

I read Ahmed’s work on happiness and the critical or diagnostic potential found in the willfulness of mood as having much in common with Ann Cvetkovich’s engagement with depression. Cvetkovich is an oft cited affect and queer theorist and a member of the Public Feelings project, a project which seeks to: “[open] anew the question of how to embrace emotional responses as part of social justice projects. It is alert to the feelings that activism itself produces and with the ways that activism could

²³ Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 162.

²⁴ Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 217.

change if it were to accommodate feelings, both positive and negative, more readily.”²⁵ Hence, Cvetkovich’s work provides a bridge between theory and activism. For instance, the Chicago Feel Tank (a branch of the Public Feelings Project) sponsors an annual depression march in which people wear bathrobes in the street and carry signs that read, “Depressed? It Might Be Political!” The march and the Public Feelings project in general aim to depathologize negative feelings in order to tap into their critical potential.²⁶ More than any other theorist of affect, it is Cvetkovich’s work on depression that has set the stage for the hermeneutic and the ethic nurtured by the political theology of this dissertation.

In *Depression: a Public Feeling* Cvetkovich engages a dual methodology. The first half of the book is a memoir of her own depression, what she calls “The Depression Journals.” The second half of the book is a critical reflection on depression. Cvetkovich’s writing moves beyond the diagnostic to the realm of political. This vision engages with feelings of despair or disappointment to uncover radical ways of living. Cvetkovich envisions a resistant life lived in the face of depression through a sense of utopia found in quotidian acts of habit and creativity. While some of these spaces overlap with more public embodiments of subcultural life (for instance in the performances of queer duo Kiki and Herb), one of Cvetkovich’s key contributions (along with cultural theorist Katie Stewart) to affect theory is an attention to domestic spheres that have gone under-theorized. In turning to the everyday her methodology, which is in sympathy with the

²⁵ Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: a Public Feeling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 109.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

methodology of this dissertation, “emerges from important traditions of describing *how capitalism feels*, but it also puts pressure on those left-progressive projects not to rush to meta-commentary.”²⁷ She reminds us that each depression, while social, is also singular; depression’s quotidian embodiment by a particular person prevents any easy narrative of what depression is or how it should or should not feel.

Further, in turning toward the domestic, Cvetkovich problematizes the binary between the public and private sphere; this becomes all the more essential when thinking through a life lived with depression, one which often engenders a feeling of being trapped in one’s own home or mind. For instance, the wearing of bathrobes in public unsettles the seeming affectual calm of the civic streets and asks for the political freedom to be unhappy. This is not to say that Cvetkovich eulogizes feeling bad, but rather that she asks us, in dialogue with Berlant, to slow down enough to look at how people find ways to live better in bad times, including how we might counter ‘slow death’ with ‘slow living.’²⁸ Further, she notes, “If depression is a version of Lauren Berlant’s slow death, then there is no clean break from it...But just because there’s no happy ending doesn’t mean that we have to feel bad all the time or that feeling bad is a state that precludes feelings of hope and joy.”²⁹ To move toward this joy we must first depathologize and acknowledge the feelings of despair that may remain even in the midst of or as a creative source for pleasure.

²⁷ Cvetkovich, *Depression a Public Feeling*, 11.

²⁸ Cvetkovich, *Depression*, 167.

²⁹ Cvetkovich, *Depression*, 206.

Additionally, Cvetkovich finds these moments of hope and joy within the formation of everyday habits, like crocheting, altar building, or brushing your teeth. For Cvetkovich, memoir writing is one of these everyday habits of creativity that “maneuve[r] the mind inside or around an impasse, even if that movement sometimes seems backward or like a form of retreat.”³⁰ Once exposed to a critique of their roles in culturally coercive demands, joy and creativity can become for us strategies for life in the face of blockage. Cvetkovich provides perhaps the greatest amount of hope in what we might call a micro tactic of the self that has macro political implications. These micro tactics of the self are possible in part (and perhaps ironically) because Cvetkovich, along with her fellow queer and affect theorists, does not see the self as an autonomous static being. A self formed in the between-spaces of affect and desire is one constructed through relation. Indeed Cvetkovich’s depressed subjects, herself included, have their identities shaped as “depressed” not merely out of an individualized mental illness but through an assemblage of worldly factors. Hence, Cvetkovich’s work, and the queer and feminist cultural study of affect more generally, will help us to reorient where we might find theological and ethical political imaginaries that run counter to neoliberal politics not only in moments of revolutionary change, but perhaps even more so in moments that remain in the everyday.

To remain with the everyday is also to open the archive of political and theological feeling to include sources we might normally overlook. The deployment of an alternate archive characterizes the methodology of many of the thinkers listed here, and it is their lead I follow. For instance, this dissertation will engage Robin James’s reading of

³⁰ Cvetkovich, *Depression*, 21.

music videos by Beyonce, Lady Gaga, and Rihanna, along with Elizabeth Freeman's reading of S/M practices to construct a Holy Saturday theology nurtured by what I name in chapter two "bipolar time." The archive of chapter three includes political theorists along with horror films, a popular novel, newspaper articles, and poetry, to argue for a theology of unproductivity and the holiness of everyday utopias and crip ontologies. Attention to an alternative archive is a queer practice, one fundamental to the work of Michele Foucault, as touched on by chapter five, and to more recent projects like Jack Halberstam's *Queer Art of Failure* which looks to Pixar cartoons, feminist performance art, and postcolonial novels (to name but a few) in its critique of the neoliberal injunction to be successful.³¹ Instead of striving to succeed at a game that has been rigged against us, Halberstam urges us to fail more often, better, and together with all those that colonial and neocolonial projects (including those of heteronormativity and white supremacy) have marked as failures: queers, women, people of color, indigenous people, the impoverished, transgender and gender queer folk, and the disabled.

This dissertation employs such non-binary thinking and archival collecting as it engages affect in order to challenge and supplement certain propositions within political theology. By taking into account the material phenomenon of affect in the world, and also the production of socially mediated emotions and the ever-changing lines between these two types of feelings, affect theory returns postmodern philosophy to the significance of the material body. Hence, I will be asking whether affect theory help us to return postmodern political theologies to the significance of the force of flesh?

³¹ Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011).

It is the supposition of this dissertation that such force of flesh diagnoses and challenges the affectual and material effects of the contemporary political economy. Affect theorists intensify critiques of neoliberalism, by taking seriously the material and affectual effects of a neoliberal economy, and the heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, and ableism that it fortifies and which fortify it. Hence, this dissertation employs the critical study of affect to interrogate neoliberal narratives of redemption under which to be productive, efficient, docile, and happy is to be free. Affect theory helps us to ask afresh: how people are really feeling, to what kinds of bodies “good” or “bad” affects stick, and what kind of salvation or freedom is actually on offer from neoliberal redemption narratives?

Crippling Redemption, Crippling Neoliberalism

To achieve such refigurations a critique of the conjoined values of productivity and wholeness will be key. This critique draws on counter-capitalist projects undertaken by a strain of queer theory often aligned with that of feminist and queer affect theory: crip theory, or critical disability studies. Prominent strains of disability studies focus on an acceptance and access model. This model aims at the inclusion of disabled people in mainstream society. While the importance of this work cannot be denied, other strains of disability studies known as crip theory or crip theology have challenged the field to expand into realms similar to those engaged by queer theory in its move beyond liberationist or identity politics. Like with the reclamation of the word “queer,” disability theorists who prefer the label “crip” seek to reclaim the derogatory signifier of the cripple for their own critical work.

Crip theory as expressed in the works of Robert McRuer, Anna Mollow, Tobin Siebers, and Alison Kafer, to name just a few, overlaps with newer queer and affect theories. Crip theory looks toward the non-normate body as a site of critical inquiry into a variety of hegemonic structures--supported by capitalism--that argue for the supremacy of 'productive' and 'reproductive' bodies. I seek to engage a crip sensibility in order to view madness and its concomitant affects (depression, mania, rage, and anxiety) not only as political affects, but also sites of crip insight. Welcoming a crip insight, we might come to more sensitively experience God and society through a non-normate mind.

Further, McRuer makes overt reference to the interaction between disability and sexuality, arguing that heterosexuality and able-bodied identity are connected in that they both, "[masquerade] as a nonidentity, as the natural order of things."³² For McRuer, compulsory heterosexuality is actually dependent on compulsory able-bodiedness. For compulsory heterosexuality is built around concepts of normate bodies and sexual desires, which as he shows create both the queer and the disabled as other, as those who are expected to answer the following question in the affirmative: "Yes, but in the end, wouldn't you rather be more like me?"³³ However, McRuer finds hope in the negative: "Precisely because [the systems of compulsory heterosexuality and able-bodiedness] depend on a queer/disabled existence that can never quite be contained, able-bodied

³² Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 1.

³³ *Ibid.*, 8.

heterosexuality's hegemony is always in danger of collapse."³⁴ Thus, for McRuer, the intersection of queer theory and disability studies undergirds the formation of crip theory.

Crip theory will (most prominently in chapter three) help us to ask both who is it that wants to be, gets to be, and benefits from being saved into becoming in the end "just like me," *and* who is the "me" like whom we are supposed to become. In other words, a crip sensibility, one that takes seriously the moods nurtured by capitalism, will help us to challenge neoliberal narratives of redemption in which the once "broken" (that is, crippled bodily or mentally, and/or made broke by neoliberal economics) can now become whole, happy, healthy, and productive.

Additionally, in terms of disability studies, McRuer and Mollow resurface those bodies gone unseen by other disability theorists. For instance, even in Sharon Betcher's excellent constructive theological engagements with disability, Betcher has noted that just because there is a high rate of suicide ideation amongst the disabled does not mean that they are mentally ill.³⁵ This move, like the ones Betcher worries about when metaphors of intellectual *blindness* pathologize the blind, is a plausible distinction, but one that can operate, beyond her intentions, to set up the troubling divide between proper disability and those from whom other disabled people should be distanced, in this case the mentally "ill". Hence, this venture into these lacunae reminds those of us interested in constructive ethical work that even as we embrace and tarry with the vulnerability of relation and affect, we will need to attend to our own abjected remainders, and our own acts of affirming certain negativities at the expense of others.

³⁴ McRuer, *Crip Theory*, 18.

³⁵ Sharon Betcher *Spirit and the Politics of Disablement* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 14.

There may always be an identity which even in our work to engage the disintegration of identities we risk making invisible. To counter this risk, we might turn to a broader definition of disability, one that serves as a deconstructive term working to reveal the fragility of all identity, and hence an essential vulnerable character of being human. For instance, Margrit Shildrick asks, “What [would it] mean, ontologically and ethically, to reposition dis/ability as the common underpinning of all human becoming?”³⁶ Similarly Tobin Siebers has offered disability as a critical framework from which to question the definitions of aesthetic value and harmony. For Siebers, a ‘disability aesthetic’ favors physical and mental difference over the replication of normative standards of beauty and health.³⁷ Disability as an aesthetic value loses the demand that the disabled be rehabilitated and redeemed. This aesthetic mood is woven throughout the following chapters in which in resistance to the need to be redeemed into the productive social body, we might seek out the singularities of becoming that wander away from such coercive cohesion. These reformulations of identity and redemption provide fertile ground for political theological propositions.

With the aid of the literature—from affect, queer, and crip theorists--detailed above this dissertation counters what Betcher has called theologies of “whole(some)ness,” by aligning God with what we might consider theories and theologies of “broke(en)ess,” as in theologies written from the sites of those made both broke and considered broken by the American hegemonic political system as enmeshed in global capitalism. Hence, this dissertation asks theologians, and particularly as we will

³⁶ Margrit Shildrick, *Dangerous Discourses of Disability, Subjectivity, and Sexuality* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 10.

³⁷ Tobin Siebers. *Disability Aesthetics*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010.

see below, radical political theologians, to take seriously the critiques of health, productivity, and positivity made by affect, queer, and crip theorists. In doing so radical theologians, perhaps myself included, may better inhabit our democratic potential.

Scene 2: The Room

I'm not supposed to be there; I certainly am not supposed to help her make the bed, but there would be no time to talk if I waited till her shift ended; she did not have a break. Odette was one of my favorite union members when I worked as an organizer for the hotel workers in New York City. She was loud and funny. Her Jamaican accent would boom across the employee cafeteria, a cafeteria like most hotel employee spaces, which lay in the bowels beneath the luxurious floors above. Over plates of rice and beans and Dominican chicken; food served by hotel chefs below and not above; she would tell me about her kids and her managers and we would talk about the union, its professional business and good industry gossip. She was only in her mid-thirties but had worked at this hotel for 12 years. She was respected by her fellow room attendants and a little feared by her managers. About a year into knowing Odette something shifted. She spoke more softly; when I would see her she seemed worn-down. Her voice no longer boomed, the jolt of a metal fork hitting a plate--as she raised her hand to her mouth so that food would not slip out as she laughed--no longer rang through the room. All of sudden I could not find her in the employee areas, the only areas where union staff were allowed to speak with our members. But, a contract dispute loomed and we needed to talk, so I roamed the floors to which she was assigned. I found her in a king suite. She was holding the small of her back as she slowly stood up after having reached over to pick up some

trash. We began speaking in hushed tones. I'll never forget what it felt like to help lift the mattress while she changed the sheets on the king size bed. After what the hotel industry called the "bedding wars" which took place in the early 2000s, hotel beds and linens had become impossibly heavy. Lifting just one made my shoulder twinge. I can't imagine doing whole floors of beds by myself. But of course this was what Odette, and many more (often older, and almost always women of color and immigrants) did every day. At some point after making the bed Odette briefly broke down and opening up, she told me that lately she had been utterly exhausted. Her back had been killing her. She could not pick up her two toddlers without wincing in pain. Providing comfort to strangers, servicing them, she had little left to give her kin. I heard years later that Odette had passed away from cancer, and I still wonder what role exhaustion played in her death. The service of comforting, what it meant to have made such comfort a commodity has never left me.

That room, it turns out, provided the scene of the first time I was conscious of what I would later, following Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri learn to call the "The Affect Economy."³⁸ While one product of Odette's physical labor was a well-made bed, more fundamentally what her work produced were the affects of comfort or homeyness for the hotel guests. Hardt and Negri include such care-work in their definition of the affect economy and what they call "Immaterial Labor." In the same semester in which I first encountered affect theory (in a talk given by Stephen Moore on the future of biblical study), I would read Hardt and Negri's *Multitude* where they explain the shift in neoliberal economics under which the economy, no longer built on factories within

³⁸ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004) 66.

Western nations came to focus on serviceable exchanges of affects—comfort, excitement, sexual satisfaction—and not “material” products. This definition returned me to work I had done the semester prior with Traci West. I did not yet have Hardt and Negri’s terms, but perhaps more crucially I was reading Womanist and Black Feminist ethics in order to engage the dehumanizing rhetoric applied to sex workers in New York City. The ethical frame provided by Black Feminists and Womanists has been for generations attentive to whose affects and bodies we have made into commodities. Political theology was perhaps finally (nacently) starting to catch up. Affect, academically speaking, seemed now to be ambient. It pulsed around each of my classes (presently and retrospectively): affect in ethics last spring; affect in the bible this Tuesday, affect in the economy on Wednesday.

According to Hardt and Negri the post-Fordist society is one of the affect economy.³⁹ This economy includes wage laborers like hotel room attendants and waiters, but also those of us who are scholars and religious leaders, those of us whose product is affect. While this shift in economy represents for Hardt and Negri the possibility of a new mode of politics and social relations based on collaboration of the ‘multitude,’ in which, “immaterial workers...become a new kind of combatant, cosmopolitan bricoleurs of resistance and cooperation. [They] are the ones who can throw the surplus of their knowledges and skills into the construction of a common struggle against imperial power,”⁴⁰ it also comes with great risks of alienation:

³⁹ Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 66.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 51

When our ideas and our affects, our emotions, are put to work, for instance, and when they thus become subject in a new way to the command of the boss, we often experience new and intense forms of violation or alienation ... The production of ideas, knowledges, and affects, for example, does not merely create means by which society is formed and maintained; such immaterial labor also directly produces social relationships.⁴¹

The reading of Hardt and Negri, along with the ambient presence of affect in my classes, led to further study. I began to ask questions: Which theologians were reading these neo-Marxists? What proposals from within an understanding of the economy as an affect economy might they be unearthing? Was affect becoming more prominently a proper object of theological study? And might that study be political?

While I did not find much work on affect, theological engagements with Hardt and Negri did open landscapes of theology that moved me into the economic and that did so without necessarily needing a specifically Christian theological basis. Most prominently in my post-*Multitude* theological encounters was a nascent field of theological reflection known as “radical theology.” The recent special journal issue of *Palgrave Communications* on radical theology describes the field thusly: “Radical theology as a field encompasses the intersections of constructive theology, secular theology, death-of-God theologies, political theologies, continental thought and contemporary culture. It expresses an inter-disciplinary engagement and approach dedicated to redefining the very terms of theology as a concept and practice.”⁴² In my encounters with radical theologies I felt the beginning senses of a theological home. Radical theologians were writing about the economic and political; they were for the

⁴¹ Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 66.

⁴² Mike Grimshaw, *Palgrave Communications* Special Collection Introduction, <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/palcomms/article-collections/radical-theologies>, (accessed December 2, 2015)

most part counter-capitalist and critical of neoliberalism; they were not confessional and many were not even Christian (this was key for me as a Unitarian Universalist constructive theologian who does not wish to frame myself as only able to speak from Christian theological grounds); and they expressed a desire to pay close material attention to immanent worldly (and perhaps holy) becomings. And yet, this new home felt bare (a feeling to which I return below). For all the talk of immanence and materiality, this literature did not seem to be attempting to effect by affect. Indeed I was unsure where emotion fit within the discourse. Yet, in the eclipsing of affect in the theological redeployments of Hardt and Negri and other postmodern thinkers engaged in political reflection, the field of radical theology left open virgin terrain across which this dissertation now hopes to venture.

Political Theology and its Radical Re-encounters

The two most famous statements from Carl Schmitt's 1922 work, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, are inarguably the following: "The sovereign is he who decides on the exception..." and "All modern concepts of the state are secularized theological concepts." The field of political theology in the 20th and 21st centuries has, in part, developed from these two statements. Schmitt's assertions came in the face of growing secularization of politics and the modern state. Responding to what he saw as the problem of liberalism, which developed out of critiques of religion from theorists like Karl Marx and Max Weber, as well as out of theories of modern progress and the rise of the scientific method, Schmitt worried that there was no regulating ideal controlling the liberal state. Democracies without a robust concept of kingdom could easily fall into mass anarchy or be manipulated for faithless

totalitarianism (an irony given Schmitt's later role in the Nazi party). Schmitt saw the 19th century becoming increasingly focused on the immanent and dismissive of the transcendent and argued for a return to a transcendent Christian God and its resultant conception of aristocratic sovereignty. For Schmitt Rousseau and subsequent liberal theorists had placed far too much faith in the people, and only a return to the Christian Good could regulate the problems of liberalism, with which he tied democracy. If all modern concepts of the state were theological anyway, then a return to proper—predemocratic and theocratic-- theology would be the solution.

This claim haunts contemporary political theological debates. Some theorists eschew the idea that the liberal secular state cannot remain neutral. For instance in his contribution to the 2006 Hent de Vries and Lawrence Sullivan collection on political theology Jürgen Habermas argues that the secular liberal state, to be liberal, must remain neutral in the sense that it must be nonreligious and nonmetaphysical.⁴³ Yet, even Habermas acknowledges that there is a need for an agreed upon normative good, that of justice, and of normative action, that of civil solidarity (an action he sees weakening with the growth of the global economic market and of the privatization of the good).⁴⁴ However, many contemporary philosophers and theologians involved in the debates around political theology take Schmitt's assertion that the secular has an implicit theological aspect as a given, but debate Schmitt's conclusions on how to respond to these theological aspects. This acceptance of a theology undergirding the secular is one of

⁴³ Jürgen Habermas, "On Relations Between the Secular Liberal State and Religion," *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, ed. Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

two crucial claims for the so-called postsecular turn in philosophy and theology. The second claim is that despite modern secularism's assumption that religion was on the decline, religiosity in many parts of the world has intensified. Out of this understanding several schools of philosophy and theology all under the large umbrella of political theology have arisen, including the school of Radical Theology which this dissertation takes as a hostel in which to rest on its theological journey, if not yet fully a hospitable abode to make its home.

Less homey is the contemporary school of political theology known as Radical Orthodoxy (Milbank, Cavanaugh, Long, Pickstock, Ward). In this school reside Schmitt's theological inheritors. Key for radical orthodox thinkers, and for my engagement with them in chapter two, is their assertion that the secular sphere needs a concept of proper telos. Their need for an absolute good, in the shape of a Christian God, means that while they may be countering conservative neoliberal economic and political models, they are proclaiming a conservative theological model that conserves God in a way that leaves many out in the cold.

Serving as foil to radical orthodoxy is the work of radical political theologians and philosophers, postmodern theologians, and Process theologians (in this list I include a wide-range of philosophers and theologians that can be traced back to the broad definition of radical theology given by the Palgrave editors) such as William Connolly, Catherine Keller, John Cobb, John D. Caputo, Jeffrey Robbins, Clayton Crockett, Noelle Vahanian, Ward Blanton, Mark C. Taylor, Mark L. Taylor, and Richard Kearney, engaged in theological reflection on the econo-political. These thinkers rely heavily on the work of poststructuralists such as Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, Malabou, Agamben,

Zizek, Laclau, Laruelle, Lacan, Badiou, and Hardt and Negri, as well as on death-of-God, philosophers such as Louis Altizer and Gabriel Vahanian. These thinkers refuse to counter secularized theologies, like those undergirding capitalism, with other absolutist theologies.

Radical theologians of the democratic bent embrace the postsecular idea that there is a theology undergirding our secular politics and economics, and indeed work to uncover the dangerously conservative, absolutist, and providential theologies behind the American Empire and global capitalism. By drawing on the death-of-God and poststructuralist theories of event, plasticity, open relationality, and potentiality radical democratic theologians and philosophers argue for theologies of immanence. These theologies, therefore, might fit into what Mark L. Taylor calls the post-theological, a theology that does not need a theistic belief in God, but does recognize a kind of agonistic transimmanence, a world in the making in which agonisms between bodies and social identities burst open possibilities beyond current immanent realities.⁴⁵ For these theologians there is no guarantee of a rosy future, but there is a flourishing within this tragic uncertainty. As Mark C. Taylor argues in *Confidence Games: Money and Markets in a World without Redemption*, the key is not that we are doomed, but rather that it is in the lack of redemption that we find everlasting life.⁴⁶

Finding theology within the immanent world and its creative agonisms, returns us to affect, even as emotion goes under-theorized in much of the work of those listed

⁴⁵ Mark L. Taylor, *The Theological and the Political: On the Weight of the World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011).

⁴⁶ Mark C. Taylor, *Confidence Games: Moneys, Markets, in a World without Redemption* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004) 331.

above. This dissertation hopes to raise the moody ghosts that haunt such theological discourses and ask with Ahmed and Cvetkovich what types of creative responses might come to view by taking seriously how neoliberal narratives make us feel and perhaps rejecting the redemptive offerings presented to us by such narratives. To encounter such creative responses we may need to embrace moods that run counter to those expected of us by mainstream culture and the neoliberal economy. We may need to care for what it is to be and how it is to feel irredeemable.

Reimagining Radical Theology

Over the years, my need for greater moodiness has taken shape in embodied encounters not only with the texts of radical theology, but also with radical theologians themselves. I met Jeffrey Robbins and Clayton Crockett at a conference on political theology in 2013. The two had just published a collaboration titled: *Religion, Politics, and the Earth: the New Materialism*. New Materialism, I had a sense, was tied to affect, was a return to the non-rational ways in which we are affected by and affect one another. I was eager to read the book, and elated when Crockett sent it to me so that I could ask questions of them at a panel discussion at Union Theological Seminary. The panel was called *Becoming a Brain*: a play on Crockett and Robbins's proposal, drawing on Catherine Malabou's concept of neuro-plasticity, that we might come to understand ontology as energy transformation and as such rethink our own becomings as becoming a brain: that organ entangled with all other bodily functioning which takes on form and also destroys it.⁴⁷ While I was drawn to the idea of ontology as energetically and/or entropically becoming and unbecoming, their deployment of "brain" left me ill at ease.

⁴⁷ Clayton Crockett and Jeffrey W. Robbins, *Religion, Politics and the Earth: the New Materialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2012).

That evening in the chapel room of Union, after official responses to the book from Mark L. Taylor and Cornel West, I raised my hand and asked: “If the ontological key for your project is that we are all energy transformation; then why go so quickly to the brain as the figure of this transformation? Why not look to the digestive tract, to processes of caloric exchange and expulsion? To the shit? Wouldn’t looking to that which we ingest, digest, and expel from our bodies better align you with all those that have been considered human waste, the non-human other, but also women, black people, the impoverished, the indigenous, the queer, and the disabled?” This was a question welcomed by Crockett and Robbins, and yet one that persists for them and for me in terms of where radical theology is going, and to which *matters* it is attending.

In the wake of my fecal questioning Crockett and Robbins urged me to present at Subverting the Norm 2, a conference that brought together people from the emergent church movement and academic theologians working with postmodern theologies, including radical theology. Attending the conference of about 200 people as one of less than ten women, and as part of 99.9% of attendees that were white it became clear to me that this discourse was missing some of the shit; much of the *material* life that needed to be engaged by any new materialism and any truly *radical* theology.

The lack of fecal attention put me in a shitty mood. I was not in the mood for Subverting the Norm, or perhaps better Subverting the Norm was not fit for my mood. Perhaps I existed at the wrong barometric pressure. I had not become acclimated to the scene. I was not emergent enough. Not Christian enough. Not male enough. I was (or perhaps was in) trouble. I was subverting the wrong norms. Ahmed writes, “How is it that we enter a room and pick up on some feelings and not others? I have implied that one

enters not only *in* a mood, but *with* a history, which is how you come to lean this way or that. Attunement might itself be an affective history, of how subjects become attuned to others over and in time.”⁴⁸ For Ahmed, attunement to the atmosphere can mean learning to not bring up certain topics. What is it about historical and contemporary theological moods that impede the present moods of race, gender, ability, and sexuality in the current discourse of radical theology? What are the histories to which this theology wants us to attune, and which are being swept into the dustbin of its history?

The question of history *matters*; whose mood gets picked up on, and to whose are we coerced to attune, were not questions yet being asked by radical theology. Answers to these questions, have largely gone unbegun, until perhaps, now. I have a feeling, that there is something *there* in radical theology; that there are the beginnings of what might be a truly moody theology, one sensitively attending to the affects of those considered irredeemable or willfully going unredeemed within neoliberal narratives of salvation. Even when I have been out of the mood, I have not given up on the potential for a faith more attuned to a multiplicity of subjects and histories within the writings of Crockett and Robbins and my other hostel mates. But, perhaps it begins with whatever hostility arises when moody bodies enter, or are excluded from, these theological rooms.

Scene 3: The library

When I’m lonely I go to *Book Culture*, an independent book store in the Morningside Heights neighborhood of Manhattan on a side street that if you were to continue down you’d end up right at the foot of the fourth largest cathedral in the world. I often think of that stretch of 112th street as just an extension of St. Johns, a kind of

⁴⁸ Sara Ahmed, “Not in the Mood,” *New Formations* 82 (2014): 18.

hallway on the way to the holy. In *Book Culture*, on those lonely days, I let my hand slide over spines of books on the shelf. My fingers feel for the smoothness of recent hard covers and the cracks of used paperbacks. I touch for the spaces created by the shifting depth and width of each monograph; I caress embossed titles that texture what otherwise would be smooth spines.

One day my hand was halted by a book that blocked its flow. The book had been put back in such a way that there was no getting from it to the next one without moving my hand away from the shelf. As it turns out the book was that of a colleague at New School University, where I had recently begun teaching. I knew of Ken Wark and was hoping to get to know him. That his book, *Spectacle of Disintegration: Situationist Passages Out of the Twentieth Century* had found me, I knew meant I had to buy it. It sat for some weeks, its lime green cover calling to me, from a growing pile of books that sat uncracked on the bedroom chair, which itself had gone mainly unused by any human, as it was perpetually covered with books, clothes, and yesterday's accessories.

A week after I completed my comprehensive exams I was set to fly to London, where I would spend a month trying to write my dissertation prospectus. I filled a suitcase almost entirely of books. I had my radical theologians and my affect theorists packed together, some transatlantic copulation hoped for. And then that green cover found me again. Frantically looking for my copy of *Depression a Public: Feeling* I was halted by *The Spectacle of Disintegration*. I tossed it in the suitcase and off I went. Because when you have lots of work you *must* do, you begin to read the stuff you *want* to; I spent part of my first day in London jet-lagged in bed reading with Wark. *Disintegration* led me to Raoul Vaneigem, whom along with Guy Debord, was a

principle theorist in the Situationist movements of the 1960s and 70s. Maybe there was something to these thinkers of an everyday life that might be free of the social order. I typed Vaneigem's name into the British Library online catalogue. At the top of the list was not a book by Vaneigem, but a title so perfect I felt my search fingers itch: *The Soul at Work* by Franco "Bifo" Berardi.

The British library was magical. It was there I first met Bifo, first ran my eyes over his soul at its work. Here capitalism and depression ran together across the pages. Here, perhaps, was a cipher for what I needed to do. Whereas I had found affect lacking in radical theology, emotion came rushing back to the fore in certain Marxist texts like that of Berardi's.

Feminism and Autonomism, or Marxist Souls at Work

As helpfully acknowledged by Kathi Weeks, Hardt and Negri, and Berardi write from within the "autonomous Marxist" tradition.⁴⁹ According to Weeks, this school simultaneously interrogates capitalist production and both capitalist and socialist productivism.⁵⁰ A politics of the refusal of work stems from this interrogation. The work of Hardt and Negri, along with other contemporary re-imaginings in the feminism of Weeks and the autonomism of Berardi, help to articulate a counter-capitalist politics that seeks not only for greater access to work, or better work, but rather demands the right to

⁴⁹ Autonomist Marxism employs "autonomy" not as a rejection of dependency or a synonym for independence, but rather using its etymology to suggest the importance of self-rule. In this way it has deep ties not only to branches of socialism that sought to counter communist totalitarianism, but also the development of anarchism. Autonomism in the thought of Antonio Negri should not be read as individualism, but rather as a critique of conformity and coercion.

⁵⁰ Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work* (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2011) 13.

everyday pleasures and freedom from work. This post-work politics intersects with recent queer, affect, and crip theories and theologies around “negative” feelings and productivism (as discussed above).

Additionally, along with Hardt and Negri’s “affect economy,” that Berardi diagnoses the affects engendered by neoliberalism (or what he calls SemioCapitalism) as depression, paranoia, and exhaustion stuck with me and the archives of feeling I had already been collecting with Cvetkovich and Ahmed. Sitting for the next month with Berardi’s soulful depression and Cvetkovich’s political one my own mad theologies grew. From these texts that stuck with me and that therefore got stuck together a commitment to an even more forceful engagement with theories of affect, particularly those marked by negative feelings such as depression, and their queer entanglements took deeper root. It is the combination of these discourses that I argue better en flesh a theological response to political threats and opportunities engendered by the affect economy. For instance, a stance of depression might resonate with a post-work politics demanding that ethical attention be paid and worth assigned to the needs, agencies, and bodies of all people regardless of their productivity and mental or physical ‘ability’. Here, a post-work theology takes on its character as a universalist theology—one which holds the inherent worth of all beings, in the beauty of their singularity and the intensity of such singularities coexisting more so than cohering, at the core of its rationale. Being halted by Wark, arrested by Berardi, and in commune with Cvetkovich the glimpses of what might be holy in all this moody reflecting started to take shape.

Scene 4: The Lunch

It was one of those semesters for which you think, “This time I’ll be prepared.” You think, “I’ll make the scans early, get the course packs printed, and the PDFs available.” You think, “I’ll read more than one class ahead of my students.” You think, “My lecture notes will be perfect and not written at 5am that morning.” You think.

I was already running late to a meeting when I popped into the faculty resource room to see if scans of Michael Snediker’s *Queer Optimism* were ready for distribution. When I got there a tall, slender, chicly dressed woman, about my age, was flipping through the book’s pages. “Oh sorry,” she said, “Is this yours? I love Michael Snediker.” Meredith was another adjunct teaching feminist thought in the first year writing course. The next day we met for lunch. When my new colleague got to the restaurant about fifteen minutes late, she was frazzled. Unsure of new-friendship boundaries, I awkwardly acknowledged that something was clearly awry and asked if she wanted to talk. The dean’s office had decided to take away two of her classes at the last minute. This was going to leave her unable to pay her rent. What about the union? I asked. Yes she was going to appeal to our adjunct union, but she was worried that because she had only been teaching for a few years there was not much standing to get her courses back. I told her the history of unionization of part-time faculty at the New School, which I had witnessed a decade prior when I was there as a student. We discussed the important gains: much more money (and yet still not a living wage); health insurance; retirement contributions; some protections in terms of hiring and firing. And yet, it was clear to us both that we still felt depressed and anxious by the precarity of what it means to be an adjunct; as unionized we had it better than most, but we were not affectually or materially *okay*. Yes, we could get medical check-ups, yes we only needed to teach at one additional school per

semester to make ends meet, but our precarity remained a stress on both our bodies and minds.

Over avocado toast (for 12 dollars) and rosemary lemonades (for 5 dollars) I told Meredith about the beginnings of my dissertation. I told her about depression as a hermeneutic into how neoliberal economics feel, and that it was from within this state of madness and not in spite of it that I thought we might find different landscapes for becoming. I told her I did not want to be redeemed out of this anxiety and depression, saved from my madness, I wanted to find ways to stop saving the neoliberal machines that had got us so depressed in the first place. “You must love Lynne Huffer,” she said. I had no idea who she was talking about. Out of her bag came a tattered, almost falling apart from being lovingly repeatedly read, copy of *Mad for Foucault*, Huffer’s rereading of Foucault’s *History of Madness*.

Six months after my lunch with Meredith, I am 3000 miles away and running late to meet another friend for lunch. I cannot yet leave because I cannot stop crying. I am sitting in a 1960s mod style apartment atop a garage in West Hollywood. Across from me sits my host, a friend in his own state of madness from the knowledge that his father, whom for years has been battling cancer, will soon be dead. I linger there in the wake of a breakup, and in the hopeful and despairing shadow of a conference set on facing climate disaster. I am crying as I read (with) Foucault. I am haunted by the little foolish ones he surfaces in the pages of *Madness*. More than once I am flooded with tears in a way that the voices of the mad, always fully unspeakable, become truly unreadable as my vision becomes wet and blurry. Irrationally, perhaps, I feel as though Foucault has written these words just for me. It is as though I am returning to a long gone self. It is as though I had

been confined and condemned, as though I had let my madness lay dormant in ways that were killing me, but that now my depression, mania, rage, anxiety, and ecstasies might no longer stay buried. In returning me to myself, Foucault and Huffer oddly returned me to God.

Mad for Foucault and my encounters—a bit hysterical-- with *History of Madness* changed this dissertation. With Foucault, I began, perhaps ironically, to have confidence in its theological character. Foucault in allowing me to go unredeemed helped me re-encounter what it might mean to be divine, or encounter divinity. In some ways, despite myself, Foucault helped me to salvage God. Foucault, read through Huffer, and then again through my own affect hermeneutic in chapter five, brought me back—quite unexpectedly--to Alfred North Whitehead, and what it might mean to feel and be felt by a mutable God that feels all of our current becomings, but also all of the past's perishings, including those of the irredeemable mad whom modern progress had hoped would remain buried.

Processing a Political Theology of Affect

While it was the sense that we might need to feel our way toward the past in order to feel differently in the present and future, a feeling Foucault elicited in me (and through my tear ducts), that lured me toward an engagement with Whitehead, there are certainly many other rationales for how Process Thought might serve as a theological interlocutor for affect theory. Beyond the odd feeling it might come to fruitful engagement with Foucault (not himself an affect theorist), there are three primary reasons behind process theology's potentiality as an interlocutor with affect theory. First, these fields share similar philosophical forbearers. Some of the theorists mentioned as having primary

influence or resonance with affect theory in *The Affect Theory Reader* include Baruch Spinoza, Alfred North Whitehead, Gilles Deleuze, and Donna Haraway. These thinkers represent primary and secondary sources for contemporary constructive Process discourses, all of which harkens back to Whiteheadian philosophy. Second, Process thought is centered on concepts that resonate deeply with affect theory: a focus on feeling and affectual interaction between all actual entities in the world (including the inorganic); a deep relationality between creation and God; a mutable God, whose ‘Consequent Nature’ is dependent on others; a complex temporality, which sees the influence of the past and the potentiality of the future interpenetrating the becoming of the present; and an ontology built on becoming and not static being. Finally, despite these critical sympathies, Process theology’s potential for a queer turn toward the negative, toward more fractured becomings, suspended agency, and the productive disintegration of subjectivity, has barely been tapped. In fact Process theology’s own emphasis on harmony and beauty could problematically quell its queer potential. Yet, as I hope to show in chapter five, when such concepts are taken in their full meaning, as reflective of the polyphonic intensity of incompatibility becoming contrast, different *moods* in Process become apparent.

According to Whitehead, every actual entity⁵¹ in the world feels all other actual entities in the process of its own becoming. Whitehead names this feeling ‘prehension’. Each actual occasion is a perpetual process of becoming and perishing. When an occasion

⁵¹ Actual entities are fundamental unites of reality. They are often called actual occasions as they represent the momentary event when past influences and future possibilities actualize into a momentary unit of subjective reality. God is an actual entity, although is never referred to as an occasion.

perishes other occasions coming into being feel its perishing and make a ‘decision’⁵² about what elements from their own past and that of the other’s perishing they will actualize in their next moment of becoming. The felt data that become actualized are called positive prehensions, whereas that which is felt but not incorporated in the concrescence of the occasion⁵³ Whitehead refers to as negative prehensions. All perishings and past data are felt, but not all are actualized. Hence, “The present occasion is nothing but its process of unifying the particular prehensions with which it begins.”⁵⁴ This is true for both organic and inorganic matter, both of which prehend, become, and perish. Nothing is static, although higher order matter, like that of the human, has a wider array of freedom of decision in what it will become.

God is also an actual entity in the world who prehends the perishings of all other actual entities, as well as each entity’s possible becomings. God’s feeling of the world is part of God’s ‘Consequent Nature.’ According to Whitehead, God has a dipolar character, with one pole representing God’s ‘primordial nature’ and the other God’s ‘consequent nature’. The primordial nature of God is that part of God which is unchanging and independent. It sets the initial aim in the world for greater harmony and intensity. The consequent nature of God is God’s mutable and dependent pole. This pole feels the world and incorporates its perishing into God’s nature such that our joy and suffering are also God’s. Such incorporation has in some Process readings taken on a

⁵² ‘Decision’ in process thought need not be a conscious choice the way we might normally conceive of it. Rather, all actual occasions even those with lower order cognition have a mentality and ‘choose’ which possibilities to actualize in each moment.

⁵³ Concrescence is the process by which the actual occasion unifies its possibilities into its momentary novel becoming.

⁵⁴ John B. Cobb and David Ray Griffin, eds. *Process Theology: an Introductory Exposition* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976), 20.

soteriological character. Yet, I argue in chapter five, a Process soteriology need not be a redemptive one, as much as one that saves in that it salvages all that has been felt; nothing goes lost or unfelt, including both the actual pain inflicted on us by neoliberal narratives *and* our potential to feel otherwise.

Indeed, that the Consequent Nature of God is dependent on us, feels us and incorporates our perishing within God's becoming means that perhaps our refusal, our unhappiness, our depression could serve its pedagogical function, teaching not only the world, but also God, a critical lesson on how life in the post-Fordist society feels. There is great potential in Process theology for a theoethic that resists and offers alternatives to the demands of productivity and success engendered by capitalism. Perhaps most crucially for theology, we might have to take seriously God's capacity to feel with us and so to feel and learn from the full spectrum of affects, feelings, and emotions, such that God too feels 'backwards,' feels abject, and crucially feels it necessary that any too complete or simplistic salvation be impeded.

Indeed, in chapter five, I argue that one such divinely affecting mood--a mood that helps me to counter neoliberal narratives of salvation--comes through God's "tender care that nothing be lost,"⁵⁵ and God's character as Eros of the Universe.⁵⁶ As explicated further in the chapter, such erotic care that insists on that which has gone not be lost is divine attention to the significance of what has been, what might have been, what might be, and what might never be again. Such divine attention might be a lure we follow into alternative archives, archives haunted by those confined and condemned as mad and so

⁵⁵ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1978) 346.

⁵⁶ Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: The Free Press, 1967) 9.

unproductive and irredeemable. These are the mad that haunt Foucault's histories, and those with whom I hope this dissertation divinely feels and thinks.

Scene 5: The Class

There are greeting cards you can get off the Internet that are written especially for PhD students. Each card in the series contains drawings of baby animals. The cards are either sympathetic: "Sorry you cried in front of your adviser!" or celebratory, "Congratulations on not crying in front of your adviser!" Just a few weeks before defending my dissertation I needed one of those cards. I found myself, quite suddenly, tearing up in the Affect Theory seminar I had been teaching: "Sorry you broke down so unprofessionally," a little bunny with big eyelashes could say to me; or "Congratulations on pulling it together within a minute!" a faun might say winking and holding its hoof up for a high-five. I was teaching Ann Cvetkovich's *Depression: a Public Feeling* in a more recent incarnation of my Affect Theory course for first year students at the New School. We had just completed the memoir section of the book in which Cvetkovich describes the scenes of her depression during times of completing her dissertation; being on the tenure-track job market; and starting her first job at a new university hundreds of miles from everyone she knew. The students were debating the authenticity of voice in the memoir, and then one said, "Also I'm sort of annoyed at Ann." "Cvetkovich," I corrected. "Right sorry, anyway, what does she have to be depressed about? She has so much privilege when you think about it." I burst into tears. For months, if not years, I had been living in what Berardi diagnoses as "panic-depressive cycle," a cycle nurtured by the neoliberal

demand to be evermore productive.⁵⁷ The demand to produce, to finish, to have one's ideas arrive right and on time, had me pulsing with nervous energy.

Such energy would often crash into depression, into a feeling of impasse that seemed insurmountable. This dissertation was not going to get done. There was *no* time. I had to pay rent and feed myself and so had been teaching three courses at the New School while tutoring 15 hours a week at Cooper Union. Like, Cvetkovich, I had been applying to tenure-track jobs all due at the same time as papers that needed grading, advising appointments that needed conducting, conference presentations that needed polishing, and dissertation chapters that needed editing. It made sense to be exhausted, but why was I so *depressed*? Wasn't I following the career I wanted? Hadn't I chosen this? Hadn't I stopped going to Black Lives Matter protests months earlier in favor of taking *my* time to write, and think, and teach, to do the things that in spite of the panic and depression I actually loved. What had got me so moody in the midst of such exhaustion? What was happening for Cvetkovich? For Marie? For Meredith? For me? For us? Was my mood academic, was it a natural part of academia? Was my teary breakdown just another rite of passage, one on which a whole series of greeting cards could be built?

Perhaps, but I want to surmise that there is a *mood* within our everyday living that has as much to do with the lifeworlds we have been offered or those we've been told were impossible, as it has to do with any essential nature of who we are and what our momentary particular situations might be. The particulars matter, but it seems to me that each particular mood (a depressed Karen) might pulse toward a more macro mood (a

⁵⁷ Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *The Soul at Work* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009).

depressed culture). What was happening that affect had become ambient in my courses? What was it about contemporary society that had these different facets of study, feminist literary scholars turned cultural theorists and Italian Marxists, delving into depression? What does the shift in moody slogans from an Obama Hope poster to #HandsUpDon'tShoot!, say about our societal mood? And what complexity of mood between these two slogans is engendered by "Black Lives Matter"? Do these shifts have anything to do with my own panic and depression? Was there another way to be in the moments of madness then I had been over those months? Then I was in that classroom? Could something other than a Trump presidency arise in the wake of eruptive moods of resentment and disenfranchisement? Could we feel differently about such emotions, both when we can barely get out of bed *and* when we rush into the streets of protest? Could the everyday be inhabited afresh by hysterical women ready to break free? Cvetkovich's memoir reminds us that these encounters with our impasses, with our breakdowns, might have something to teach us about how we live and how we *might* live, not in spite of, but from a critical engagement *with* our madness.

Scene 6: The Method

This is a dissertation about remaining with the everyday in ways that might change what such a day looks like and how it feels. Such remaining (and here I mean to evoke the Holy Saturday theologies of remaining elucidated by Shelly Rambo in *Spirit and Trauma: a theology of remaining*) I argue, clears pathways for the possibility of different theological, ontological, political, economic, and affectual becomings. The constellations of texts employed for such caring and clearing are ones that found me as

much as I found them. They are like affects, sticky; they stuck to me. I am sticky with their matrixes of ideas; they are those that got me unstuck from other feelings of being pathologically damaged, not good enough, my work not worthy enough.

Methodologically, this project relies on the intra-actions of the archive that I weave together from the texts that to me cohere. It is an archive of feeling (to borrow from Cvetkovich), and time, and economy, and worth, but also an archive of thinkers that I hope defamiliarize us with what each of these words might mean.

In many ways I follow Cvetkovich's own instincts in my hope to produce, "what Audre Lorde describes as forms of truth that are felt rather than proven by evidence, the result of 'disciplined attention to the true meaning of 'it feels right to me.'"⁵⁸ These texts felt right to me. In the disciplined attention I brought to them and they brought to me from the shelves, in bed, in classrooms, and conference rooms, and libraries, and book stores, the ideas in these texts felt right to put together. However, since, these texts are not necessarily, or obviously, meant to cohere, to assemble as a whole, perhaps they are not the perfect fit for all I want/ed to do. I will of course not be digging deep into every recess of philosophical madness, nor span the networked breadth of affect theory (and its cousins queer temporality, critical disability studies, and New Materialism). I will make no definitive declarations on the state of neo-Marxism and on various theological critiques of neoliberal economics. My dissertation will queerly fail at all of that. I will though try out what Catherine Keller has called, trusty propositions, that while eschewing capital T truth-claims, "[narrate] what has been in order to keep open the democratic

⁵⁸ Cvetkovich, *Depression*, 77.

space in which the shared future is negotiated.”⁵⁹ I will pose some tough questions. I will feel for and touch on answers, but not give solutions. I will leave too much unbegun.

My propositions will be trusty, if they will not claim Truth. I will be following different senses of emotion, feeling, and affect where they lead. I will, with theorists such as Ahmed and Cvetkovich find “happiness,” “depression,” “mania,” “hope,” “worry,” “rage,” and “madness” interesting and not definitive. While at times some of these terms, particularly that of madness and depression will seem interchangeable, at other times they will unfold in their fierce particularity. Additionally, at times the terms affect, emotion, feeling, and mood will slip and slide inhabiting similar meanings, while at other times they will take on particular characteristics. Ultimately, they each refer back to how we come to be and to know through the non-rational, although terms like emotion and mood more readily bring to mind the cultural production and policing of feeling than any preconscious sensory experience that affect occasionally implies.

For the purposes of this dissertation the meaning of “depression” and “madness” in general and as hermeneutic lenses come primarily from the affect, crip, and neo-Marxist theories listed above, as well as my own felt experiences of the world. Following, Cvetkovich, I argue that depression or madness must be depathologized and deindividualized. She argues that we can only deal with what we traditionally think of as “clinical” depression if we confront political depression; the one is never inconsequential to the other. Cvetkovich sees this endeavor as an opening to a different kind of utopia: “a utopia that doesn’t make a simple distinction between good and bad feelings or assume

⁵⁹ Catherine Keller, “Uninteresting Truth? Tedium and Event in Postmodernity,” in *Secrets of Becoming: Negotiating Whitehead, Deleuze, and Butler*, ed. Roland Faber and Andrea M. Stephenson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011) 211.

that good politics can only emerge from good feelings, feeling bad might, in fact, be the ground of transformation.”⁶⁰ In support of this suggestion madness in this dissertation is a mode of approaching alternate utopian visions, those with counter-salvific and counter-redemptive sensibilities, and therefore carries theological weight. Additionally, depression and madness serve as my entree into a larger discourse within affect theory around “negative” feelings, or what I come to call mad feelings, and cannot be read as significantly unique or separate from theoretical engagements with boredom, disgust, melancholy, shame, and anxiety.

Taking a cue from McRuer and Mollow who argue that compulsory heteronormativity is also compulsory able-bodiedness, I further suggest that heteronormativity is additionally compulsory able-mindedness, and argue that “madness” can become a kind of queer site of insight, desire, and resistance. Following such theorists we might view madness temporally as a depressive impetus for a slowing down and deeper paying of attention as well as the manic hope that we might feel otherwise. While sometimes tragically so, mad feelings like depression often manifest as extreme-sensitivity to the world. Further, even times of extreme de-sensitivity might provide key insights, those that help us to look critically at the often deadening or suppressing space of the affect economy. In short, moods of madness and maddening moods function in this dissertation as diagnoses of how capitalism can feel on social and individual levels, counter visions of collectivity and utopia, sites of alternate desires and affectual flow, and embodiments of an agonistic politics and theology, all of which are formed through our porosity to one another and the rest of the becoming world.

⁶⁰ Cvetkovich, *Depression*, 3.

Given madness's (and most prominently depression's) function in this project as an insight into how capitalism feels and an embodiment of a politics and theology that refuses to "go with the flow" of society, it is important at this point to mark both my understanding of what that capitalist flow is and which problems I hope to diagnose through my deployment of such feelings. First I understand these problems to significantly stem from capitalism's theological proposals. Liberation theologian, Joerg Rieger details the ways in which the neoliberal economic proposal that a rising tide will lift all boats is in fact a theological assertion. This rising-tide theology carries with it bold faith claims: that economic deregulations promote growth, that tax cuts for powerful corporations and the wealthy spur the economy, and that wealth gathered at the top eventually trickles down.⁶¹ Assumptions about value and worth also stem from these claims. The equation of wealth with worth and a fundamentalist belief in a rising tide result in both the material and emotional marginalization of a majority of the world's people. Materially the prioritization of the accumulation of wealth at the top along with the false conclusion that wealth at the top will provide for those at the bottom has resulted in the economic and social disenfranchisement of whole communities. Emotionally that one's worth is defined by capitalism as proven through one's material gain and socio-economic prestige means that when the wealth doesn't trickle-down people are not only forced to struggle to meet their most basic needs, but also are assumed to be ontologically less-than those at the top. Viewed from the perspective of an affect hermeneutic one can explore how this marginalization feels, but also how it might be a source of resistance and transformation.

⁶¹ Joerg Rieger, *No Rising Tide: theology, economics, and the future* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press) viii.

Further, the unwavering belief that neoliberal capitalism, if only we would learn to successfully play the game, will set us free nurtures both emotional and material oppression and depression. To re-engage one's depression in resistant modes would be to sit with it and ask from where it came and what insights it brings. Such an attention to the depression, one loosed from an anxious need to be cured, might help us to resist the neoliberal demand that we get over what has got us so down, and to open up alternatives for how we might live in counter-relation to hegemonic systems.

In finding each of these affects interesting and following where they may lead when we uncover their entanglements with political theology and neoliberal economics, I hope to begin to shape both a hermeneutical approach for and a theoethical response to such encounters. Such a hermeneutics would be a kind of affect hermeneutics. It would be an approach to reading of text and world that would look for moments of emotional rupture, dissonance, and uncontainability within spaces overtly and subtly marked as emotional. For the purposes of this project, this affect hermeneutics might be particularly attuned to those affects we consider maddening or pathological. I want to read for, listen to, and touch on those moments in which the given or expected mood of a text or situation is challenged by the mood of those that cannot accept what has been given nor rise to expectations.

In reading for such moodiness, the feelings that arise when one is not in the mood for what is being asked of her, I am also seeking out and offering up a theoethical response to such moods. I name such a response a grave attending. Grave attending is a caring for the gravity, the pulling down to the material world, listening and feeling for what all its myriad emotions have to tell us, and where they have to lead us. It is also a

witnessing to those assumed to be buried over and gone, the ghosts that haunt us and so gift us a sense of what we might have been and an imagination of what we might become. Acts of grave attention refuse to efface the material mattering of others on the way to our own redemption. Such a grave attending, I argue more fully in chapter two and throughout the dissertation, is an attention to the lamentant cries (those released in word or affect) of those that have been crucified by neoliberalism and its concomitant heteropatriarchal and white supremacist ethics. As such theologically speaking, grave attending is what happens on Holy Saturday, on the day between crucifixion and resurrection. It is an ethical style of life that does not look or wait for resurrection as much as it tries to remain with a difference on the day after damage and death. It does not and cannot rush toward redemption out of the gravity of such damage, because it is attendant to the damage of those that in the wake of our resurrective impulse we have let drown. To not resurrect, might be to fail at overcoming our damage. And yet a theoethic of grave attending affirms that in resistance to such a successful raising up, we are brought down to be together with all the others who have failed to be redeemed. There is hope, and even joy, in the remaining in that there is a thirst for all of life.

Each chapter of this dissertation functions as a thought experiment or scene of interpretation rather than as a linear narrative. While the chapters are of course consequent to one another they can also be read independently as vignettes of how an affect hermeneutic and a theology of grave attending might feel and what it might do. Since affect always contains both promise and threat (each individual feeling can never fully be “good” or “bad”) it is my hope that when one reads the chapters together they still resist a meta-narrative. There will be no definitive narrative, which also means we

need not save or redeem any of the texts nor the interlocutors with which I critically engage, as much as work to see where such engagements will take us when we read critically for affects and the material, ontological, political, and theological selves and lifeworlds they help us to form. Most particularly, I surmise that in looking for the pains inflicted by problematic pulses in these discourses we might feel for critical alternatives not in spite of feeling bad, but creatively through such sensitive attunement and attendment. This dissertation will not glorify suffering, but nor will it be convinced that rehabilitation out of our damage is salvific. It seeks to attend to what might come when we feel our ways around, through, and beside myriad pain and pleasure.

Thus, each subsequent chapter brings together thinkers of affect with political, radical, and postmodern theologians to see what might happen when we read for the mood and modes of such encounters. Chapter two, “Unsaved Time,” uncovers the temporal structures nurtured by the eschatological and counter-eschatological orientations within radical orthodox and radical democratic theologies. It then places such temporalities into dialogue with: Shelly Rambo’s Holy Saturday theology; the queer temporalities of Lee Edelman, Heather Love, José Muñoz, and Elizabeth Freeman; and Robin James’s feminist critique of resilience. From this dialogue I construct the concept of bipolar time as a Saturday and mad resistance to neoliberal time. Chapter three, “Unproductive Worth,” reads with the autonomism of Berardi, the political and quotidian depression of Cvetkovich, and a disability poetics in order to challenge both neoliberal and more progressive (the latter represented in this chapter by Hardt and Negri and their theological deployment by Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui Lan) productivist theologies that tie our worth to our work. Chapter four, “Unwilling Feeling,” reads John D. Caputo’s

material theology and his conception of the insistence of God alongside Sara Ahmed's work on affect alienation and willfulness to offer biblical scenes of affect alien prophets. Martha and Jonah embody such moody prophecy in this scene. The chapter attempts to apply and construct an affect hermeneutic to and with biblical texts and read for what might happen when we follow moodiness to unexpected theological conclusions. Chapter five, "Unreasoned Care," returns us to God through a sojourn with Foucault's archives. This chapter queerly attends to how the Process God as Eros of the World might open us to a non-redemptive or counter-salvific and yet ethically attentive theology that sticks with the mad we've condemned, confined, and left unredeemed. The conclusion offers us "Unconcluded Affects," and yet remains trusty, offering propositions for what a faithful ethical living might arise in response to the dissertation's scenes of encounter. It hopes to suggest if not answer the question of what a radical political theology can become when it is nurtured through a grave attention to the affect alien prophets (those explicitly named here and those that continue to haunt at the edges of my thought) and the interlocutors that help me to hear them through out this text. These scenes are, at their heart, scenes of moody lament, demanding our attention, gifting us different theological moods and modes.

Chapter Two: Unsaved Time

In *The Theology of Money*, Phillip Goodchild warns of the “eschatological judgment of money.” Money defines value and, through its promissory nature (as in the promise that, “*One day* I will have enough money,” or in other words, “*One day* I will finally be enough.”) money holds us in suspense of achieving value. The sovereignty of money, one might note in the context of queer and affect theory, fortifies an eschatological hope akin to what Lauren Berlant has diagnosed as cruel optimism: “A relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing.”⁶² We desire to be happier through our wealth so we work as hard as possible, leaving little time for moments of flourishing in the present. Or, horrifically we work ourselves to death before any happy goal could ever be reached. The question of the moneyed Eschaton leads us to apocalyptic ponderings. Is there an end to capitalism? Does capitalism have an end time, an eschatological climax--the apex of which we might be nearing? Does capitalism have an end goal, a telos toward which it strives? Or, on the contrary, does it presume endless progress, no end in sight, the Kingdom always deferred? Further, what does it mean to live in the *time* of 21st century neoliberal economics? What are the “signs” (mores, theologies, affects) of our time? *And*, under what constructs of temporality do we labor? Questions of ends, times, and End Times have been at the forefront of contemporary political theologies.

⁶² Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 1.

According to Goodchild, under neoliberalism *spending time is subordinated to saving it*.⁶³ For, if as the saying goes, “time is money,” then we have to use our “time wisely,” by saving as much of it as possible. Hours need to be spent productively, meaning profitably. We wear blue-tooth headsets to the playground so that family time is also work time. We don’t saunter errands; we run them. No one ever says, “You wouldn’t believe what a great uni-tasker she is!” Conversely, spending time—time to play, to make love, to just be--places us into debt. To spend time unproductively, neoliberalism tells us, is to have “wasted our time.” Hence, even as we are held in suspense of the moneyed eschaton—held captive to the promise that one day we will be saved from our wretched state and transformed into one of financial worth--we must be ever more efficient producers of promised wealth. By promising its fulfillment in a nearly unattainable state of future wealth, the eschatological judgment of money holds our flourishing at bay.

Political theologians have sought to counter this eschatology.⁶⁴ Radical Orthodox (RO) theologians propose a return to the Christian Kingdom. Others, whom I will refer to

⁶³ Phillip Goodchild, *Theology of Money* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), 188.

⁶⁴ I define radical political theology as a field of theology that takes postmodernism and postsecularism as a starting point for the writing of theology. It is interested in questions normally considered political like that of sovereignty, economy, and agency. The field is greatly indebted to Carl Schmitt’s famous assertion that, “All significant concepts of the theory of the modern state are secularized theological concepts” (Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985] 36; Originally published in German in 1922). Radical political theology for the purposes of this dissertation encompasses two strands of contemporary political theology, that often called just radical theology, but for the purposes of clarity I will refer to as radical democratic theology or RD and radical orthodox theology or RO. Radical theology/radical democratic theology is a contemporary field of theology drawing on constructive theology, process theology, secular theology, and death-of-God theologies and deeply influenced by continental thought (particularly the writings of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. It

as Radical Democratic Theologians (RD), propose the eventiveness of the multitude, or an in-breaking of democratic potentiality.⁶⁵ Yet it remains for theology to address how post-Fordist temporalities *feel*, by which I mean how the material weight of such a temporal structure rests cruelly on some bodies and psyches more than others. To take the material affects and effects of such a time seriously might open up possibilities for embodying a different *sense* of time. It is my contention that queer theories of affect and temporality, those attuned to the bodies and subjectivities out-of-joint and bent down by the *time* of neoliberal economics, can help us to do just that. As touched on briefly in the introduction contemporary queer theory has moved well-beyond an exclusive focus on sex, gender, and sexuality. Current discourses on queer temporality seek to examine the ways in which heteronormativity as well as white supremacy fortify the neoliberal political economy. For instance, queer work on temporality, like that of Berlant, questions the ideal of the white middle class nuclear family. This queer work uncovers the resonance between the demand to be a productive member of society and the manipulated desire to be a reproductive member of the heteronormative family. Such demands nurture in us an optimistic belief that the straighter and whiter we become the happier we will be. This cruelly optimistic promise impedes alternate desires of community, family, and self.

offers a theology written from within an immanent frame and dependant on the potency of people over and against a transcendent God in whom rests ultimate sovereignty. Radical orthodox theologians, while similarly writing from within and in response to postsecularism and engaging in issues of sovereignty and economy, argue for a return to the transcendent sovereign God as a counter to what many see as the loss of value in a liberalism run amok in the wake of the death-of-God.

⁶⁵ The discourse I refer to in this dissertation as radical democratic or RD often goes simply by radical theology. However, in order to better distinguish this school from the radical orthodoxy I have added democratic to the descriptor of the field.

The effects of such cruelly optimistic demands must be of critical importance to theologians who take seriously the question of how we might ethically spend time instead of obsessively saving it. While I affirm Goodchild's diagnosis of the moneyed eschaton there is still more to ask of political theologians and the alternatives they offer to the hold on us this eschatological promise has. Hence, throughout this chapter I hope to trace the following framing contentions. First, I propose that the field of political theology, in its radical orthodox and radical democratic forms, while it addresses neoliberal structures of value, still contains problematic universal claims *and* anemic concepts that seem to elide the effects neoliberalism has on our bodies, psyches, and collectivities. Hence, while certain theologies in this field, particularly those in the radical democratic camp, provide fertile ground from which to ask these questions, more seeds need to be sowed. Second, I surmise that both the fertile potential within and the more barren grounds of political theology can be brought to light in an examination of the different approaches to temporality undertaken by radical orthodox and radical democratic theologians. Third, I suggest that while at times mirroring some of the same contentious issues found in democratic/orthodox debates, queer approaches to temporality offer invaluable resources for a political theology that takes seriously the material and embodied consequences of neoliberalism. In particular we might learn from subjects whose temporal and affectual orientations impede productivity and efficiency. This suggestion is further elaborated in the following chapter. Finally, through an engagement with queer theories of temporality and affect as well as theologies of Holy Saturday, I propose the concept of bipolar time as a queer temporal reorientation, one that resists the eschatological demands of neoliberalism.

It is my hope that bipolar time will reorient us towards different modes of feeling and living. These modes (the thinking of which is begun here and continued in subsequent chapters) do not offer resurrection out of the pain of neoliberalism from which we might come to be its productive agents once more: happy customers and efficient laborers. Nor does bipolar time offer a nihilistic acceptance of the pains endured in the quotidian crucifixions perpetrated in service of neoliberalism's cruelly optimistic promise. Depression is not crucifixion. Mania is not resurrection. The *bifurcation* of bipolarity cannot be viewed as separable states of being or linear modes of becoming. Bipolar temporality is disordered temporality. Manic stages are haunted by depressive ones. In depressive stages one might feel the pressure of what mania has done and can do. There is no clear linear narrative from one to the next. Further, bipolarity as embodied by states of extreme feeling--extreme dullness, despair, rapidity, and creativity--impedes demands to get over it, to move on, to save time. In disordering time bipolar sensibilities disrupt a crucifixion/resurrection binary, as they reveal how states of both self-shattering and of self-inflating interpenetrate one another. I then begin a discussion, one continued throughout the dissertation, on what embracing our moods of disorder might have to do with challenging the econo-political and theological orders of the day.

Hence, this chapter seeks to make a queer intervention into political theology, most prominently those strains seeking to redress the Market Fundamentalism that undergirds neoliberal capitalism. I therefore expand on queer debates around temporality—on the tensions between a queer rejection of a programmatic future and a queer hope in the not-yet, as well on as queer theory's recent engagement with affect. This chapter diagnoses and complicates: temporal orientations in radical orthodox and

radical democratic theologies that may unwittingly align too closely with neoliberalism; the danger of decontextualized political theologies; and the undertheorization of affect in political theology. This diagnosis begins with a mapping of how both RO and RD theologians have considered temporality crucial in countering the value-structures that undergird capitalism. I then ask how a supplemental theological mode and mood might look and *feel*. I look for this supplement from within contemporary queer discourses. I argue that it is in the complex and affectual interplay of past, present, and future found in the work of Heather Love, Robin James, Elizabeth Freeman, and José Esteban Muñoz where we might encounter a counter-capitalist hope significantly attentive to the material lives of those marked as irredeemable by neoliberal salvation narratives.

This queer supplement takes on its theological weight in this chapter's constructive comparison between queer temporalities and the temporality of Holy Saturday as explicated in Shelly Rambo's *Spirit and Trauma: a Theology of Remaining*. From the theological ground cleared by a perhaps surprising reading of queer time as Holy Saturday time I propose the concept of bipolar temporality: as a sensibility that helps us to live into the day after crucifixion, taking seriously what form (temporal, spatial, and sensorial) hope might take when we accept that a resurrection may not be needed, wanted, or coming. Bipolar time, as a time that hovers between the depression of a crucified world and a manic belief that the world as it stands need not be all there is, is offered in resistance to Radical Orthodox teleologies that rely on stable Christian origins and certain eschatological ends *and* as a corrective to Radical Democratic theologies that often imply an active temporal pull toward the future while regularly eliding the material hold the past and present have in the midst of such a pull.

Radical Theologies of our Time

For both orthodox and democratic theologians the temporality of the event is key for political and theological questions of sovereignty. According to RO's standard-bearer John Milbank, "The Church is the most fundamental of events, interpreting all other events."⁶⁶ For Milbank the seemingly uniform Christian Church becomes the standard by which all other historical events must be judged. Here Milbank is proposing a very particular concept of time. He critiques an eventive temporality, one which instead of moving forward towards a certain end-goal, is animated by and structured through the often eruptive, fractured, and discontinuous movement of the immanent world. Such a discontinuous temporality is one, for example, embraced by democratic theologians such as Clayton Crockett and Jeffrey W. Robbins and their interlocutors Gilles Deleuze and Antonio Negri in *Radical Theology* and *Radical Democracy and Political Theology*, respectively. In his critique of what he refers to as the Philosophers of Nihilism, Milbank writes:

What matters is the objective surface presence of a teleological ordering where intention of a goal shows up in visible structure...Of course one can still see phenomenal drag of effect upon causes as infinitely wild and interminable, rather than properly teleological. This is Deleuze's path, which a Christian ontology must clearly refuse.⁶⁷

For Milbank this Deleuzian time is a "directionless time," and as such cannot be accepted by a truly Christian ontology, one necessarily predicated on a sense of the particular good of Christianity as transcendent and universal. The Christian good becomes the Good.

Indeed the Christian Good is the *only* marker of an authentically ethical life:

⁶⁶ John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1990), 388.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 359.

Only in Christianity, after virtue has become charity which is a virtue uniquely productive of virtue, does virtue also become truly self-measuring. Christianity, therefore, achieves at a new level the Platonic desire to refer everything else to the Good, rather than vice versa. Only Christianity once it has arrived really appears ethical at all.⁶⁸

For Milbank, Christianity serves not just as *one* way, but *the way* to ground time such that we might make ethical judgments about that toward which we are moving or from which we may be fleeing.

For RO more broadly, teleological ordering, one modeled by the event of the Church, implies a temporal pull toward an historical given or providential plan. Milbank's understanding of the all-interpreting-event of the church is a statement against both an open-ended future and an uncontainable past. Following Catholic priest and political essayist Luigi Sturzo's proposal that an integral sociology must also address the supernatural community and view the Church as supernatural, Milbank argues against contemporary liberal theologies. He writes that when one introduces the social to these theologies, "Either the transcending impulse remains essentially individual in character, and merely provides motivation and creative energy for social and political action which retains its own immanent norms. Or else the social process itself is identified as the site of transcendence, of a process of 'liberation' which is gradually removing restrictions upon the human spirit."⁶⁹ In other words, instead of modeling its sociology after its theology, liberal Christianity names the socio-political as theology, and begins to model its theology after its sociology. Further, for Milbank, without reference to the supernatural, society fails to speak concretely of the human because it fails to grasp the human's "most fundamental aspect, which is precisely [our] relation to a transcendent,

⁶⁸ Ibid., 362.

⁶⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 229.

final cause.”⁷⁰ The transcendent final cause allows us to understand the human being in its concreteness in that we come to understand the purpose of our lives. Further, drawing on de Lubac Milbank argues that to deal with the transcendent in its concreteness we must understand salvation as an historical and particular event, one in which individuals are saved in concrete and particular relations to a Christian past and future. Locating salvation in the Ecclesia becomes the rationale for viewing the Church as that event which interprets all other events. If salvation must be thought of as concrete and particular and can only happen through the church, which is oriented to a certain Christian past and a promised Christian future, then the event of the church dictates a spatio-temporal reality in which you either make it on time and at the right stop or you miss the train altogether. No salvation for you, not there, not then, not now.⁷¹

It could be argued that Milbank here is speaking exclusively to and for Christians, and hence merely critiquing other Christian theologies that he sees as only partially adhering to the logic of the incarnation. For instance, James K.A. Smith is critical of Crockett’s critique of Milbank’s totalizing narrative (a irony according to Crockett as Milbank purports to be rejecting the totalizing narrative of autonomous Modern reason); Smith argues that Milbank cannot possibly be offering a metanarrative as his project seeks to critique secular metanarratives.⁷² Indeed according to Smith as RO is “a hermeneutic disposition and a style of metaphysical vision,” and so clearly not a

⁷⁰ Ibid., 224.

⁷¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 246.

⁷² James K.A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic), 60.

systematized method or theology, an RO metanarrative is impossible.⁷³ Yet the instability of Smith's argument that "because RO claims not to be offering a metanarrative, it must not be offering one," permits it to unravel as his own analysis of RO continues. His readings of RO include statements such as: "RO is *not* intended to be just an interior--albeit prophetic--monologue with the church. Rather it is intended to motivate a kerygmatic engagement with contemporary culture," and, "This is why the true telos of the RO project is not simply a theology but a comprehensive Christian account of *every aspect* of the world...Unlike correlationist strategies that defer the 'truth' of the natural sphere to secular sciences (as in liberation theology's deferral to Marxism as the 'expert' on the social sphere), RO claims that there is not a single aspect of human experience on creation that can be properly understood or described apart from the insights of revelation."⁷⁴ If the 'truth' of every aspect of the world cannot be understood apart from the particular revelation of the Christian church, and if RO's own defender lauds this as crucial to the RO project, then surely Crockett's argument that RO offers up a totalizing narrative stands.

Indeed, to argue against RO's totalizing nature is to occlude Milbank's more exclusionary instincts. He writes: "Against difference, by contrast, I do not bring forward dialectics, nor even virtue in general, but rather Christian virtue in particular, which means that *I can claim to be the more serious advocate of the conjunction of the universally objective with a particular social option.*"⁷⁵ To be a more serious advocate is

⁷³ Ibid., 66

⁷⁴ Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 68-70. (Emphasis added).

⁷⁵ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 331. (Emphasis added)

crucial in the formation of Milbank's ideology. If one is to make the universal Good concrete one cannot choose a multiplicity of paths toward this Good, this would not be to take seriously what it is to be properly theological or sociological. To take the message of the incarnation seriously is to see that the path toward the Universal Good comes only through the particular incarnation of God in Christ.

Additionally, for RO theologians the proper path toward the Good/Goal is one modeled on the transcendent Christian Kingdom and encountered in the sacrament of the Eucharist. The consumption of Christ in the Eucharist becomes the ideal model of exchange, a non-competitive exchange in which the consumer is consumed and brought into the consumptive body of Christ. According to William Cavanaugh, one of the greatest mistakes of contemporary liberal Christianity is an open communion table.⁷⁶ For Cavanaugh, as well as fellow RO theologian Stephen Long, the Eucharistic exchange is a moment of commitment and indebtedness to God by Christians.⁷⁷ Indeed, Long critiques Kathryn Tanner's conception of an economy of grace and gift in which the on-going nature of creation is proof that God keeps giving despite our failings. For Tanner if God were to require perpetual indebtedness God would just be another paternalistic man, the biggest of all big men, to which we were enslaved.⁷⁸ For Long and Cavanaugh, however, this is exactly the kind of indebtedness the Eucharist should bring forth. Through the consuming and being consumed by Christ Christians are indebted to Christ and therefore

⁷⁶ William Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008).

⁷⁷ Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed*; Stephen D. Long and Nancy Ruth Fox, *Calculated Futures: Theology, Ethics, and Economics* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007) 17.

⁷⁸ Long and Fox, *Calculated Futures*, 16.

must regulate their emotions and redirect their efforts and desires toward the will of God and toward the proper ends of friendship with the Trinity.

Yet, as Stephen Shakespeare has argued, this unwavering faith in the Eucharist ignores the multiplicity of responses those that actually come to the table might have to such a process of consumption, including those RO would refuse. Shakespeare critiques Milbank's Eucharistic theology in which "the physical sensation of consuming the bread and wine leaves no room for doubt. Language's capacity to mislead is abolished. Taste and Word are one."⁷⁹ According to Shakespeare, when Milbank eliminates doubt from the ritual he undermines his own theology of desire through Divine Grace which, through the Eucharist, is shown to be inexhaustible. But, as Shakespeare further points out, if we understand the complete truth of God in the direct moment of consuming the bread and wine, then what more can come? Indeed, if the often uncontainable sensations, not to mention the often drably routine ones, of consuming Christ's flesh and blood can be reminders that grace is inexhaustible, then perhaps the Eucharist is actually *the* eventive moment that resists a certain telos in favor of an overflowing desire. The Eucharist, even in Milbank's own words (perhaps against his intentions), can be seen as the impossibility of ever fully grasping the not-yet. Instead of closing off the multiplicity of the good, returning us to orthodoxies of the back then and the back there, the Eucharist can open us to democracies of the now and the next.

Hence the anti-democratic implications in Milbank's thinking and its internal inconsistencies nurture the need for a different type of radical theology, one suited to a world full of more multiplicity than Milbank makes room for. While Milbank spends

⁷⁹ Steven Shakespeare, *Radical Orthodoxy: a Critical Introduction* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2007), 127.

pages on particularity and the need to turn back to the particular relations created by the incarnation, his is a concept of the particular (one particular particular) as the universal. Milbank's reading of the Church as the event that dictates the shape of human history, and so of time, is essentially and unapologetically exclusivist. His "event" excludes those outside or not welcomed into the church, but so too does it exclude the potential in-breaking of temporal and affectual possibilities yet unimagined in *this* universal/particular Christian narrative.

Democratic Events as Temporal Alternatives

A more democratic theology must resist turning one particular particular into the universal. Indeed, for Crockett and Robbins, in contrast to RO thinkers, the event is that which precisely cannot be interpreted by uniform and imperial structures demanding obedience. For instance in his reading of Negri Robbins argues:

The political potency that is key to radical democracy's resistance to all forms of hegemony comes not by a way of transcendent authority--by an appeal to some power outside ourselves--but by way of an exodus emanating from within: 'In Postmodernity,' Negri writes, 'The eminent form of rebellion is the exodus from obedience, that is to say, from participation in measure, i.e. as the opening to the immeasurable.'⁸⁰

We can understand this reading of exodus as an example of democratic temporality. To move from "participation in measure" to the opening of the immeasurable is the movement from a providential time--one that can be measured by proper eschatological ends radiating from certain Christological beginnings--to an open-ended future, one beyond measure and so beyond absolute consciousness, control, or conformity. Here, contra Milbank, Robbins illuminates how the temporality of a more radically open

⁸⁰ Jeffrey W. Robbins, *Radical Democracy and Political Theology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) 191.

concept of event changes the mode of sovereignty implied in the political theology that follows. For Robbins, an opening to the immeasurable is a refutation of Milbank's understanding that the all-interpreting event is that of the Church. This exodus is a 'creative event,' and so an exodus that does not flee toward a particular salvific end. It is a rewriting of teleology and so temporality.

In *Radical Democratic Theology* Clayton Crockett proposes a similar reimagining of sovereignty, one found in a theology written in the wake of the death-of-God. Crockett employs Deleuze's concept of the event as that which goes beyond the law and which the law cannot predict to propose a political theology written from a space and time of responsiveness as opposed to one of Providence.⁸¹ It is precisely in the infinitely wild and indeterminate character of Deleuze's event worried over by Milbank where Crockett finds democratic potential. The event, for Crockett, is a rupture into a world that can no longer be viewed as stable, particularly in the wake of the death of the kind of transcendental ontotheological God invoked by RO theologians.

This democratic turn toward the event in terms of temporality is further explored in Crockett's constructive applications of Gilles Deleuze's conception of time in *Cinema*

II. According to Crockett:

Deleuze is not interested in developing a metaphysical understanding of time as unchanging eternity; he is interested in building a brain. Building a brain involves producing the event as time-image, a pure image of time that cuts entities away from their automatic sensory-motor linkages and reconstitutes them in another series or another order.⁸²

⁸¹ Clayton Crockett, *Radical Political Theology: religion and politics after liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

⁸² Clayton Crockett, *Deleuze Beyond Badiou: Ontology, Multiplicity, and Event* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013) 97.

To build a brain is to reconstruct a concept of time as responsive, such that time finds cracks in history that break open new possibilities. Deleuze is not interested in a teleologically ordered and predetermined History, he is interested in what happens when we realize that this progressive History is no longer a viable way to view time in the world.⁸³ Deleuze finds these cracks or cuts that serve as temporal openings exemplified in forms of political cinema in which, “the cinematographic image becomes a direct presentation of time, according to noncommensurable relations and irrational cuts...this time-image puts thought into contact with an unthought, the unsummonable, the inexplicable, the undecidable, the incommensurable.”⁸⁴ This image of time in which one can no longer trace a universal line or procession from old to new opens up a politics in which one can ask: whether the story as it stands now, and its end, were inevitable. Asking this question might spark others including: Whose stories have gone and go untold when one universal narrative is assumed to be natural, virtuous, or given?

For Deleuze, cinema which exposes the inconsistencies found when moving away from a relation of direct association to one of cuts and fissures, which results in an incommensurability revealed when old and new are juxtaposed, “makes up an absurdity,” which is also the “form of aberration.”⁸⁵ This aberration or absurdity is what calls into question the progressive temporality that has worked to disappear from history those that refuse to or cannot toe the line. Hence, modern political cinema is a politics of “putting

⁸³ Ibid., 99.

⁸⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II: the Time Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003) 214.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 218

into crisis,”⁸⁶ but it is this crisis that reminds us that time need not be what we think it is; time itself contains more potential. The march of History is not inevitable; there can be new twists in the tale, or new chances to become differently.

If History is not inevitable, if it is loosed from the stable teleology on offer by RO, then options for our becoming that had been silenced and effaced in the past might resurface and haunt both our present and future. Indeed, for Crockett, via Deleuze, the possibility of the event is the opening in time for the radicalization of democracy. Such a radicalization would take, Crockett proposes, an impossible future that is not a clear temporal extension of the present, but rather exists in the shadow of an “unforeseen event.”⁸⁷ This possibility radicalizes democracy by reminding us that there must always be more democracy to come.⁸⁸ Crockett, following Deleuze, suggests that a time-image puts us into contact with the unthought and so contributes to the invention not only of a people, but also of new ways of thinking time and democracy.⁸⁹ For instance, in locating this type of eventive time in Haitian social movements Crockett argues that when Haiti’s first democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide spoke of democratizing democracy, he was tapping into the potential of the Deleuzian time-image: “Democracy is not based upon a present arrangement or explicit state of affairs, but is predicated on

⁸⁶ Ibid., 219

⁸⁷ Crockett, *Deleuze Beyond Badiou*, 192.

⁸⁸ Jacques Derrida’s conception of the democracy to come, most prominently developed in *Spectres of Marx* (1993), *The Politics of Friendship* (1994), and *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (2004), implies that full democracy is never present, but always deferred or on its way. The democracy to come is a reminder that what we call democracy in the present is not full democracy. Democracy has never arrived.

⁸⁹ Crockett, *Deleuze Beyond Badiou*, 183.

justice and freedom, which are technically incalculable and exceed any and all determinate horizons.”⁹⁰ To extend all determinate horizons is to challenge the certainty of orthodox Christian origins and ends; it is to ask us to live in such a way that the unforeseen of the future allows for new visions of the present.

It is clear that the event as the unforeseen that allows for an impossible future and an exodus from obedience is a radically different event from that of the Church and its future as proposed by Milbank. This difference revolves not only around the very constructs of time, but also around the definition of freedom. For Milbank the event as formulated by theologians like Crockett and Robbins represents a freedom *from* value and truth and as such a susceptibility to co-optation by the very structures which both orthodox and democratic theologians purport to be contesting, most particularly those undergirding neoliberal capitalism. And yet, the assumption that to allow for indeterminacy would mean one never makes robust determinate judgments about what is of value is willfully mistaken. For instance, as touched on in the introduction, Catherine Keller has argued for trusty propositions as opposed to overly determined Truth claims. Such propositions take seriously what *can* be said about the truths of the world, without eliminating a sense of doubt or indeterminate potential.⁹¹ Indeed, RD theologians make robust claims to value when they refuse to ignore the violence done by an exclusivist definition of the Good. The proposition that a democracy-to-come, an indeterminate future, allows for a more faithful attention to the demos, to all those made precarious by

⁹⁰ Ibid., 192.

⁹¹ Catherine Keller, “Uninteresting Truth? Tedium and Event in Postmodernity,” in *Secrets of Becoming: Negotiating Whitehead, Deleuze, and Butler*, ed. Roland Faber and Andrea M. Stephenson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011) 211.

neoliberalism, is trusty. Second, perhaps in some sympathy with Milbank, we might question how truly indeterminate capitalist or *free* market freedom is. For instance, the narrative that there is no viable alternative to capitalism represents its own teleological truth claim, one that through its promise of freedom actually enslaves us. Both Milbankian orthodoxy and Market fundamentalism promise salvation through our indebtedness and obligation to their saviors--Christ or Money. The goal may have changed, but the structure of obligation and debt remains. Hence, we might, reading with and as supplement to RD theologians, be in search of a freedom not from value but from an over-determined universal particular of value that limits temporal possibilities no matter which capital V value holds us in its chains.

Free from or Free for Capitalism?

While their methods and conclusions greatly diverge both RO and RD theologians seek to challenge neoliberal constructs of value. I find the manner of challenge undertaken and the conclusions drawn by RD theologians more convincing and in greater sympathy with the values purported by this dissertation. And yet I am left wondering, in terms of each school's concept of temporality, whether there remain problematic resonances with capitalistic structures of time. How might the structure of indebtedness to Christ, upheld by RO theologians, resonate with, if unintentionally so, indebtedness to the Market? How might concepts of plasticity, exodus, and event, while helpfully resisting oppressive teleologies, risk falling prey to neoliberal values of flexibility, resilience, and rehabilitative change? These questions frame the following sections, and are helpfully supplemented and challenged through an engagement with queer theory.

The above questions are not unfamiliar to either school. For instance, Milbank finds a problematic collusion between a sense of indeterminacy lauded by RD theologians and what he views as nihilistic philosophy and liberal theology and the structures (or anti-structures) of value on offer by neoliberal economics. Milbank argues that for theologies of liberation and other theologies focused on immanence (and so we can assume radical democratic theologies) he views as too far detached from the transcendent Good:

The single imperative to ‘love’ others, which means to desire their liberation, is supposed to well automatically from the depths of the human heart. All other moral prescriptions must be judged according to the ‘situational’ criteria, as to whether or not they maximize human love and freedom. There is no sense here of the impossibility of giving any content to love, or the exercise of freedom, unless we articulate them in terms of a complex set of virtues, which means to appeal to a particular form of human social existence.⁹²

This particular form of human social existence should be discerned through the event of the Christian Church. Without this particularity liberal theologies provide no way of judging the content of love and freedom, and so of liberation. This lack of judgment, for Milbank, leaves theology open to a reorientation (or cooptation) of value dictated by capitalism.

According to most RO theologians liberal theologies too easily lend themselves to the free-play of desire viewed as characteristic of capitalism. For instance William Cavanaugh has argued that true freedom is not found in the free-floating desire-without-ends of capitalism, but rather in the freedom to choose obedience to Christ over the Market.⁹³ His critique of an untethered desire is emblematic of the issue of desire found

⁹² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 230.

⁹³ Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed*, chapter 1.

in RO writings. In a chapter on negative and positive freedom, in his *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* Cavanaugh argues that the key theological question for a free market system is: What makes an exchange free? Deploying a very particular reading of Augustine Cavanaugh suggests that unlike the assertion of neoliberal economics that sees freedom as freedom from interference by others (most prominently the State), true freedom comes in the freedom to choose one's *proper* desires. Here *proper* means orthodox Christian desires. Therefore, to ask if an exchange is free is to ask if the exchange represents an end that is commensurate with the values of RO's particularized universal Christian God/Good. For Cavanaugh, most desires in the free market are restless desires with indeterminate ends, and hence sinful.

But is there really no determination to capitalist desire? In other words is there no goal, no "good" toward which a faith in the Market is oriented? Is capitalistic freedom free of the regulations of progressive History and imperial demands? Let us return to the opening questions of this chapter. What is the time of neoliberal capitalism? Or rather what is the arc of its time? In other words what does it mean to be held in suspense of the moneyed eschaton?

Looking again to Berlant we can note how a focus on a particular end goal or grounding value assumption, one which we are told is given, inevitable, and righteous, not only can cause cruelty, but also psychological and physical death. Perhaps RO theologians would agree with this assessment, except of course in terms of the properly Christian end. Hence, the cruelty of the promissory structure of the closed-telos goes unquestioned by Milbank and his fellows. Berlant, therefore, is an instructive interlocutor. In her chapter on "slow death" Berlant analyzes how bodies are worn down

by the demands to work for a goal of wealth. The producers of such a goal rely on it being one that is nearly if always unattainable. Slow death, “refers to the physical wearing out of a population that points to its deterioration as a defining condition of its experience and historical existence.”⁹⁴ This wearing out happens at the confluence of a matrix of oppressions in which one’s racial, economic, gendered, and sexual histories and identities are shaped by and reflected in: the availability of jobs, the reliability of schedules, the mobility of wages, the nurturing of diets, and significantly the flexibility of time. For example, the demand to be healthy, while faced with systematized obstacles, most particularly the lack of *freedom of time* and access to mechanisms of health (nutritious food, clean air), makes health a problematically normativizing concept.⁹⁵

While at times RO theologians seem to imply that the problem with capitalism is that its values are indeterminate; at other times they would recognize the problematic value-structure outlined by Berlant and explicated throughout this chapter. And yet, they have fallen short of analyzing how it is not just what the goal is--wealth, happiness, Whiteness, heterosexuality, able-bodiedness--but also the exclusive character of particular goals made into universals, that cause a cruel limiting of options for our present flourishing. This does not mean we seek out a value-less society, but rather one that admits to its own occlusions, and looks out for those it has deemed invaluable.

Our orientation to a promised telos-- of the moneyed, healthy, and “Good” life-- can prevent our flourishing in ways that impede the possibilities sought for by Crockett’s sense of a time lived in the shadow of an unforeseen event. Additionally, this structure of

⁹⁴ Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 95.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, chapter 3.

death from within the temporal flow of neoliberal capitalism is not always slow. Here we might recall the August 2014 tragic death of Maria Fernandes. Fernandes worked four jobs. One afternoon, likely exhausted, she pulled over to take a nap in her car in-between shifts. The combination of a spilled gas container (which she kept in her car) and fumes from the running car killed the sleeping 32 year old. This moment of rapid death, one brought on by Fernandes's attempt not necessarily at the good life, but at *any* life --the attempt to make ends meet--began before that August afternoon. Fernandes was already dying a slow death, as the wearing down of her body lead her to pull over that day. The eschatological judgment of money was already in the process of claiming another life. In this way the problem of capitalistic desire may not be its free-floating nature, but rather its very particular, yet unreachable, telos. To be sure, one might argue that if we would just reorient to the right end, the right future, we would not be working, eating, and fighting each other to death. But as Berlant has noted it is not just toward what we are oriented, but the ways in which the processes of orientation imply value judgments in terms of what types of bodies and modes of living are worthy of orientation, that do violence to our present and future selves.

For instance, looking again to RO theologies of the Eucharist, Shakespeare argues:

The attempt to save the world ends up by condemning the world outside a few Christian enclaves to darkness. But even within those enclaves, the desire for God is so identified and fueled by a desire for immediate connection provided by the Eucharist, that it turns into a desperate parody of capitalistic desire. The Eucharist becomes the object to end all objects, the ultimate commodity to satisfy our lack. It becomes an addiction.⁹⁶

The optimistic objects offered up by the “good life” –a big house, a flush back account, a spouse of the “opposite” gender, two able-bodied children, and a profession--mirrors this

⁹⁶ Shakespeare, *Radical Orthodoxy*, 127

Eucharistic addiction. Instead of living we consume in a manner that closes off alternate possibilities of life in favor of the certainty of our orientations. Hence even while they refuse a capitalist structure of value, RO cannot get out of its own parodic way. That its method resonates so deeply with that of the system it claims to be countering, unravels the proposal that it is only through the enslavement to proper ends that we might break the chains of propertied ones. Additionally, as Shakespeare further notes, RO's forceful projection of *one* truth has enchained all other concepts of truth into warfare with it.⁹⁷

This zero-sum game eerily reflects the paranoiac assertions by those on the right and their media mouth-pieces that any resistance to a neoliberal Market Fundamentalism is a call for class warfare. The imperialistic tendencies of RO reflect those of global capitalism, in ways that prevent it from fully countering such neoliberal systems of belief.

Evidence of the commonality of effects of such a temporal orientation--one structured around Predestination and Providence--between that of an orthodox Christian Kingdom and that of the Neoliberal Market are not inconsequential. We can see similar commonalities in William Connolly's concept of the Evangelical-Capitalistic-Resonance-Machine. The ECRM is bound together by shared fundamentalist faiths: the belief in an omnipotent God resonates with that of an omnipotent market. As this relation is amplified, the machine becomes increasingly invested in the stabilizing force of the Christian-family-erotic assemblage:

The radical Christian right *compensates* a series of class resentments and injustices produced by the collision between cowboy capitalism and critical social movements by promising solace in the church and the family; it then cements (male) capitalist creativity to the creativity of God himself, fomenting an *aspirational politics* of identification by workers with men of prowess and privilege; these self-identifications and compensatory entitlements then encourage those sweltering in

⁹⁷ Ibid., 163

the pressure cooker to demonize selected minorities as nomadic enemies of capitalism, God, morality, and civilizational discipline.⁹⁸

While Milbank might refuse an association with the sort of Evangelical Christian who practices this unwavering faith in the market, and while he would sharply critique evangelicalism for its lack of sacramental unifying practice, the results of such a faith mimic the exclusions proffered by Radical Orthodoxy. Milbank takes aim at nomadic enemies of *his* definition of the Christian Good. One can take solace in Milbank's church which proclaims to be a solution to the ills suffered under neoliberalism, but which perpetuates violent exclusions of some of the same minorities that Evangelical Christian resentment vilifies.

Besides its exclusionary nature, the return to orthodoxy sought by RO theology feeds into what Connolly has diagnosed as an impossible dream: "Both religious and economic fundamentalists dream an impossible dream of a world of simplicity in which complete redemption is possible, overseen by a rational and dependable God."⁹⁹ This possible redemption is in part an impossible dream because of the very exclusionary practices set forth by both RO Christianity and Market Fundamentalism. Neoliberalism relies on keeping the majority of the population in states of precarity in order for those at the top to maximize their share of the market. What Naomi Klein has named "disaster capitalism," functions in this exclusionary way. In order for investors in disaster capitalism (the architects of subprime mortgage lending for example) to reach their

⁹⁸ William Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008) 34.

⁹⁹ Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity*, 13

promised wealth others must be put into crisis.¹⁰⁰ For certain people to rise to the top, others must fall. Further, capitalism's handmaidens heteronormativity and white supremacy rely on the making of exclusions of people of color and queer folk (an issue to which we return below). Capitalism's elect rely on those who cannot rise through the ranks of wealth to keep producing wealth for those at the top without redistributing it. Heteronormativity's power relies on the exclusion of those who do not hold the nuclear family as the arbiter of value. White supremacy relies on denigrating people of color and the placing boundaries around who can "overcome" their race. The very structures of RO Christianity rely on the particular revelation of Christ's incarnation and the event of the Church as being the universal and *only* path toward the Good. This universal particular relies on its exclusion of those who do not hold the Christian Church to be the arbiter of value. Without this exclusionary nature Milbank's own claim to (his definition of) seriousness crumbles.

We are in need, therefore of a different dream, of a different structure of temporality, one resistant to such a closed and determinate telos. Reading Robbins and Berlant, we might say, we need a time of exodus from such cruelly optimistic systems. How might we recognize how this sense of the immeasurable and of exodus is radically felt and experienced by those in processes of fleeing? Indeed to better understand the consequences of such a democratic time we will need to investigate how this immeasurability *feels* for those choosing or forced to flee, *and* we will need to problematize the linearity an act of fleeing might imply. For while the event as radical exodus may embrace a future without ends, can it also sensitively contain a past-without-

¹⁰⁰ Naomi Klein, *Shock Doctrine: the Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Picador, 2007).

measure? Further, is such a past, a past we will be able or wish to fully flee? In other words, can we embrace the potential in an immeasurable exodus without eclipsing the mattering of our, often measured, material lives?

While exodus as a concept does not necessarily preclude sensitive attention to the past, a focus on the flight to the immeasurable as though everyday matters can be eclipsed in favor of what comes next, might prevent us from attending to the material conditions that allow some more than others a greater chance of flight. Further, while it resists the programmatic nature of time as illuminated by Milbank, does RD's sense of freedom also lend itself to an ungrounded desire that might hinder a sensitive engagement with the strictures of captivity and those of resistance found not in the productivity of the event, the action of exodus, but in the refusal of the productivity of a time-in-action? This is a question that will be more forcefully engaged in the next chapter, but for now perhaps we can begin a search for structures of temporality that waiver between action and passivity. Left in the shadow of the moneyed eschaton *and* the wake of the uniform Church, we can look to temporal sensibilities that find their potential in the equivocacy between capture and flight, obedience and openness. This equivocacy can be found and provoked in theological constructions of Holy Saturday, and those in queer debates over temporality, to which we now turn.

Queer Time: No Day, but Today?

There can be no future for queers, as they are to bear the bad tidings that there can be no future at all: that the future, as Annie's hymn to the hope of 'Tomorrow' understands, is "always/ A day/ Away."

- Lee Edelman, No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive

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

- José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*

Over the last decades queer theory has taken a critical turn toward the “antisocial” thesis. In the queer turn to temporality, and particularly in discourses arising around this thesis, we can find similar debates in terms of teleology, universalism, and value as those tackled by political theology. According to Robert L. Caserio, this thesis, first developed in Leo Bersani’s 1995 work, *Homos*, proposes that, “If there is anything ‘politically indispensable’ in homosexuality, it is its ‘politically unacceptable’ opposition to community.”¹⁰¹ Antisociality represents a refusal to be a productive or reproductive member of heteronormative society. The work of Lee Edelman perhaps best represents the temporality proposed by the antisocial thesis. For Edelman, politics rest on a reproductive futurism, in which the hopes of a better life are dependent on the figure of the Child, for whom we are told we must fight. Queerness, he writes in his 2004 polemic *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, is what “names the side of those not ‘fighting for the children,’ the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism.”¹⁰² Edelman’s refutation of the promise of the future opens up new temporal possibilities, ones potentially resistant to the eschatological judgment of money.

¹⁰¹ Robert L. Caserio, “The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory,” *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 121.3 (2006): 819.

¹⁰² Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 2.

This critique of futurism can also be used to challenge an orthodox focus on the all-interpreting-event of the Church under which a promised future holds us similarly in suspense. For Edelman all politics rests on a future vision. We are invited to live caged to the hope in a better future. Yet, we might find problematic resonances between Edelman's universal particular in which queer experience becomes essentialized in the death drive, a charge I elaborate on further below, and the universal particular in assigning the Christian God (as interpreted by the orthodox Church) as the value of all values. Edelman famously and provocatively announces:

Fuck the social order and the Child in whose name we're collectively terrorized; fuck Annie; fuck the waif from *Les Mis*, fuck the poor, innocent kid on the Net; fuck Laws both with capital *ls* and with small; fuck the whole network of Symbolic relations and the future that serves as its prop.¹⁰³

Here, affirming a collective “we” terrorized by the figure of the Child, Edelman risks turning the negative into the affirmative. In his naming queerness as having a collective *side*, “the side of those not ‘fighting for the children,’” Edelman forms a sociality. This sociality feels affirmative even as it makes claim to its own antisociality.

Lynne Huffer argues against Edelman's deployment of the Freudian death drive as the foundation of the dismantling of the political subject that: “Precisely because queer performativity cannot let go of the ‘psyche’ or ‘soul’ which constitutes the rationalist modern subject, the moral violence of the swamp remains—even, and especially, in morality's dialectical negation as a resistance to sociality or a queer death drive.”¹⁰⁴ For Huffer, Edelman's deployment of the self-shattering instinct of the moral “I” that he finds

¹⁰³ Ibid., 28

¹⁰⁴ Lynne Huffer, *Mad for Foucault: Rethinking the Foundations of Queer Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 115.

in the death drive, while purporting to undo the self actually affirms the self. Negation in this psychoanalytic vein accepts that there was something affirmative really existing in the first place that needed to be negated. In other words: “In dialectical terms, negation alone does not undo the ‘I.’ As Beauvoir puts it pithily with regard to surrealism: ‘every assassination of painting is still a painting.’ Every assassination of morality is still a morality.”¹⁰⁵ Fucking the figure of the Child (assassinating it) on whom all politics are based still creates a politics and perhaps a future, one in which it is the queer pessimist for whom we now must fight. If negation does not eliminate the “I” then the question becomes, “On whose effacement is the ‘I’ of the queer pessimist built?” In other words, who lurks in the shadows of the symbolic created by the alignment of the queer with the death drive? It is a similar question to one we might ask of Milbank: “On whose effacement is your claim to ‘seriousness’ in a return to orthodoxy built?” To be sure, Milbank’s exclusions do not come through universal negations (secret affirmations), but through the overt affirmation of a universal particular. And yet, both Edelman’s and Milbank’s exclusionary instincts perform violent acts of effacement.

The question of effacement is not a novel question for Edelman or Milbank.

Addressing this issue in his entry in the oft-referenced 2006 issue of *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America* José Esteban Muñoz wrote:

I have been of the opinion that antirelational approaches to queer theory were wishful thinking, investments in deferring various dreams of difference. It has been clear to many of us, for quite a while now, that the antirelational in queer studies was the gay white man’s last stand.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ José Esteban Muñoz, “Thinking Beyond Antirelationality and Antiutopianism in Queer Critique,” *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 121.3 (2006), 825.

This effacement of racial and economic difference is perhaps nowhere clearer or more commented on than in the fact that children of color and impoverished children were never promised a future in the first place. To fuck the figure of the Child is actually in terms of the promissory to fuck the figure of the white Child, but this distinction goes under theorized by Edelman. And this is the problem; by remaining in the universe of figures, Edelman loses track of the singularities of experience that might helpfully multiply queer approaches to feeling, temporality, and subjectivity. A similar elision takes place under Milbank's coercive universalization in which the figure of the Church supersedes the particular historical experiences of those bodies that en flesh any ecclesial one.

Edelman does make clear that his target is not an actual child:

In its coercive universalization, however, the image of the Child, not to be confused with the lived experience of any historical children, serves to regulate political discourse—to prescribe what will *count* as political discourse—by compelling such discourse to accede in advance to the reality of a collective future whose figurative status we are never permitted to acknowledge or address.¹⁰⁷

And yet what makes the figure of the queer aligned with the death drive any less coercive or universal? As long as Edelman seems to be compelling us to accede to an (antisocial) collective present, can the figure of the queer pessimist escape the prescription of what will *count* as political discourse? We might recall here J.K.A. Smith's assertion that because RO says it's not a metanarrative it must not be a metanarrative. Because Edelman says it must not be a politics it must not be a politics.

¹⁰⁷ Edelman, *No Future*, 10.

Additionally, as Tim Dean has pointed out, in Edelman's use of the figure of the Child, Edelman misses certain psychoanalytic features of children, and this "enables [Edelman] to overlook all those ways in which, far from the antitheses of queerness, children may be regarded as the original queers."¹⁰⁸ While I do not wish to follow Dean into the psychoanalysis of children—a path that might lead us to once again make of situated historical experiences into exclusionary figures--Dean helps me to unravel the myopic strains in Edelman's vision. For instance, in terms of capitalist time, children and queer folk might embody a similar nonproductive function. Children are not old enough to labor in the marketplace (at least legally in the United States, although this is far from the case in much of the world), or to biologically reproduce. They take up the resources for which others have toiled; they are a burden and a waste. Having children can prevent one from saving time and being efficient. Just as Milbank's claim to seriousness and Cavanaugh's claim to the closure of desire crumble in the actual practice of Eucharistic consumption and ecclesial community, Edelman's claims to an anti-politics may crumble in the face of the lived reality of the figures on which his polemic is built.

So why turn to Edelman at all? Edelman does clear a ground for an important critique of the way in which we might be weary of the orienting force of the future. However, his internal contradictions also help us to illuminate how a mere rejection of the future cannot avoid its own dangerous political erasures. Hence, while Edelman's rejection of an over-determined future is compelling, and a useful counter to the imperial teleology found in RO writings, *No Future* does not escape its own problematic

¹⁰⁸ Tim Dean, "An Impossible Embrace: Queerness, Futurity, and the Death Drive," in *A Time for the Humanities: Futurity and the Limits of Autonomy*, edited by James L. Bono, Time Dean, and Ewa Plonowska Ziarek (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 128.

universalizing. In its polemical and (anti)moralizing tone it leaves little room for doubt. Instead of making trusty propositions that while standing firm in what they believe are willing to be democratically negotiated and undone, it turns its negation of a future politics into an affirmation of one particular truth such that that particular becomes the Queer Truth. Both Milbank's insistence on seriousness in universalizing a particularity and Edelman's elision of difference miss the ways in which unexpected actors and collectivities (the gay Christian, the black child, the mad prophet) destabilize both universal transcendence and universal annihilation.

Despite my concern that the radical democratic concept of the immeasurable, even in its best intention, might elide issues of history and everyday embodiment, it does help us to destabilize false universals. RD temporality in its lack of measure might make room for those, like the queer Christian, that don't fit into neatly measured categories. Radical democratic theology escapes the troublesome exclusivity I worry about in both Milbank's and Edelman's writings. And yet, the temporality of the event proposed by RD thinkers could be an apt target for Edelman's critique of futurity. Indeed if we were to replace the word "queerness" in this section's epigraph from Muñoz (whose work on queer futurity is often placed in opposition to the antisocial turn) with "event" such that it became: "The event is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world," we might be at the heart of radical democratic temporality. In embracing queer collectivity--an embrace that resists the elision of difference and so escapes some of the universal-particularist tendencies of Edelman--Muñoz's utopian performatives provide alternative visions of how one might, harkening back to Goodchild, spend time over saving it.

Refusing pure negation, Muñoz proposed the concrete performance of hope from within queer communities. Counter to Edelman, he saw the future as integral to the queer imaginary: “Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present.”¹⁰⁹ From Muñoz, queerness, as not only a sexual identity, but more so a marker of non-normate desires and a critical stance toward normative society, is, “that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing.”¹¹⁰ The very utopian thinking that allowed Muñoz to imagine something beyond the quagmire of the present might be proof for Edelman that we find it impossible to think politics without what Edelman finds to be an oppressive future promissory. Yet temporality in *Cruising Utopia* is more complicated. Drawing on the philosophy of Ernst Bloch, Muñoz asserts that, “in our everyday life abstract utopias are akin to banal optimism... concrete utopias are the realm of educated hope.”¹¹¹ For a utopia to be concrete it must not merely be one of future vision, one that might not only trap you in banal optimism, but worse, in cruel optimism. Rather, concrete utopias must be performed in the present. It is in this sense of presentist performance that we begin to see an alternate way between teleological and anti-teleological theologies.

The concreteness of hope in Muñoz’s work keeps the importance of everyday embodiments at the fore of political thought. Hence, we might, placing Muñoz into dialogue with RD theologians, insist on the potency of quotidian queerness (its fleshy attention to past, present, and future) as a key supplement to concepts of event,

¹⁰⁹ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: the Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009) 1.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 3

immeasurability, and exodus that would benefit from attention to myriad affecting histories and fleshy moments that shape our orientations to such narratives of flight. For instance, while I find it hard to *touch* on how exactly an exodus from obedience and an opening to the immeasurable looks and feels; I can imagine getting physically lost and loosed from my chains on the dance floors where Muñoz wishes to take ecstasy with me. I can vibrate with the screams of Vaginal Crème Davis in the drag punk bar as she helps undo any sense of stable separation between my pleasure and my pain.¹¹² As discussed further below, with affect theorist Ann Cvetkovich I could caress the crocheted sides of artist Alison Mitchell’s “Hungry Purse,” and slip into a sense of being together with others gathered in the art piece and with the material threads that encompass us.¹¹³ And with Elizabeth Freeman I might tremble with expectation--time finally slowing down to the point where it is pleasurably unproductive--as I wait to be dominated in the S/M club.¹¹⁴ From within these material enactments, ones in which one is both still here in the present and feeling ones way through a dream of a different past that might have been and a different future that might be, binaries between past and future, crucifixion and resurrection, and pain and pleasure begin to crack under the weight of *both* the immeasurability *and* material affects of time. Further, the concrete utopias found in the work of Muñoz, because they are enacted by collectivities of people in the present, are textured with histories and bodies that confront and are confronted by moments of

¹¹² José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

¹¹³ Ann Cvetkovich *Depression: a Public Feeling* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012).

¹¹⁴ Elizabeth Freeman *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010).

inscriptional violence. Hence, these utopias contain the undeniable potency of *feeling* that comes from being out-of-joint with the temporal and emotional demands of neoliberalism.

While I wish I could *sense, touch, or feel* my way more concretely into such an event, the utopic time proposed by Muñoz *is* reflective of Crockett's understanding of the present allowed for by a Deleuzian event. Constituted from within the shadow of an unforeseen event this present escapes a sense of inevitability dictated by a containable past and a predestined future. The shadow of the unforeseen event might be in Muñoz's terms the queerness that lets us know this is not all there is; the unforeseen event provides space for a different dream of the present—a democratizing of democracy. While it may not be obvious how the punk rock drag show or the singing of cover songs inside a feminist art installation is a democratizing of democracy, if we are to take seriously the utopic sensibility of Muñoz's concrete performances of community, we might begin to see how it is precisely the creation of lifeworlds and dreamscapes within quotidian expressions of our entangled, yet singular, selves that democratizes the availability of flourishing for myriad of desires and embodiments in the present. This is not a grand political program, but rather the performance of how life under a democracy-to-come might look and feel. It is a democratizing of the options of spending time over saving it, and the explosion of possibilities of which feelings might be welcomed and nurtured in such acts of spending.

And yet in the work of both Muñoz and that of Radical Democratic theologians there may still be a problematic temporal deference to the future. The event comes from the future, even if it is unforeseen, and a utopian dream is oriented toward the future

(even when it is lived out in the present). Additionally, both might be recognized as acts of exodus from a traumatic past, and such imply a more linear temporal movement than either intended. In other words, can an exodus from totalizing narratives, even when conducted through utopian performances in the present, aptly contain a persisting past?

While RD theologians have provided key theological critiques of the present and offered eventive re-imaginings for the future, I am left desirous of alternative theological language for how we might more faithfully attend to the past. Further might there be a theological grounding that helps us to counter the cruelly optimistic promise on offer by Neoliberal redemption narratives? Can we theologically witness to the damage done by such a narrative without nihilistically giving in to such damage—a time between our quotidian crucifixions and seeming impossible resurrections?

Looking to the time of Holy Saturday as proposed by Shelly Rambo in *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* might better touch on a persisting past. Exploring a Saturday temporality can bring us back to queer theory through a new theological lens, one which looks not only to what might come next, but more particularly to what remains in the wake of traumatized pasts and uncertain futures. This strain of queer and feminist theory, represented here in the works of Heather Love, Robin James, and Elizabeth Freeman clears pathways toward what I am calling bipolar temporality.

Holy Presence of Past and Future

According to Shelly Rambo: “In the aftermath of trauma, death and life no longer stand in opposition. Instead death haunts life.”¹¹⁵ Rambo looks to what remains in the

¹¹⁵ Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: a Theology of Remaining*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press: 2010), 3.

time between crucifixion and resurrection, the experience of witnessing to what remains of life, which is an encounter with what is not recognizable. This encounter involves the interplay of the senses in an attempt to find one's way.¹¹⁶ Following Rambo we can ask: What if the temporality of the post-Fordist moment is one of Holy Saturday-- a day lived in the wake of crucifixion and the shadow of an uncertain resurrection? The wake of a failed American dream and the shadow of fractured revolutions? Indeed might we be living in a moment reflective of a life haunted by death? And if so how does this Holy Saturday *feel*? Or rather, where within material life might we locate a sense of Holy Saturday? Might Holy Saturday be a more apt descriptor of how most of us remain in the face of our quotidian crucifixions when flight is either not on offer or not desired? For instance, in such states: even as we are beckoned forward, held cruelly captive to the promise that Sunday is coming, we feel ourselves pushed back, pulled asunder.

In constructing a Holy Saturday pneumatology Rambo looks to the writings of Hans Urs Von Balthasar deeply influenced by his partner Adriene Von Speyr's mystical experiences with Jesus' descent into hell. Agreeing with Rambo that while Balthasar and Speyr construct a Holy Saturday that still relies too heavily on Sunday's redemption I suggest there is great potential for the rethinking of temporality found in this work. For instance, Balthasar argued that the time of Holy Saturday describes an indecipherable time that resists a sense of mere waiting for the event of resurrection.¹¹⁷ The time of Holy Saturday is a time-out-of-joint, or reading with Deleuze, a crack in History. We might find similar Deleuzian resonances between political cinema's revelation that the people

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 162.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 46.

have been missing¹¹⁸ and what Rambo describes as “The middle-day [as] the site of witness to the truths that are in danger of being covered over and buried.”¹¹⁹ As explored further below and in subsequent chapters, this refusal to be covered over is similarly demanded by a turn to bipolar time; bipolar time asks us to *feel* what is to be that which neoliberalism has worked so hard to suppress.

Holy Saturday as described in Speyr’s mystical experiences marks not a faith in redemption, but rather one of endurance. This is a persistence found in the space not of God’s victory, but rather God’s abandonment.¹²⁰ The sense of what it is to live in the wake of crucifixion and the face of uncertain resurrection saturates Holy Saturday. The temporality of Rambo’s “middle spirit” marks a crucial alternative to the binary between being locked in the narrative of the past and being held captive to a cruelly optimistic belief in a fully unchained new life. It resists both an over emphasis on an *active* exodus from the dead God and an unwavering faith in the new life promised but rarely, beyond the saved elite, provided by Milbank and Market orthodoxies. Holy Saturday time, as theorized by Rambo, favors instead a focus on the affect of a present in which the binary between death and life no longer holds.

The materiality of a life lived in this time is often unproductive. Balthasar recounting the experiences of Speyr narrates the temporality of Holy Saturday as such:

¹¹⁸ For Gilles Deleuze the new basis on which modern political cinema was founded is the acknowledgement that a people have been missing. According to Deleuze, political cinema’s rejection of linear time or an historical narrative that has served to absent the people is represented through juxtapositions of old and new that create absurdities and point toward the cracks in History. Deleuze, *Cinema II*, 217-218.

¹¹⁹ Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 48.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

It is a beginning without parallel, as if Life were arising from Death, as if weariness (already such weariness as no amount of sleep could ever dispel) and the uttermost decay of power were melting at creation's outer edge, were beginning to flow, because flowing is perhaps a sign and a likeness of weariness which can no longer contain itself, because everything that is strong and solid must in the end dissolve into water. But hadn't it--in the beginning--also be born from water? and is this wellspring in the chaos, this trickling weariness, not the beginning of a new creation?¹²¹

This is a present-future less evocative of the eruptive event of the multitude or that of the resurrection than with the quotidian process of feeling one's way through the weariness of a life penetrated by the past. It is a finding of flow from within the stuckness of those worn down to such a point that not even sleep is redemptive. It is a time not of stable beginnings and ends, but one of watery wellsprings (manic life flows), and a trickling weariness (depressive attention to mortality). As Rambo notes, "This residue of love [that found between Father and Son even in utter abandonment] is not powerful but weary and impotent."¹²² It is in this sense of Holy Saturday in which temporality shifts such that we no longer see utter despair in such impotence, but rather what remains of love. This sense of time is a particularly apt theological referent for queer temporalities. For, these theories, like Holy Saturday, can throw our senses of success, production, and redemption into crisis.¹²³ In doing so they demand that it is not we unproductive, disordered, deviant wasters of time that need to be rehabilitated and redeemed, but rather the system that devalued us that must be resisted. In this sense a weary love that remains in the face of

¹²¹ Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 43.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 57.

¹²³ While below I have chosen to focus on the writings of Heather Love, Robin James, and Elizabeth Freeman in order to illuminate the tie between certain theories of queer temporality; one could also look to the work of Jack Halberstam on queer failure in *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011) or to crip critiques of productivity such as those found in the work of Robert McRuer.

that which is trying to either kill us or resurrect us back into its system of exploitation may actually provide hope.

Queer Saturdays

Feelings of witnessing to our traumatized past, of waiting, and attempting another way similarly reflect the reading of queer time found in Heather Love's *Feeling*

Backward. Love frames the temporal problem in queer studies as such:

In so far as the losses of the past motivate us and give meaning to our current experience, we are bound to memorialize them ('We will never forget'). But we are equally bound to overcome the past, to escape its legacy ('We will never go back'). For groups constituted by historical injury, the challenge is to engage with the past without being destroyed by it.¹²⁴

The tension between never forgetting and never returning frames Love's question of how best queer life in the present might deal with its past *and* its future. Making reference to the queer utopias on offer by thinkers like Muñoz and influenced by the antisocial thesis, Love notes that while utopian desires have been primary in the project of queer studies, the future vision on which they build has too often impeded the act of facing the past from which that vision is trying to escape.

Here we might remember the problematic sense of a time of exodus, and the worry that it has not yet fully addressed that from which it flees. Love reminds us that neither the present nor the future is ever fully free of the past. This is in part due to the affectual legacy the past holds on the future. Often faced with the choice to either move on to happier times or cling to the past, even as they are beckoned forward, queers, Love argues, can't help but feel "backward."

¹²⁴ Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 1.

Feelings not only persist, they also have critical work to do; these “backward feelings,” are “all about action: about how and why it is blocked, and about how to locate motives for political action when none is visible.”¹²⁵ Further, “backward” feelings arise through the experience of being marked as “backwards.” Whether one is “backward” because one is queer, disabled, indigenous, black, woman, impoverished, or mad, the feeling of being so arises through plays of power that have allowed certain bodies to flow easily into societal space and others to be impeded. In this way, “backward” feelings can interrogate the eventive flow of time proposed by radical democratic theologians *and* the providential time, which has historically served as an imperial rationale for marking certain people divergent, proposed by the radical orthodoxy. Hence, one need not overcome these feelings as much as learn from them, feel them in order to feel a different kind of future, what Love calls a “backward future,” one “apart from the reproductive imperative, optimism, and the promise of redemption.”¹²⁶ Rather than a project invested in voiding the future, we might say that Love seeks to unvoid the past by refusing to avoid it, and so to feel our way toward more viable lives beyond reproductive futurism. Hence, a backward future might be another name for the time of Holy Saturday. Holy Saturday theologies can view the day between crucifixion and resurrection not merely as a time of reflection on our way to happier futures, but rather as *the* place and *the* time from which we can find alternate ways of living and structures of feeling that better en flesh a democratic temporality.

¹²⁵ Love, *Feeling Backward*, 13.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 147.

We might find a queer and democratic Saturday in Robin James's theorization of melancholy as a counter to neoliberal narratives of resilience in *Resilience and Melancholy: Pop Music, Feminism, Neoliberalism*. We can read such narratives theologically as contemporary resurrection stories, ones that teach us we must resurrect out of our damage (perhaps our quotidian crucifixions) if we are to become healthy subjects. According to James neoliberal subjectivization processes no longer assume a modernist subject, the self as originally whole and stable. Rather, they assume *and* rely on damage:

Resilience is the hegemonic or 'common sense' ideology that everything is to be measured, not by its overall systematicity (coherence) or its critical, revolutionary potential (deconstruction), but by its *health* ... This 'health' is maintained by bouncing back from injury and crisis in a way that capitalizes on deficits so that you end up ahead of where you initially started ... If resilience is the new means of production, this means that crisis and trauma are actually necessary, desirable phenomena—you can't bounce back without first falling.¹²⁷

You can't resurrect without first being crucified. In other—theological-- words, neoliberalism relies on crucifixions (crisis, trauma) in order to establish meaningful and profitable selves. A saturated globalized economy, with few new terrains to exploit and on which to grow, needs the damage and resilience cycle because it provides surplus value and new zones of profit maximization. Here we might, and James does, think of Klein's concept of "disaster capital," in which industries grow by gambling on and profiting off of crises.¹²⁸ Disaster capitalism includes the subprime mortgage and predatory payday lenders as businesses models that profit on crisis and trauma, but importantly too on the command we bounce back from the crises nurtured by

¹²⁷ Robin James, *Resilience and Melancholy: Pop Music, Feminism, Neoliberalism* (Alresford, UK: Zero Books, 2015), 4.

¹²⁸ Klein, *Shock Doctrine*.

neoliberalism through our individual resilience. The command to be resilient is the command to become healthy subjects; once debilitated we are redeemed into model citizens “free” to adapt to whatever of us the market demands.

To counter this societal exploitation/individual resilience/societal exploitation cycle James offers melancholy as a mode of short-circuiting the neoliberal machine. To short-circuit neoliberalism would be to resist the command to overcome (be resilient) that profits off the renewed human energy (our surplus value) produced through rehabilitating damage. This short-circuiting, according to James, might come from making “bad investments” in those the market views as waste—those unable to be “rehabilitated,” or theologically speaking, “redeemed.”

James traces these resilient (resurrection/redemption) narratives, and their possible melancholic counter, through contemporary pop music. For instance, she finds in Lady Gaga’s goth style not the rejection of neoliberalism, but the turning of an aesthetic of damage into a narrative James names as “Look I Overcame” (LIO). The LIO narrative makes Gaga recognizable to society, or in other words subjectivizes her through the narrative of overcoming, such that she might profit on societal damage, but also so that we need not investigate the neoliberal exploitation that persists despite individual resistance: “If she can overcome, maybe I can too!” There’s no need to worry why we were asked to overcome in the first place.

To achieve her LIO identity, Gaga adjusts the location of pleasure within goth damage. Historically, goth subcultures have found pleasure within the damage itself; Gaga’s version finds pleasure at the site of one’s overcoming of the damage: “whereas traditional goth practices use an identification with monstrosity as a way to achieve a

critical distance from mainstream culture...Gaga's performances of monstrosity are not identifications with, but incitements of the damage that she ultimately overcomes."¹²⁹

Gaga's fans, for instance are known as "Little Monsters," but Gaga makes the monster loveable, not as monstrous, but because the monster is revealed to be natural (born this way) and perhaps more importantly, resilient (able to resist gender norms). In other words, her monstrous fans "grow up into resilient citizens."¹³⁰ They do so not through systemic changes, but through individually (if with a reference to a Gaga collectivity) overcoming.

James further suggests that much of the anarchic performance in contemporary pop music supports, instead of subverting, neoliberal logic. Under neoliberalism not stability, but flexibility is the prize:

Noisy an-arche sounds [are] queer and illogical only to ears tempered by a *logos* that privileges development, teleology, euphony, virtuosity, and rationality. Neoliberalism, however, doesn't care about linear progress, teleology, or euphony; in fact ... neoliberalism courts and incites damage, glitch, and imperfection. Neoliberalism co-opts classically queer negation and critical black aesthetics, redistributing their negative, critical force and putting it in service of privileged groups.¹³¹

This key temporal shift diagnoses neoliberal constructions of value. Such a diagnosis might reflect the one on offer by the radical orthodoxy. Perhaps if noise out-of-measure is part of the neoliberal plan then an exodus to the immeasurable is not the resistant tactic for which we are in search.

¹²⁹ James, *Resilience and Melancholy*, 135.

¹³⁰ James, *Resilience and Melancholy*, 135.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

However, as I have argued--and as James seems to imply despite saying otherwise in the above citation--neoliberal economics, while claiming to be flexible and free, are actually teleological and restricted. For instance, James (following Jodi Dean) suggests that “‘the market as a site of truth’ is the main thing that distinguishes neoliberalism from its predecessors and alternatives...Market logic is a site of truth because that’s the instrument we use to evaluate and assess everything, to tell us, for example, whether society is healthy or whether an artwork is any good.”¹³² In other words, the Market is the ground of all interpretive events. Under the “truth” of neoliberalism, everything is measured and accounted for. Freedom is in service to the market as its master. Indeed, James notes this is why we mark some consumer choices, like those of people on welfare who spend their money on luxury goods or high-end foodstuffs, as stupid.¹³³ Because adherents of the Truth of the market (market fundamentalists) have to act as though there is “free choice” they must also mark those who make choices that deviate from certain systemic rules--those that wander away from the teleological path toward the moneyed eschaton--as unhealthy. This “free” actor must be making such a choice because she is not of her right mind. So perhaps *it is* the radical democratic flight to the immeasurable that will release us from such a caged freedom. And yet, as James further makes clear such a flight risks becoming the resilient (adaptable) flexibility that creates surplus value out of damage. This is value that now can be reworked into a neoliberal market.

Additionally, reading with James, we might view this flight as increasingly difficult for those made most precarious by neoliberalism to actually partake in. Those

¹³² Ibid., 9.

¹³³ James, *Resilience and Melancholy*, 162.

who cannot bounce back are not considered resilient, but rather toxic. Those that cannot flee their damaged situations have no worth. Analyses of neoliberalism's treatment of race, gender, sexuality and ability uncover disparities in terms of one's access to a "healthy" resilience. According to James, neoliberalism makes of certain subjects exceptions to overcoming through performances of race, gender, and sexual *inclusions*. She rewrites the White Supremacy of neoliberalism as: multi-racial white supremacist patriarchy or MRWaSP. MRWaSP includes certain "good" (meaning healthy and resilient) women, people, of color, and gays in its structures of power: "*This inclusion is always conditional and always instrumental.*"¹³⁴ Inclusion is conditioned on exercising the right kind of resilience: making the right kind of choices out of one's damage. It is instrumental in that it serves to show that MRWaSP, this time, truly does believe in democratic equality for all.

According to James women are also the most important instruments in the resilience labor that works to show that MRWaSP "good guys" are good. "Just look at the good girls that have been able to rise through our ranks" MRWaSP says. Look I overcame. This type of instrumental inclusion pathologizes those that cannot or refuse to be resilient; it marks them as irredeemable: "*MRWaSP uses resilience to cut the color line-and the gender binary, the line between homonormative and queer, and to differentiate between mainstreamable and non-mainstreamable people with disabilities.*"¹³⁵

¹³⁴ James, *Resilience and Melancholy*, 13.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

So what is to be done? Follow a resurrection event that moves us out of time or return to a time of values other than that of neoliberal flexibility and resilience? James offers us a third way. The third way between, or better beside, the MRWaSP (and I argue RO) exclusionary through inclusion cage and the MRWaSP (and perhaps RD) embrace of the value of flight out of the situation of damage, comes through a close reading of the *feeling* of what it is to remain *with* the damage, or to invest in those that MRWaSP makes exceptions to resilience/resurrection: the feeling of melancholy. To invest in the exceptions and to stay melancholically with the damage is to act as an entropic force on the MRWaSP machine, a machine always looking for more surplus value on which to run.

To better understand such “bad investing” let us return to James’s analysis of Lady Gaga and in particular the difference she finds between on the one hand Gaga and Beyonce (models of the labor of resilience) and on the other hand Rihanna (the model of melancholic care for the exceptions). Analyzing Beyonce’s video “Video Phone” and Gaga’s “Telephone,” James suggests that while each claims a kind of place of damage, damage inflicted on them by patriarchy, their resilience (their LIO narrative) is built on making urban black men the exception to overcoming. Beyonce and Gaga--feminist and queer icons *and* profitable investments thanks to having overcome the damage inflicted on them by patriarchy--are resilient in such a way that turns their damage into their surplus human capital (literally their profitability in the market). In order for their music videos to properly tell this narrative they need a representative villain--he who has damaged them--to overcome. In both videos this “villain” is the urban black man that

portrays a misogynistic ex lover. Non-bourgeois blackness is the price paid for “good girl” inclusion in MRWaSP.

In other words, the videos suggest that “black men were singularly responsible for patriarchy’s monstrous excesses, and overcoming patriarchy was simply a matter of punishing or eliminating black men.”¹³⁶ Indeed, MRWaSP inclusions function only because there are still exceptions. Some are included and others are excluded to show that it is up to the individual to prove her health, the (sick) system remains unchallenged: “Neoliberalism needs privileged folk to individually ‘go gaga’ so that society (relations of privilege and oppression) can stay the same.”¹³⁷ While staying the same, MRWaSP argues it has become more inclusive, holding up individual resilient people of color and women (“Just look at Beyonce!”); it performs change, while ensuring that certain exclusions remain. These exclusions are those defined as irredeemable in the face of MRWaSP functionality: “[Urban black masculinity] can’t be recycled because it is toxic to the system.”¹³⁸ Resilience (redemption/resurrection) is healthy; being unwilling or unable to be “redeemed” to health is sick.

Counter to this type of “healthy resilience” James offers us melancholy:

*Melancholy—that is, misfired resilience, insufficiently profitable overcoming—is an alternative to biopolitical discourses of resilience and acceleration. Instead of resiliently recycling damage into human capital, melancholy goes into the death, investing in damage without properly overcoming it.*¹³⁹

¹³⁶ James, *Resilience and Melancholy*, 133.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 138.

¹³⁸ James, *Resilience and Melancholy*, 125.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 124

Going into the death need not mean accepting crucifixion, but rather attempting to kill off MRWaSP power by making “bad investments” by which James means investments that impede the machine from turning damage into profitable human capital. Melancholy, by making space for damage remains in a darkness that is inefficient, and yet in being inefficient or irredeemable it is a darkness that shows care for those that have been damaged by MRWaSP. Melancholic bad investments are refusals to overcome on the backs of those non-resilient exceptions (the urban black man, the precariat, the disabled) that serve as our ransom for the price of inclusion. This is a kind of weary remaining that embodies a Holy Saturday sensibility and temporality. This is an act of care that might be a middle way between democratic exodus and orthodox return.

We might find with James the performance of this middle way, of melancholy, in the tracks and videos of Rihanna’s album, “Unapologetic.” “Unapologetic”:

doesn’t overcome, but *invests in* gothy damage and stereotypically urban black men (namely Chris Brown). Rihanna’s work is not resilient, but *melancholic*. This melancholy isn’t the failure to get over a loss (as Freud understands it); rather, Rihanna’s melancholy is a way of actively investing in the biopolitical, MRWaSP death that blackness represents. Melancholy is a feminist method of going *into the death*. Rather than investing in damage, melancholy invests in MRWaSP *exceptions*.¹⁴⁰

This is not to say that Rihanna chooses death or to remain in physically abusive situations (Chris Brown famously assaulted Rihanna at the 2009 Grammy Awards), but rather that her affect, her melancholic rhythms, images, and performance refuse to stop witnessing to the crucifixion of blackness on offer by MRWaSP. She short-circuits the narrative, by investing in what MRWaSP finds toxic.

¹⁴⁰ James, *Resilience and Melancholy*, 126.

One such melancholic image takes place at the end of the music video for Rihanna's hit, but critically panned (for not "going anywhere"), song, "Diamonds." At the end of the video Rihanna's character is "floating-not even swimming treading water, just floating face-up-in-the water. Drifting directionlessly atop tiny ripples of water, there are no crises for her to overcome—no storm, no tsunami."¹⁴¹ The ripples hold Rihanna; there is no sense that she needs to escape or be rescued out of the watery depths, nor that she will be pulled under by them; she remains carried by and feeling with the watery rhythm. This is an unproductive end to the video; there is no narrative punch, no radical stance or uplift as in "Video Phone," and "Telephone." "Diamonds" leaves the viewer and listener to do their own affectual labor in the face of damage. Not granting us the satisfactory end (the rush to Sunday out of Saturday) may be Rihanna's request to remain with her in the dark places. This is not a request to drown, but rather to block up a flight from that which needs our attending.

Rihanna's refusal to sacrifice exceptional blackness as the price paid for an LIO narrative can be read as an act of attentive care work. She is caring for the damage by being unwilling to redeem it as human capital. Ultimately this is the work of melancholy: "At bottom, this strategy of making 'bad investments' really an argument for a more even distribution of care work (sic) ... Caring, I understand it, is investing in others without expecting or receiving a return, in the form of human capital, to the people making the investments."¹⁴² Rihanna remains with non-bourgeois blackness. She cares for what it has been to be marked as damaged. To remain with the damage, to witness to the crucifixion

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 149.

¹⁴² James, *Resilience and Melancholy*, 174.

without resiliently resurrecting on the backs of the toxic “exceptions”, and to do so without expecting a return is a kind of grace. In an economy of grace, one attends for the sake of attending not out of obligation or personal profit. In refusing to make Chris Brown a villain (Brown sings on a track, but in general the videos for the album do not include men at all), and in attending to her own weary remaining, refusing a narrative of her individual resilience, Rihanna gifts us the opportunity to attend to her mood. In not overcoming, she demands our care for her melancholy; this demand turns self-care into communal attention. To attend is holy; it is to take care for the processes of inclusion and exclusion such redemptive narratives come to mean within MRWaSP.

This care is missed in both RO and RD. While in RO there is a resistance to the kind of flexibility and adaptability that allows for damage to be turned into human capital, they require exclusions (just like MRWaSP) in order for their particular to become the universal particular and their salvation narratives to be “serious.” To mark some as good Christians, those that have chosen obedience to Christ over the market, needs the example of bad exceptions, those who resist such narrow definitions of faith. RO does not provide an analysis of how truly free or not the choice of Christian obedience is. The question of freedom might arise because of commitments to other faiths or to one’s queer desires that mark one for many RO theologians [with perhaps Graham Ward as an exception] as outside the Christian Good or the “healthy” economy of Christ and Kingdom.

For RD theologians, James can be read as offering a warning about narratives of change that might eclipse the material experience of those that either do not have the surplus energy to flee or those for whom such a narrative might slip too quickly into

“healthy” resilience at the expense of marking others as toxic remainders. For instance, drawing on the work of Steven Shaviri, James argues that, “deregulated worlds can be ‘entirely incoherent, yet immediately legible to anyone ‘ (Shaviri PC 80) because *the superficial chaos is intentionally produced and controlled for by the work’s immanent structure*. If regulation limits and prohibits irrationality and incoherence, deregulated visualization leverages and exploits it.”¹⁴³ This is not to say that RD theologians intend to produce superficial chaos, but rather to argue that if we are to ensure concepts of “immeasurability,” and “event” not easily be leveraged by neoliberal economics we may need to practice some melancholic *and* ecstatic attention to Muñoz’s concreteness and James’s bad investments

Melancholic care refuses to be captured. It floats on the damaged water, short-circuiting the productive programs on offer by MRWaSP. This bad investing might be a kind of careful remaining or what I call “grave attending.” Grave attending is a caring for the gravity, the pulling down to the material world, listening for what all its myriad emotions have to tell us, and where they have to lead us. It is also a witnessing to those assumed to be buried over and gone, the ghosts that haunt us and so gift us a sense of what we might have been and an imagination of what we might become. Acts of grave attention refuse to efface the material mattering of others on the way to our own redemption. Hence remaining with the damage is, perhaps, a Saturday mood, a way between crucifixion and resurrection.

We can find a similar sense of grave attending in Elizabeth Freeman’s discussion of S/M and her reading of Isaac Julien’s short film “The Attendant,” in *Time Binds*:

¹⁴³ James, *Resilience and Melancholy*, 99.

Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories. Freeman offers us another scene of Holy Saturday time, one in sympathy with the kind of melancholic refusal to overcome on offer by James. Freeman's analysis of sadomasochistic practices can be understood as an erotics of queer ritual enactments of time. She "treat[s] S/M as a deployment of bodily sensations through which the individual subject's normative timing is disaggregated and denaturalized."¹⁴⁴ Through her analysis of "The Attendant," Freeman argues that this disorganization is collective and that "sadomasochistic sex performs a dialectic of a rapid-temporal 'modernity' and a slower 'premodernity;' the latter indexed by any number of historical periods and, crucially, by forms of labor and affiliation that do not accede to capitalist imperatives."¹⁴⁵ The particular visceral practices of S/M might be refusals to give in to the coming of the moneyed or Christian eschaton. Further, to denaturalize bodily time such that demands for efficiency are thrown into disorder by our most intimate plays of desire is to feel a backward future.

We might find in this subcultural practice modes of feeling and becoming that sensitively attend to both the desire to flee toward a different possible world, and the one to intensely witness to each micro-sensation of what it is to live in this present. Indeed, quoting Carla Freccero, Freeman locates in S/M a "Passivity – which is also a form of patience and passion – [that] is not quite the same thing as quietism. Rather it is a suspension, a waiting, an attending to the world's arrivals (through, in part, its

¹⁴⁴ Freeman, *Time Binds*, 137.

¹⁴⁵ Freeman, *Time Binds*, 137-138

returns).”¹⁴⁶ This is the Attendant’s attendance, but this might also be the witness of Holy Saturday, of the love that remains instead of redeeming. Freeman’s reading of “The Attendant” reminds us that since the pleasures and pains of histories infuse temporality, any counter-capitalist theology, including a radical democratic one, must address how moments of time are felt and embodied differently by different people. Hence, relations to revolt, exodus, and infinity will be received and undertaken in variant ways from within historically constructed subjectivities.¹⁴⁷

“The Attendant” is set in Wilberforce House, a British museum centered on the history of slavery. The primary plot of the film centers on either the sexual fantasy of a black museum guard/attendant about a young white visitor or the actual S/M encounter between the two (the line between reality and fantasy is left ambiguous in the film). When the museum closes a large painting by Francois-Auguste Biard depicting a white master bending over a dying black slave comes to life as it is re-imagined as a leather S/M scene. According to Freeman, various re-imaginings and re-enactments of the Biard painting: “intimate that sadomasochism overtly engages with the dialectic between an era’s dominant temporal modality and other historical moments and their temporal fields. And [the film] gestures toward the possibility of encountering specific historical

¹⁴⁶ Freeman, *Time Binds*, 147. Of course the play of pleasure and pain through ritual enactment is not unfamiliar to theologians and religious practitioners. There is a long history of Christian practice that involves bodily pleasure and pain in acts not only for worship, but also for the enactment of a different kind of time.

¹⁴⁷ For instance, see George “Tink” Tinker’s work on the problematic trope of exodus in liberation theology for Native Americans, for whom sticking with their land is politically and cosmologically crucial. (George Tinker, *Spirit and Resistance: Political Theology and American Indian Liberation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2004).

moments viscerally, thereby refusing these moments the closure of pastness.”¹⁴⁸ For instance, Julien creates a triptych of the black attendant about to be whipped by the white visitor, the white visitor about to be whipped by the black attendant, and the two standing side by side. This triptych reengages the past both to re-imagine it, but also to attend to its material reality in the present.

Freeman finds important temporal and material insight not only through viscerally entering such historical moments, but also through the structure of the pause created by the “about to be whipped.” For Freeman, drawing on Benjamin, “the pause does not signal an interval between one thing and another; it is itself a thing, analytically and experientially available, that reveals the ligaments binding the past and the present.”¹⁴⁹ Might the pause of the whip in *S/M* be the middle spirit we see in Shelly Rambo’s pneumatology where in the wake of trauma death haunts life and yet love may still remain, in Rihanna floating at the end of “Diamonds”, and in Love’s feeling backwards? The pause, or remaining, does not give into the past as though the past were static and its results inevitable, but nor does it flee the past. In the pause of the whip and in Julien’s play between painting and film that for Freeman represents, “flow and freeze,”¹⁵⁰ there is a kind of melancholic attending, a caring, for what was *and* what might have been.

In *S/M*’s material attending to the past through its destabilization of linear time, and in the non-linear rhythms (what she calls a “proliferation of visual and tactile

¹⁴⁸ Freeman, *Time Binds*, 145.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 149.

rhymes”) of Julien’s film, Freeman locates: “a kind of *short-circuiting*, circuiting, a jolt seen or felt, a profane illumination or kinetic leap into history otherwise. If s/M in its sensory elements encodes and transmits the bodily knowledge of personal and collective trauma, Julien seems to argue, it can also release this knowledge for new bodily experiences in the present.”¹⁵¹ Might this short-circuiting be similar to the short-circuiting James finds in making melancholic bad investments? Both short-circuit a linear or uncomplicatedly finished narrative of crucifixion and resurrection, but they do so without giving up hope that the past might not foreclose a different present.

For James, short-circuiting is also “going into the death” instead of investing in life. To go “into the death” for James means making investments that kill off the surplus value that MRWaSP needs to live. To go into the death, to remain with damage, is not to die, but to rest in the pause that keeps different possibilities (for instance not sacrificing blackness as toxic) open for the present. Hence “The Attendant”’s attendance might recall the redistribution of care work imagined by James’s melancholy. James hopes to short-circuit future overcoming while Freeman sees S/M as short-circuiting the dualistic reading of time in which one must either go back into stable damage (crucifixion/slavery) or forward into fated utopia (resurrection/obligatory forgetting). Both inhabit a space that refuses narratives on offer without overcoming (and so rehabilitating and making available for profit) the past.

This sort of Holy Saturday labor of attending and care might be what Foucault had in mind when in his *Hermeneutics of the Subject* he spoke of the care of the self that

¹⁵¹ Freeman, *Time Binds*, 163-164 (Emphasis added).

would permit us to “become *again* what we *never were*.”¹⁵² This ethic of care will be the focus of the fifth chapter, for now we might note here that to become again what we never were is to feel backwards, to remain tied to the past, while allowing for the past/present/future to be otherwise. This Holy Saturday labor might be the “kinetic leap into history otherwise.” These queer Saturdays call not for an exodus toward resurrective novelty, nor “radical” *return* to an imperial history of crucifixion (of exception making), but an equivocacy between the two. This might be a call for an attendant pause that invests in the exception and not in individual overcoming.

The need to attend better, to witness, returns us to the work of Clayton Crockett. In *Deleuze beyond Badiou*, Crockett asks, “So what is to be done? Do we militantly wait for another event, and hope that it happens before we die or become extinct? Or do we create an event of thinking?”¹⁵³ He continues, “As Paola Marrati suggests, Deleuze believes that concepts like History, God, and Self are too big to function for any effective political action, and that, in fact, politics based on action runs into serious problems because the movements become programmed in advance and then reduced to clichés, or else captured by state and capitalist apparatuses.”¹⁵⁴ Here we recall the programmatic nature of Milbank’s event of the Church. The Universal Good of the Church has, of course, been used to justify the neo-colonialism of global capitalism and earlier forms of “civilizing” colonial projects. In Freeman’s pause and James’s melancholy we find not

¹⁵² Michel Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982* (New York: Picador, 2001), 95.

¹⁵³ Crockett, *Deleuze Beyond Badiou*, 169.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

only events of thinking, but too of feeling, felt events that resist a programmatic politics of action without falling into apathy.

I find great potential in Freeman's reading of S/M and James's reading of pop music, yet I am left wondering if there is another approach to time that can address the temporal and affectual precarity nurtured by neoliberalism: one that looks sensitively not only to moments of ecstatic reengagement with the past or problematic performances of resilient futures, but also to our material mundane slog through the present. I want to pause in the everyday as much if not more so than any revolutionary moment or change. I desire to inhabit refusals and bad investments that arise in our most quotidian of embodiments. I propose, we might find such sensibilities by pausing in and attending to temporal shifts within so-called mental "illness," most particularly bipolar disorder.

Disordered Time

What would it mean to view the "disorder" we name bipolar as a site from which to question the value of neoliberal civil order? Following Ann Cvetkovich's work on depression, I suggest that we can deindividualize and depathologize bipolarity and affirm that good politics need not only come from good feelings.¹⁵⁵ I propose bipolar time--that disordering of a linear movement from crucifixion to resurrection--as a protest and potency from within the eschatological shadows of capitalism.

Following crip theorist Robert McRuer, we might name the indictment to save time as a heteronormative insistence on able-bodiedness.¹⁵⁶ Bipolar time argues that this

¹⁵⁵ Cvetkovich, *Depression*.

¹⁵⁶ Crip theory is a form of disability studies that seeks not for accessibility and acceptance, but rather, similar to queer theory, looks (through the experience of the disabled) to destabilize heteronormative and ableist systems of accessibility and

indictment is also an insistence on able-mindedness. Viewing bipolarity as a crip sensibility disrupts its pathologization in order to reveal, while acknowledging its pain, its pleasurable potential.¹⁵⁷ Embracing the crip reformulation of disability as not that which should be fixed, but rather as a site from which we might learn to resist society's demands for productivity and efficiency (an issue to which we return in the following chapter), I argue that bipolarity can question the thrust of normativization inherent in neoliberal temporality and sociality. Further, bipolar disorder opens up questions of redemption or cure similar to those brought to the fore by crip theory. Hence, bipolar time returns us to Holy Saturday time, taken now not from the point of view of divine abandonment, which in Balthasar's reading will be redeemed, but rather from a stance that says resurrection may not only be unattainable, but also unnecessary. Bipolar time need not be rehabilitated out of its damage as much as it cares for what happens within the damage. Bipolar time is a kind of queering of Holy Saturday theologies as it not only serves in Balthasar's words as a "radically disorienting space of death and hell,"¹⁵⁸ but also as a radical reorientation of the meanings of life and of (present care-full) heaven.

acceptability. In *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* McRuer explicates how compulsory heterosexuality is actually dependent on compulsory able-bodiedness in that compulsory heterosexuality is built around concepts of normate bodies and sexualities. Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

¹⁵⁷ In invoking bipolarity's pleasurable potential I seek not to glorify depression or mania, but rather to uncover alternate desires for the world produce in non-normate mental orientations. Additionally, following the work collected by editors Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow in *Sex and Disability* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), to argue against the pathologization and desexualization of the crip (including the mentally crip).

¹⁵⁸ Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 77.

Like the time of S/M, which according to Freeman can serve as “a dialectic between the will to speed up and annihilate and the will to slow down and dilate,”¹⁵⁹ bipolar time illuminates the ties and tensions between the soul-deadening effects of capitalism and the mad feeling that things might be otherwise. Further, bipolar temporality marks the inseparability of time and feeling. Bipolar time, a time saturated by unnerving feelings, can offer ways in which we might better learn to touch and feel a counter-capitalist hope in mania, depression, and their interpenetration. Hence, bipolar temporality refuses the cruel optimism and happy efficiency of neoliberalism and affirms a different *sense*, one enacted through microtactics of the self: collapsing into bed, embracing one’s feelings of overwhelming exhaustion; or living into one’s porosity to the world, collectivizing connections and so insisting that we need not be alone in facing that which has got us so tired. Bipolar time does not seek to construct, reveal, or capture *subjects* of depression and mania. Rather, bipolar time attempts to clear space for different *experiences of life*, those dependent on the paying of greater attention to where moodiness takes us. Bipolar time asks us to attend to what our moods reveal about the world and to what feelings will us to do. Hence, while the rupturing of a certain temporality is key for a bipolar sensibility, bipolar time might not cohere to queer pessimism (let alone optimism) as much as to queer attentiveness.

To gravely attend to our moods is to find both manic joy *and* deadening depression ethically interesting. To find moods ethically interesting is not to sublimate one into the other, but rather to follow moods where they will and to practice a multiplicity of moody responses, a following to which we will biblically return in chapter four. For, in

¹⁵⁹ Freeman, *Time Binds*, 153.

practicing both the fall into the bed *and* the flight into the world, bipolar time seeks not a final end to its penetrative flows of despair and desire (a Sunday for its Friday), but rather questions the very nature of resurrection. It gravely attends to or pauses to care for what has been, what might have been, and what might be.

Bipolar time is a dream of a temporally reordered world, one where worth is divorced from waged work, value from efficiency, and the *raison d'être* from redemption. In many ways it is reflective of the temporal eventiveness proposed by democratic theologians and resistant to the providential time advocated by the radical orthodoxy. Yet because bipolar time is a non-linear penetrative time in which with every speed up there is also a slow down, it can interrogate excessive foci on rapidity, newness, and action implied by the RD concept of the event. Within a time of bipolarity mania is always haunted by depression and depression by mania. Hence, a life lived in bipolar time might resist a sense of irruptive change out of captivity into any sense of an ultimate freedom-to-come. In this way bipolar temporality questions both a radical democratic narrative of exodus and a radical orthodox narrative of salvation. Further, to radical theologies, both democratic and orthodox, bipolar time adds the acknowledgement that each moment of past, present, and future is deeply felt and so carries affectual resonances that matter for how we imagine *and* presently live out our political, theological, and social lives.

Further bipolar time shakes any sense of clear agency. One does not choose to be chained to depression or to take off in flights of manic exodus. Yet there is a partial agency of response. This partial agency of response cannot be simply individual. To be sure there are micro responses we might attempt as individuals in pleasure and in pain. One might choose to cry in public or private. One might choose to call in sick or go to

work. One might choose to live or to die. However, I want to propose that our greatest agential and ethical hope may lie not in how we each individually feel (or separately respond to such feelings) as much as in how we come to be ever-more sensitively oriented toward one another. In other words we might have an agency of response even if that agency is simply to better attend to how both the world and we feel. We all can respond ever more sensitively. We can look to what remains of love in a mania haunted by depression and a depression haunted by mania. We can respond to the anxiety produced by demands for efficiency and productivity by feeling these alternate emotional states in such a way that we refuse to subordinate spending time to saving it. Indeed, the depressive side to bipolar temporality is a reminder that inaction is also a way of faithfully remaining. It attends to how the love that remains in the wake of the collectivizing trauma of neoliberalism feels often weary and impotent. Therefore, the inaction implied in microtactics like the fall into the bed confronts demands for action implied in the politics of event, exodus, and utopia. And yet, we can still find a sense of performativity in our attempts to feel ourselves through bipolar time, reorienting our macro senses of value.

This reorientation is one that might be philosophically traced in the thought of mad thinkers and thinkers of madness. For instance, in *The Rebellious No: Variations on a Secular Theology of Language*, Noelle Vahanian, drawing on discussions of madness in the works of Foucault, Nietzsche, and Derrida, surmises that: “simply put, . . . what is called reason is a form of blindness, a suspension of thought which produces sanity—the ability to desist from willing, a ‘being caught up and carried along.’ She’s hyper-aware of the saliva in her mouth or the ticking of her heart; hyper self-conscious to the point of

self-alienation, unable to let be and let go; he's a model citizen, an average consumer, a good soldier, a man of the crowd, a cog in a wheel."¹⁶⁰ The hyper awareness that madness nurtures is the kind of resistance to dulling orders of civility found within a life lived in bipolar time. Characteristic of both phases of depression and mania is an "oversensitive" orientation toward the world. Whether it comes in the form of a manic reading and *feeling* of the world or the depression that comes when the world *feels* like too much to bear living in a bipolar time means being the woman who cannot let be and let go. It is to be unable to become the model citizen and average consumer. Through the madness of living into a bipolar temporality we can resist becoming cogs in the wheel.

Additionally, while one might understand depression as the very shutting down of the will, Vahanian, quoting Louis A. Sass, counters: "What prevents the [insane] from returning to a more normal existence is no simple failure of will, but, in a sense, an inability to desist from willing—an inability to let themselves be caught up in and carried along by the ongoing flow of practical activity in which normal existence is grounded."¹⁶¹ To refuse to be carried along by the temporal pull of productive activity, when productive activity has become monetized and often cruelly optimistic, is at the heart of performing bipolar temporality. Hence, bipolar time is resistant to the flows of productivism and captivity demanded by the eschatological judgment of money.

Further the madness of the mad like the backwardness of the queer brings to the fore power-relations that have shaped the history of the model citizen known as "rational man." Reading with Foucault's *History of Madness*, Lynne

¹⁶⁰ Noelle Vahanian, *The Rebellious No: Variations on a Secular Theology of Language* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 71.

¹⁶¹ Vahanian, *Rebellious No*, 70.

Huffer notes that, “Madness is the ‘ransom’ paid by the ‘other’ for the historical rise of the rational moral subject.”¹⁶² This should conjure to mind the urban black man made to be the exception on whose exclusion good girl inclusion is built. Further as Huffer artfully argues, the ransomed mad cannot be disentangled from the ransomed queer:

At stake in Foucault’s tracing of these figures in their historical appearance and disappearance are ethical questions about subjectivity and alterity within a modern rationalist moral order. Faced with an objectifying language of reason for the telling of history, *History of Madness* refigures those sexual subjects transformed by science into objects of intelligibility—as homosexuals, onanists, perverts, and so on—by allowing them to hover as ‘fantastical’ ghosts. They haunt our present but we can’t quite grasp them.¹⁶³

The sensibilities of those that are mad not only serve to diagnose how the post-Fordist moment feels, they also pose ethical questions about the historical sacrifice of certain people—queers, perverts, the impoverished, the differently abled, the differently minded—for the construction of Modern *Man*, an issue to which we will return throughout this dissertation.

Like the hauntings of trauma felt within Holy Saturday, the mad of the past haunt our present asking not for resurrection, but rather for a reorientation of feeling and attending, or what Huffer names, “an archival listening: the creation of a pathway for a different hearing.”¹⁶⁴ This different hearing of an ethical call responded to more fully in chapter five, and yet for now what such a request for hearing might do is ask us how our current structures of time either make room

¹⁶²Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 92.

¹⁶³ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 56.

¹⁶⁴ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 227.

for such a hearing (a pausing, and attending) or impede practices of attention required to hear. Bipolar time offers time to hear in that it resists the demands to stop attending, to get back in time with the order of the day. Whether one is too hot (manic) or too cold (depressed) one's disordered mood disrupts the atmosphere and as such moodiness becomes a personal failing that must be fixed in time to save time.

For all its resistance to the ordering rods of the world, bipolar time as a crip time is not necessarily a queering of the symbolic order, but rather an attempt to short-circuit contemporary neoliberal orders that shape the symbolic as such.

As Vahanian has offered in her response to my concept of bipolar time:

[It] offers a different resistance, one beyond a psychic disordering of drives failing 'normal' accession to the symbolic where such so-called failed accession would be a resistance, a subject-less resistance to this symbolic. Why? Because bipolar time is not a production of linear time. It is not a response to capitalistic time, and in that sense it does not develop as a resistance to it. But yet, it resists.¹⁶⁵

Bipolar time does not develop in direct reaction to neoliberalism; neoliberalism cannot be traced as its origin or as its ultimate target, as though if once neoliberalism was destroyed we would no longer need processes of feeling and responding differently to whatever norms arose in its place. Rather the styles of life allowed breath under bipolar time are those that will continue to wound *and* wonder.

Bipolar time is a dream of a time in which we can *spend* time depressingly critical of any new norm that a revolution against neoliberalism might bring, and *spend* time manically joyful about such newness. Key for a non-linear penetrative

¹⁶⁵ Noelle Vahanian, email message to author, October 12, 2014.

time such as that of bipolarity is the chance that both when one is made depressed by society (even a revolutionary new one of our own making) one might be haunted by a crazy belief things could be otherwise, *and* that a possible despair in the novel might continue to persist through any complacent joy in the new. This is not a linear or particularly revolutionary state of being. Bipolar resistance comes not from the programmatic politics worried over by Deleuze and found in Milbank, but rather wells up from the ways in which we are always already “disordered.”

Bipolar time, as representative of disordered time is not interested in being “saved.” It will not be *saved* by an ordering cure, nor does it need to *save* time over spending it. Indeed, bipolarity makes saving in either sense nearly impossible. It is this impossibility that returns us to the appropriateness of Rambo’s reading of trauma as a time of Holy Saturday. Bipolarity asks us how we should better remain, and so live, when we are unsure whether we really want a resurrection that may not be coming. Crucial to bipolar time’s sense of disorder is that those with alternate mental orientations to the world often can’t live temporally in the constant demand for efficiency. The “dis-ordered” may experience times of rapid creativity and production, but also times in which the slow down of depression means saving time is no longer an option. Hence, bipolar time can throw our sense of self into a spiral of worth. This spiral might force us to divorce who we are from what we produce. This is not an easy feat in light of a societal ethos that, as McRuer and Mollow remind us, affirms Joseph

Conrad's assertion, "'A man is a worker. If he is not then he is nothing.'"¹⁶⁶ Not easy, but crucial, as growing wealth disparities are throwing more of us out of work and into our beds or worse (a worse that might include being made to produce and serve at a life-threatening pace and for an unattainable future).

So what might happen if we viewed this ever-increasing collective "disorder" not as something that needs to be overcome, but rather as a site from which we might question the demand to be productive and efficient? And if in doing so we concede that we need to spend time instead of saving it, just how might we enact such a need?

Bipolar Practices, Concrete Hopes

While bipolar time helps us to resist even a radical democratic over-emphasis on the future and while it is a sensibility resistant to neoliberal resilience narratives, I suggest if we are to practice spending time over saving it we may still need utopian dreaming, a dreaming performed within the smallest quotidian moments as well as in the social utopias described by Muñoz. Concrete utopias are a doing for and toward the future; they are an enactment of what might be. The doing rather than the telos is of utmost importance. For instance, Muñoz viewed the queer punk scene as a collective space in which identity and acceptability—even that of acceptable queer identity—was challenged and in which this challenge was communal. Ann Cvetkovich describes a similar utopian moment when she writes of the collective singing of cover-songs performed by Feel Tank participants.¹⁶⁷ During a gathering in Toronto the line "My

¹⁶⁶ McRuer and Mollow, *Sex and Disability*, 25.

¹⁶⁷ "Feel Tank" names groups in Chicago, New York, and Toronto who have participated in the Public Feeligns Project, which brings together activists, artists, and academics, who

loneliness is killing me” from Britney Spear’s “Baby One More Time,” embodied the loneliness felt by Cvetkovich, while also, because it was sung collectively, helping her to feel a little less lonely.¹⁶⁸ This is the performance of a utopia in which the love that remains in loneliness, while not curing loneliness, *feels* like concrete hope.

This insistence on the concreteness of utopia, in its performability, aids in contextualizing political theology, and reins in the risk of crucial concepts of event, potentiality, and the multitude remaining too amorphous and disembodied. Further, it is in the concreteness of queer utopias where we might find resonance with and so (ironically) a resistance to RO’s conception of the salvific church. According to James K.A. Smith, “[For RO] the church does not have a cultural critique; it is a cultural critique. Its politics is an ecclesiology.”¹⁶⁹ Might queerness, for Muñoz not have but *be* a cultural critique, a critique made through lives and communities inhabiting emotional and temporal (not to mention sexual) terrains counter to heteronormativity and the neoliberal economics it nurtures and is nurtured by? Like Milbank’s church, the queer utopias found in the work of Muñoz can function as interpreting events and cultural critiques. Yet, it seems unlikely that most RO theologians would accept queerness as a “proper” part of creation and revelation. This is true not only because of a history of homophobia within RO writings, but more so because of the acts of the effacement of otherness necessitated by Milbank’s definitions of “seriousness.” It would be antithetical to such concrete utopic hope to claim exclusionary rights to it based on the closure of desire within a particularist

do critical work in the study of theoretical, historical, and artistic materials engaged with political affects and the politics of affect.

¹⁶⁸ Cvetkovich, *Depression*, 188.

¹⁶⁹ Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 80.

Christian sacrament or faith. Indeed, the queer utopian demand that the present is not all there is does not dictate what “this other is” has to be. Conversely, RO’s “other than this” relies on a singular and unwavering telos. Unlike the kind of transcendence in immanence found in queer utopian dreaming, one which opens a multiplicity of immanent possibilities, RO’s transcendence in immanence actually shuts down the potency of the immanent.

In his concluding chapter, “Take Ecstasy with Me,” Muñoz writes, “Knowing ecstasy is having a sense of timeliness’s motion, comprehending a temporal unity, which includes the past (having-been), the future (the not-yet), and the present (the making-present).”¹⁷⁰ Drawing on the etymological meaning of ekstasis as to stand or be outside of oneself, Muñoz conceives ecstasy as a moment in which one is brought not only beyond oneself spatially, but also temporally. Perhaps to join Muñoz on the dance floor, or Cvetkovich in “The Hungry Purse,” is to attend to the other, to take care of those we’ve made other or in James’s words the exception. In this way the temporal shift of Muñoz’s ec-static encounters have a Saturday feel. We may not know what kind of Sunday might come in this movement from within our closure to the present utopian openness that comes from ecstatic entanglement; we may not need a Sunday. And yet, in being together in material difference from past, present, and future as they have offered to us Muñoz’s ecstasy is a moment of presentist hope.

This temporal movement is an invitation to, as Muñoz puts it, “desire differently, to desire more, to desire better.”¹⁷¹ This call to desire differently, more, and better, is also a

¹⁷⁰ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 186.

¹⁷¹ Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 189.

call made by radical theologians of both camps. However, in their assertion that this desiring must direct itself toward the Church and nowhere else, orthodox theologians miss the very heart of desire. Hence, Muñoz's invitation to take ecstasy with him might be the open communion rejected by radical orthodoxy, but demanded when we take seriously the inexhaustibility of divine desire.

Therefore, concrete utopias may be more of pause than eschaton. They may be performances of attendments more than ends. Concrete utopian hope is an attending performed (sometimes melancholically) in the *present* at the punk bar and through the collective singing of cover songs, but also in quotidian moments of the weary love that remains but does not redeem pain in order to persist. It is in these spaces where I hope to spend some bipolar time. Perhaps I will spend it in the hours of teaching that remind me that moods and modes of thinking matter; perhaps I will spend it in the moment of sharing both a weariness from and a mad hope for the world, a moment that reminds me that *collective* feeling matters; or perhaps I will spend it in the hours of *not* getting out of bed, which remind me that impotency is also a way of witnessing to how this world feels. Perhaps, taking a note from Cvetkovich, I will spend it at the karaoke bar singing St. Dolly's great lament against saving time: "9 to 5, what a way to make a livin,' barely gettin by, it's all takin and no givin', they just use your mind and you never get the credit, it's enough to *drive you crazy* if you let it."¹⁷² There, spending time surrounded by the collective out-of-tuneness of my fellow patrons, this disordered space might become a reminder of our attunement, or perhaps better our attend-ment to one another, an attendance that reminds us that we need not let the *rich man's game* take our time and use

¹⁷² Dolly Parton, *9 to 5*, Dolly Parton © 1980 by RCA Nashville

our mind, but too that we need not be on pitch in order to sing out. We need not be fleeing towards certain redemption—an all-curing salve in the church or the market—to avoid becoming a slave to the cubicle, the commodity, or consumption. For this life of faith, one in which none of us need find our pitch in order to know our (im)potency, is the embodiment of bipolar Saturday time as it concretely refuses the eschatological judgment of money.

Chapter Three: Unproductive Worth

What definitions of value and worth might need rethinking if we are to imagine alternative modes and moods of spending our time? In other words might a closer investigation into the *affects* and material embodiments of the value system that demands we save time help us to offer up alternate ways of structuring worth beyond that of work? Continuing to read radical political theology anew through the hermeneutic of affect clears space and time for an attentment to the radical potential of a political theology that takes seriously the emotional mattering of both neoliberal value-systems and the counter embodiments that rise up from within, alongside, and in rejection to such systems. In particular if neoliberal salvation narratives construct the *time* of capitalism, it might be the *feeling* of such a time that significantly reveals structures of worth dictated and nurtured by a life lived in our Time. Hence, this chapter sustains an engagement with political theology to open a discussion on the neoliberal value of productivity and efficiency in order to reveal its material violence, but also in hopes of encountering different sources of value and so generating alternatives. I read counter-redemption theories of affect and disability in order to clear ground in the realm of political theology for a radical refutation of the assumption that our work defines our worth. Hence, it offers up the theological hope that we might find pleasure and resistance from within what the social body has deemed our brokenness (emotional and physical); we might live imaginatively by living without the need to be redeemed as a productive part of the social whole.

Questioning productive redemption

In *Multitude* Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that today “No social line divides productive from unproductive workers...these distinctions...have often been used to exclude women, the unemployed, and the poor from central political roles, entrusting the revolutionary project to the men (with calloused hands from the factories) who were thought to be the primary producers.”¹⁷³ This troubling of the productive/unproductive divide appears to be a radical rejection of a neoliberal politics of efficiency and exclusionary productivism. And yet, in their continued emphasis on the *productivity* of the multitude might Hardt and Negri undermine the radicality of this rupture? Or put otherwise, what goes missing in their turn toward what the multitude can *do*, rather than how we might differently become? If the line no longer stands why not look afresh at the multitude’s unproductivity? What types of inscriptional violence does embracing the value of productivity commit? What does productivity as the site of the collectivization of subjectivity for the empowerment of the multitude say to those subjects who refuse their productive capacities? In other words if the power of and commonality between the multitude come from the very value held so dear by the Empire—that of productivity—can the multitude (in its productivity) effectively counter neoliberalism? Through a reengagement with *Multitude* and its theological deployment in Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui Lan’s *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude* this chapter offers alternate affectual and material orientations towards work and productivity. I do so alongside the

¹⁷³ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004) 135.

postwork imaginaries of Franco “Bifo” Berardi and Kathi Weeks and in conjunction with the affect theory of Ann Cvetkovich and a poetic engagement with crip theory.¹⁷⁴

If in the last chapter we began an analysis of what neoliberal economics does to *our time*, in this chapter we will expand on the *feeling* of such demands. By both analyzing how current structures of time and worth *feel* and in exploring how material embodiments of “disordered” affects and crip materialities (which returning to the previous chapter we might consider Saturday sensibilities) surface alternate constructions of ontological worth not dictated by the value of work, I further en flesh the lacunae within radical theology diagnosed in this dissertation’s introduction. By attending to those with “bad timing” we can reencounter political theology from the space of an affecting everyday. In doing so we might begin not only to divorce our worth from our waged work, but also encounter new structures of value beside and beyond productivism.

Continued philosophical and theological emphases on the productivity of the multitude resonate with a salvific narrative embedded in both a Fordist and a post-Fordist economic understanding of work as redemptive. Re-reading Max Weber’s *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Kathi Weeks reminds us that, “The Protestant work ethic hailed the individual as a moral agent, responsible for achieving the certainty of his or her own salvation (see Weber 1958, 115).”¹⁷⁵ Work was a reflection of one’s state of election and one’s capacity to be saved. In Weber’s formulation, under industrial

¹⁷⁴ Crip theory is a form of disability studies that seeks not for accessibility and acceptance, but rather, similar to queer theory, looks (through the experience of the disabled) to destabilize heteronormative and ablest systems of accessibility and acceptability.

¹⁷⁵ Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism Anti-work Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011) 51.

capitalism, “This orientation to work was...less the result of one’s faith in the afterlife than constitutive of it; hard work and success are not a means to salvation, but at most signs of it.”¹⁷⁶ However, within a post-Fordist value-system, “[the work ethic] serves a more directly productive function today: where attitudes themselves are productive, a strong work ethic guarantees the necessary level of willing commitment and subjective investment.”¹⁷⁷ In other words, whereas under Fordism one’s productive labor was a reflection of God’s election (and so was used, according to Weber, to turn productive work into a calling), today the call to be productive is a call to be productive “with a smile.” To be productive with a smile is to make what Weeks refers to as one’s hands, head, and heart, essential for the ethic of work. This in turn means that to become a good subject, to be redeemed out of any subjective lack, is to become a happy and productive worker (an assumption to which we return below).

If to be saved by God *or* redeemed as a proper societal subject takes place through one’s physical and emotional labor, would rethinking work not simply in order to reorient where we place our resources and assign our social and monetary values, but also to nurture a refusal of neoliberal “happy” productivity better disentangle our acts of resistance from narratives of individual resilience/redemption? In response to this question I offer a political theology of unproductivity. Such a theology takes shape through an engagement with autonomist and feminist Marxist critiques of the salvific

¹⁷⁶ Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 45.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 70

structure of work.¹⁷⁸ Here both Weeks's reading of the Protestant work ethic in *The Problem with Work* and Berardi's examination of the affectual effects of what he calls SemioCapitalism in *The Soul at Work* along with his post-futurist proposals in *After the Future* will be key.¹⁷⁹ Berardi's reading of how neoliberal structures of worth and time impact the production of material affects will serve as an alternate to a eulogistic reading of productivity. Ultimately, however, it is Hardt and Negri's turn to the monstrosity of the multitude, read anew through crip and affect theories, which opens us to how this unproductive stance might be embodied in a theology of worth divorced from efficient production. Through reading Hardt and Negri's affirmatively monstrous multitude with a crip sensibility I seek out a theology that resists both neoliberal and uncritical liberal productivity as a method of salvation, and so troubles the concepts of worth on offer by both neoliberalism and certain productivist theologies hoping to counter its deleterious effects.

The Productivity of the Multitude

In *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude* Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui Lan draw on Paul's epistles to discuss the importance of the multitude's common

¹⁷⁸ Autonomism is a school of thought and action most commonly traced back to the workerist or operaismo movement in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s (a movement of which Antonio Negri was a part). In general autonomism represents a stance toward capitalist labor in which instead of seeking reform of the system one seeks autonomy from capitalist production. For instance, Franco "Bifo" Berardi, a leading voice in contemporary autonomist thought (and a primary theorist for the constructive work of this essay) has referred to autonomism as "out-onomy," which names the formation of ways of living that get one out of the capitalist economy.

¹⁷⁹ Semiocapitalism is a neoliberal economy in which we are flooded with and dictated by an exhaustive flow of signs without referents. (Franco Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy* [Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009]).

productivity: “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect (1Cor. 12:21-24).”¹⁸⁰ According to Rieger and Kwok the productivity of the multitude honors the contributions to the social body made by those considered inferior. For Hardt and Negri, the very fact that even those who we normally assume to be outside the traditional labor economy are part of social production is what ensures that the multitude can resist the capitalist empire. That all classes *produce* in common allows them to resist in common: common productivity as bond. And yet, might this sense of common productivity rely too heavily on one’s ability to produce and so to contribute *productively* to the common? Indeed, what might a theology built on the way in which each part of the body matters for the whole have to say to a body missing some parts? What of the blind woman who does not need the eye or the amputee who does not need the hand? What of those cut off or breaking away from the community that is the social body? What of those who reject a productive path to subjectivization? Is the focus on common productivity too eerily resonant with soteriological and anthropological structures embedded in neoliberalism that tie our worth and election to our work--who we *are* to what we can *do* (and how happy we are to do it) for one another? In other words, does a theology that reasserts our productive worth to the function of the social body

¹⁸⁰ Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui Lan, *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012) 67.

affirm the current principles of the social, those that marked us as disposable in the first place? Does it recycle us as surplus value back into MRWaSP¹⁸¹?

Rieger and Kwok continue:

The multitude picks up the concerns of working people, the so-called working class, because it values the notion of production. While the multitude is forced to endure the pressures of the system, it does not remain passive. Working people make substantial contributions to society, which are often overlooked and underappreciated. Hardt and Negri extend the multitude to the unemployed, unpaid domestic laborers, and the poor, who also make substantial contributions to society. We agree with their idea that ‘the multitude gives the concept of the proletariat its fullest definition as all those who labor and produce under the rule of capital’ [10].¹⁸²

While, as Rieger and Kwok make clear, Hardt and Negri include the unemployed and underpaid in their definition of the productive multitude, I am arguing that the fact that political emphasis remains on production and societal contribution is problematic. To be sure, the dismantling of what we can recognize as the “We Built This” notion made famous by Mitt Romney’s 2012 presidential bid is key for the work of solidarity sought for by Rieger and Kwok. Members of the 1% (and allies that perhaps believe one day they too will rise to the upper echelons) rallied behind the notion that those in the lower classes owed our livelihoods to those at the top, to the wealth the rich claimed to have built and then benevolently shared with the rest of us. An emphasis on the productivity of the multitude resists this narrative, helpfully bringing to the fore the ways in which wealth relies on the work of the impoverished. Yet, the ways in which the productivity of the multitude not only built the wealth of the 1%, but also sustains that wealth is obscured

¹⁸¹ Recall from chapter 2 that MRWaSP is Robin James’s acronym for Multi-racial White Supremacist Patriarchy. James uses MRWaSP to express how certain minoritized people are let into the neoliberal mainstream.

¹⁸² Rieger and Kwok, *Occupy Religion*, 61.

by Rieger and Kwok's productivism. Hence, the attempt to regain the worthiness of the multitude through what we have done for an economic system, and the social cohesion it engenders, that continues to betray us is at best rash and at worst a tightening of the chains that bind us to an exploitative market. If we are to regain power through a reassertion of our worth in productive capacity, then we have not unbound ourselves from the tragic narrative that it is what we can do for the system rather than who we are—our singular embodied desires and becomings--that defines our worth.¹⁸³ Indeed, a focus on labor allows the terms of worth to remain within a theological system fortified by, and which strengthens, the idea that our work is a sign of our Divine election. The addition of the unemployed and underpaid domestic worker to the definition of the multitude does not adequately refute the work ethic; rather it affirms that regardless of our employment status we all are indeed workers.

Instead of a more radical refutation of the need to be a worker in order to be of worth, a productivist theology in the form proposed by Rieger and Kwok borders on apologetics--a theology begging for the *recognition* of the impoverished as societal contributors. The terms of value may remain intact. Rieger and Kwok continue, "Hardt and Negri focus on economic class, in part because this concept has not received enough attention in recent debates, but also because the multitude needs to be understood in terms of economic production. It is both the 'common subject of labor, that is, the real

¹⁸³ By "singular" here, and by "singularity" elsewhere in this essay I refer not to an individualism, but rather back to the concept of singularity employed by Berardi (reading Gilles Deleuze's concept of singularity in which individuation [the uniqueness of each singularity is not the same as individualism]) in which a singularity resists homogenization while keeping the uniqueness and creative potential of each entity within an assemblage of entities at the fore. (Franco Berardi, *After the Future* (Edinburgh, Oakland, Baltimore: AK Press, 2011) 148.

flesh of postmodern production’ and ‘the object from which collective capital tries to make the body of its global development.’”¹⁸⁴ The focus on class can indeed help us to raise issues of fair wages and just labor practices (it has done so to great effect as generations of labor and feminist movements have shown). And yet from a theological point of view Rieger and Kwok’s proposals obscure the problem of where we place ultimate value, focusing instead on how that value gets measured and compensated (an issue to which we return below).

Rieger and Kwok insist that if one is going to follow the teachings of Jesus one cannot “serve two masters” and so cannot serve both God and wealth.¹⁸⁵ Yet, in using the gospels to theologically valorize agency and productivity (which may not be able to escape the fact that contemporary demands to be productive are injunctions to worship the promise of money) their theology begs for further interrogation. They note that: “Jesus’ healings tend to encourage agency and productivity as well. He responds to a man who has been waiting for help for thirty-eight years with these words: ‘Stand up, take your mat and walk’ (John 5:8),”¹⁸⁶ and that, “[Jesus spent time healing] the paralyzed, whose agency had been shattered, and the possessed whose personalities had been destroyed. He combated religious neuroses by proclaiming the forgiveness of God and put people back on the road: ‘Stand up and take your bed and walk’ (Mark 2:9) and ‘Get up!’ (Mark 5:41).”¹⁸⁷ Theirs is a theology in which, “In short, discipleship means

¹⁸⁴ Rieger and Kwok, *Occupy Religion*, 62.

¹⁸⁵ Rieger and Kwok, *Occupy Religion*, 100.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 71

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 86

becoming a productive agent in relationship with other productive agents.”¹⁸⁸ Does not the demand to take your mat and walk resonate with a neoliberal demand to get to work? Might the demand to “Get up!” reflect a demand resonant with “Stop being so lazy!”? What about the agency of the paralyzed as paralyzed? Or that of the shattered as shattered and the neurotic as neurotic? What of those too sick to work? Too tired to participate? Too isolated to contribute? Too willful to attune to the demands of other productive agents?¹⁸⁹ What of those considered exceptions in the sense Robin James means, as in those that are considered toxic to the social body, and so cannot overcome or be redeemed back into the system? What of those who while not valorizing sickness or suffering, choose not to rehabilitate their brokenness into productive energy for the social body that marked them as broken in the first place? Must *we* adjust to the call for productivity, or might we learn from unproductivity? Might we make “bad investments” by attending to what we can learn from those who do not work in the time frame demanded by neoliberal economics? In other words, how might political theologians better counter neoliberal constructions of value?

The Redemption vs. the Refusal of Work

In *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*, Kathi Weeks maps how Weber’s diagnosis of the Protestant work ethic has developed in the transition from Fordist to post-Fordist economic systems. This mapping

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 73

¹⁸⁹ My use of “willful” here and later in this essay refers to Sara Ahmed’s work on willfulness in *Willful Subjects* (2014). According to Ahmed, certain forms of living are considered *willful* because they “pulse” with a desire directed away from that of the mainstream (Ahmed, 2014, p.23). They willfully come apart and wander where they *will* (Ahmed, 2014, p.50).

reveals the persistence of the work ethic within post-Fordist value structures. Such persistence illuminates how productive work continues to be fundamental to how we define individual and social worth. While we will return to Weeks's constructive counter to the work ethic in this dissertation's conclusion, for now Weeks clears intellectual ground for an analysis of how a turn to unproductivity might become increasingly interesting, even in terms of the leftist valorizations of work. Within feminist and Marxist struggles against capitalist labor relations, Weeks finds a similar persistence of productivism along the lines detailed above in the theology of Rieger and Kwok. While Weeks affirms the gains made by feminist struggles which demanded access to work and the recognition of "women's work" as work, she makes clear its limitations: "But all of these demands for inclusion serve at the same time to expand the scope of the work ethic to new groups and new forms of labor; and to reaffirm its power. Thus the laborist ethic may have helped in the struggle to win Fordist concessions, but it did so by affirming the ideal as a lifetime of 'dignified' work (see also Rodgers 1978, 181)."¹⁹⁰ In other words while certain wage and labor protections were won by affirming that women's work, or care work, was indeed work, to affirm care work as work might be to affirm that it is within work where we might find our worth.

For Weeks, this does not break open the moral order in which "the individual's economic achievement or lack of achievement depends on and is reflective of his or her character."¹⁹¹ This not only means that the collective need no longer take care for those who do not or cannot work, but also that those who work need not care for time outside

¹⁹⁰ Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 68.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 52

of work. The fight for inclusion in the work ethic is a fight for our worth, but it will always necessitate sacrifices, whether they be the “undignified” who do not work, or the sacrifice of our own time and sense of self outside that of waged labor.

Just as James saw MRWaSP’s need for exceptions, a need I located in Radical Orthodox salvation narratives, Weeks acknowledges that “[the exclusion of some] from the dignity and worth conferred by the work ethic can serve to render its prescriptions more attractive to others.”¹⁹² When work is tied to (Divine) election (and so worth), one becomes more able to sacrifice as exceptions those who remain unelectable in order to be affirmed in one’s own redemption into the labor system. In order to discuss the way in which a productivist ethos can inhabit social movements critical of political economy Weeks draws on Baudriallard’s observation that “The ‘class of laborers ... is thus confirmed in its idealized status as a productive force even by its revolutionary ideal’ (1975, 156).¹⁹³ It is worth quoting Weeks’s analysis of Baudriallard’s insight at length on as she here best illuminates the persistence of the work ethic within such leftist struggles and so shores up my concern about Rieger and Kwok’s productivist theology.

Although opposed to the work society’s hierarchies, such tactics were complicit with its ethics. This is a potential problem with both of the long-standing feminist strategies regarding work and its dominant values: the demand for inclusion in the form of ‘real’ (that is, waged) work for women and the demand to expand the category of work to include what has been mischaracterized either as idleness and leisure, or as private, intimate, and spontaneous acts of love—but in any case, as nonwork. Each of the approaches risks contesting the gendered organization of capitalist work society by reproducing fundamental values. Claiming one’s place as a productive citizen and one’s value in relation to the legitimating ethic of

¹⁹² Ibid., 64

¹⁹³ Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 69.

work, whether or not the original ethic is thereby altered, remains in this specific sense a mode of rebellion susceptible to co-optation.¹⁹⁴

The lingering problems with the legitimatization of the work ethic (even as it resulted in important material gains for women and the impoverished) is a mirror we might hold to Rieger and Kwok's (and to a lesser degree Hardt and Negri's) "redemption" of the multitude by illuminating its productive contribution to society. More people become dignified and worthy (more are redeemed), but the terms of redemption and value remain intact.

The post-Fordist economy's fractured boundaries between the public and private sphere crumble even further when the pervasiveness of this work ethic becomes even more intimately engaged with definitions of personal worth. While the inclusion of women in "real" work and the recognition of women's work (care work) *as* work were necessary steps for the material well being of women, they were also harbingers for the way in which the Market, and its demand we be productive workers, would come to define every aspect of our lives. According to Weeks the work ethic persists even as work and workers become more precarious. Particularly in the service-sector, workers must give not only their labor but also their intellectual and affectual capital in the service of their jobs. Service workers have never produced tangible commodities, but with the service-sector taking on an-ever-increasing role in the US economy the stakes of what Hardt and Negri call "immaterial labor" and the affects it requires are raised.¹⁹⁵ Hardt and

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 66.

Negri call such an economy the “affect economy.”¹⁹⁶ According to Hardt and Negri: “When our ideas and our affects, our emotions, are put to work, for instance, and when they thus become subject in a new way to the command of the boss, we often experience new and intense forms of violation or alienation.”¹⁹⁷ One’s ability to provide comfort, affection, and joy become the products one must sell.

Additionally, according to Weeks, as it becomes harder to identify individual contributions to the collective production processes, the surveillance of workers increases. In particular, observations of a worker’s commitment to her job become all the more important for the proper functioning of the business. Hence, “A worker’s devotion serves as a sign of his or her capacities just as it once served as a sign of his or her status among the elect. Strong work values are thus increasingly highlighted in management discourses as significant remedy to the new problems of surveillance simply because they render it less necessary.”¹⁹⁸ In other words, whereas under Fordism workers were disciplined by a belief that their work ethic was a sign of their election, under post-Fordism a work ethic (which includes a positive attitude) is a sign not only of self-worth and employability, but also social value.

Dave Eggers’s recent dystopian novel *The Circle* exposes this *happy* work ethic. *The Circle* tells the tale of a kind of Google/Facebook/Amazon/Apple conglomeration; Silicon Valley’s best, but on crack. In the novel Mae Holland gets a job at *The Circle*, a tech company that provides social-networking, online shopping, digital pay services,

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 70-71.

search engines, and “wearable” technologies. Mae’s first job is in “Customer Experience,” which is the Circle’s customer service department. After each interaction with Mae the customers rate their experience. If Mae gets less than a 100% satisfaction rating (say if she gets a 99%) she must reach back out to the customer asking what she could have done better. Customers often write back upping their satisfaction scores to 100%. When Mae’s rating falls below 98% she gets worried emails from the head of her team. When she doesn’t show up to the myriad social offerings on the Circle’s campus (concerts, cookouts, talks by famous inventors) more worried emails and texts fill Mae’s inbox. The ethic at the Circle is not “Get your work done,” it’s “Be happy about getting your work done,” or perhaps “Be your work.” Even while couched as social, being happy to participate becomes part of the job.¹⁹⁹

The demand to be happy and social, to give of personal time and energy to one’s work, is a phenomena detailed by affect theorist Melissa Gregg in her essay, “On Friday Night Drinks: Workplace Affect in the Age of the Cubicle.” Gregg, reads scenes from the television series *Six Feet Under* for what they have to say about an affect economy. She focuses on what happens when Claire the artsy daughter of the show’s central family drops out of art school and must start an office temp job. Whether it’s the requirement to join for after-work drinks, or sign a birthday card for someone she’s never met, Claire (and the viewer) quickly comes to understand “that in this situation friendship isn’t much of a choice. You don’t even need to know the person, you just have to participate.”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Dave Eggers, *The Circle* (San Francisco: McSweeney’s, 2013).

²⁰⁰ Melissa Gregg, “On Friday Night Drinks: Workplace Affect in the Age of the Cubicle,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2010) 261.

In *The Circle* such demands lead to all sorts of disastrous ends; it is clearly a dystopian read. It is also a realistic one. Companies like Facebook and Google have massive campuses with an array of social and leisure offerings, napping pods, and hotel rooms. When one works for these companies there is never any reason to go home. Work and leisure converge. These companies are lauded for such services; they make work fun, as long as one is fun at work. Recently, Facebook and Apple were praised for offering to pay for female employees to freeze and store their eggs. This was seen as recognition of the various demands placed on women of childbearing age, as well as representative of the companies' commitment to diversity and inclusion.²⁰¹ And yet, we might also read such a “perk” as a demand that one continue working for Facebook or Apple during one's most productive *and* reproductive years.²⁰² The message is clear: “Wait to have those distractions from work when you are past your laboring prime.” The work ethic now demands hands, heart, head, and ovaries.

While couched in a less friendly package, recent articles on the culture of the Amazon work place illuminate the realism in Eggers' fictional account of contemporary work culture. An August 15, 2015 New York Times article, “Inside Amazon: Wrestling Big Ideas in a Bruising Workplace,” (which subsequently went viral) detailed the harsh reality of the work ethic employed by Jeff Bezos and the managerial teams at Amazon.²⁰³

²⁰¹ Mark Tran, “Apple and Facebook offer to freeze eggs for female employees,” *The Guardian*, October 15, 2004, accessed August 5, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/oct/15/apple-facebook-offer-freeze-eggs-female-employees>.

²⁰² Tran, “Apple and Facebook offer to freeze eggs for female employees”

²⁰³ Jodi Kantor and David Streitfield, “Inside Amazon: Wrestling Big Ideas in a Bruising Workplace,” *The New York Times*, August 15, 2015, accessed on August 16, 2015,

The article detailed systems of peer surveillance and impossible performance standards: “At Amazon, workers are encouraged to tear apart one another’s ideas in meetings, toil long and late (emails arrive past midnight, followed by text messages asking why they were not answered), and held to standards that the company boasts are ‘unreasonably high.’ The internal phone directory instructs colleagues on how to send secret feedback to one another’s bosses. Employees say it is frequently used to sabotage others. (The tool offers sample texts, including this: ‘I felt concerned about his inflexibility and openly complaining about minor tasks.’)”²⁰⁴ The culture in which such demands on performance and acts of surveillance become naturalized operates under Bezos’ “articles of faith,” 14 principles of what the *Times* reporters call his, “Philosophy of Work.”²⁰⁵ Bezos’ faith principles include: No. 2 *Ownership*, which encourages employees to take responsibility for every element of the Amazon business and brand; and No 8 *A Bias for Action*, which affirms that “speed matters for business,” and that calculated risks are better than slowing down to get more information.²⁰⁶ In the *Times* article current and former employees detailed various levels of burnout: seeing at least one person cry at their desks everyday, being bullied about taking time off to treat cancer; and being pushed out after having miscarried twins, even though the person in question left for a business trip the next day,

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/16/technology/inside-amazon-wrestling-big-ideas-in-a-bruising-workplace.html?_r=0

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ “Amazon Leadership Principles” <http://www.amazon.jobs/principles>, accessed November 11, 2015, 11:34am.

because being at a place in life where she was trying to start a family would be too much of a distraction from what needed to get done at work.²⁰⁷

So why stay? Why put oneself through this? Here is where Weeks's understanding of the persistence of the work ethic within post-Fordism is most apparent. According to several current and former employees interviewed for the *Times* article, it was precisely the impossibility of achieving what Amazon demanded of their employees that became definitional for an employee's sense of worth. Only the strong survive at Amazon, so if one has survived she has become one of the chosen, the few, the worthy. According to the article, even those that had left realized they had become addicted to the Amazon work ethic. Dina Vaccari (who worked at Amazon from 2008 to 2014) noted, "I was so addicted to wanting to be successful there. For those of us who went to work there, it was like a drug that we could get self-worth from."²⁰⁸ The article continues, reporting that, "Company veterans often say the genius of Amazon is the way it drives [employees] to drive themselves. 'If you're a good Amazonian, you become an Amabot,' said one employee, using a term that means you have become at one with the system."²⁰⁹ This is the Protestant work ethic on digital steroids. To become good is to become one with the system. To be deemed of worth one must become fuel for one's workplace. While we might understand Amazon to be extreme and unique, according to trends discussed by the *Times* they are, "in the vanguard of where technology wants to take the

²⁰⁷ Kantor and Streitfield, "Inside Amazon."

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

modern office: more nimble and more productive, but harsher and less forgiving.”²¹⁰

Productivity trumps humaneness. Flexibility trumps grace. The Amazon articles of faith resonate with the neoliberal narratives of resilience critiqued by Robin James and explored in the previous chapter. Amazon’s ethos relies on its workers overcoming the damage Amazon has itself inflicted on them. What’s more is it requires they overcome (resurrect) with a smile.

Further, the ritual formation of self worth within the workplace (a workplace that spills into leisure space) is not only the territory of high tech jobs. According to Weeks, during Fordism the label of “professional” was reserved for those whose careers acted more like a calling, spilling over into the zone of the personal, and most particularly described doctors, lawyers, and the clergy. However, today the term “professional,” and the command to “act professionally” are democratized such that they serve as disciplinary techniques for the control of workers across economic strata. One’s job becomes one’s career, which becomes one’s life. Weeks:

Because, like the high-priced man, the professional ‘wears a badge of prestige’ (C. Mills 1951, 138), the practice of hailing a wide range of workers as professionals also serves to cash in on the term’s cachet and encourage employees to identify with jobs further up the labor hierarchy. To recall Weber’s description of the Protestant work ethic, according to which all waged workers are expected to approach their work industriously as if it were a calling, those in low-waged service-sector jobs under post-Fordism are asked to approach their work professionally as if it were a ‘career.’²¹¹

When labor becomes career and in consequence work becomes the center of one’s prestige and worth, one is more susceptible to demands to sacrifice material wellbeing (including the wealth of time to do non-work activity or to just rest). One gives up

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 73.

freedoms for the prestige of being deemed a good worker or a productive member of society.

I may have witnessed such rationale for exploitation when in 2004 the adjunct faculty at New School University, including a majority of the faculty at the Parsons School of Design, embarked on a campaign to unionize with the United Autoworkers. During the campaign and before the certification vote, the university administration posted signs that read, “Are you an artist or an autoworker?” This slogan tapped into the prestige adjuncts and artists gain by being “professionals,” and not merely workers. No matter that adjuncts at the time made far less than minimum wage and few had health benefits. Might management have been using this democratization of prestige in hopes of retaining a separation of laboring classes through rejecting the alignment of artist with autoworkers? The desire to be recognized as either a prestigious career person and/or a productive laborer only affirms that it is through our employment, and our happy productivity at such a job, where we must find our worth. I hope here that we see glimpses of the dangers of a theology that tells the invalid to take his mat and walk or understands discipleship to be in action and productivity. Whether we are disciples of Bezos, the Customer Experience, or Jesus, if we are told our worth lies in our productive capacity to serve our God, how much harder does it become to pause, stop working, and question the terms of work on offer? I wish both to conflate those we would never want to conflate (Jesus and Jeff Bezos), *and* to acknowledge that faithful action writ large need not be problematic. There are ways to read discipleship that honors holy action and inaction, but if we do not sensitively attend to the moments in which the conflation between Market productivism and theological productivity seems all too easy, we are in

danger of fortifying those systems we hope to resist. An examination of the affectual effects of such a system of worth provided by Franco “Bifo” Berardi helps us to attend to these questions, and to trace possible alternatives to such productivism.

Soulfully Unproductive

Similarly to Rieger, Kwok, and Weeks, Berardi draws on (both to embrace and supplement) the work of Antonio Negri, and the radical thought of others in the 1960s and 70s Italian Workerist (*Operaismo*), Autonomist, and Compositionist movements. In these engagements Berardi resists productivist rhetoric and questions the political potency of the concept of the multitude. In both *The Soul at Work* and *After the Future*, Berardi explores the affectual effects of post-Fordist modes of production and communication (SemioCapitalism) on our individual and social psyches. In doing so he not only diagnoses the toxic effects of neoliberalism, but also elaborates a politics and poetics of the refusal of work. The unproductivity on offer by Berardi exposes the affectual and ethical issues raised when we remain within the logic of productivism, even that which claims a revolutionary and counter-imperial stance. According to Berardi, SemioCapitalism “takes the mind, language and creativity as its primary tools for the production of value.”²¹² Under SemioCapitalism the soul is not left out of work, but rather becomes the very mode of production and so the tool of its own estrangement. Hence, while the resistance to alienation through the reassertion of the importance of one’s mind and soul was at the heart of organizing workers on the factory floor, under post-Fordism acts of resistance must take on a different character.

²¹² Berardi, *The Soul at Work*, 21.

The goal of autonomy or what Berardi rewrites as out-onomy becomes not how to overcome alienation, but rather how to increase the estrangement between the soul and capitalist labor relations. As Berardi notes:

The working class is no longer conceived as a passive object of alienation, but instead as the active subject of a refusal capable of building a community starting out from its estrangement from the interests of capitalistic society... Alienation is then considered not as the loss of human authenticity, but as estrangement from capitalistic interest, and therefore as a necessary condition for the construction—in a space estranged from and hostile to labor relations—of an ultimately human relationship.²¹³

To become increasingly estranged from labor relations involves for Berardi a multistep process: first, we must understand the way in which SemioCapitalism has redefined value, second we must identify the affectual effects of SemioCapitalism on our individual and social psyches (effects which Berardi names as exhaustion and depression in *After the Future* and the panic-depression cycle in *The Soul at Work*), and third we must engage Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis as a political therapy which helps us to reorient the field of desire and so reframes the concept of wealth, re-engaging us in authentic human relationships. Each of these steps happen not through reasserting our productive capacity, but rather through refusing to participate in the systems of production on offer by SemioCapitalism's labor relations.

Under SemioCapitalism value has been divorced from all material referent points. When Richard Nixon cancelled the direct convertibility of the US dollar to gold the referential logic of value was discarded in favor of what Berardi calls "generalized indeterminacy."²¹⁴ From a radical democratic theological point of view a sense of

²¹³ Berardi, *The Soul at Work*, 23

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.

generalized indeterminacy may sound appealing in that it, like radical democratic theology, denies a determinate telos. It might resonate, for instance, with Jeffrey Robbins's call for a radical democratic resistance to all forms of hegemony that will come by way of an immanent exodus from the measurable. Or it might reflect the indefinite or infinite eschatology proposed by Clayton Crockett.²¹⁵ Yet as Berardi notes, the indeterminacy of value and the process of economic deregulation brought on by SemioCapitalism did not result in anarchic freedom. It remains tamed and obedient to the judgment of money: "Deregulation does not mean that society is freed from all rules, not at all: it is instead the imposition of monetary rule on all domains of human action. And monetary rules are in fact the sign of a relationship based on power, violence and military abuse."²¹⁶ Following Berardi's analysis of how deregulation has fortified the violent power of money in its encroachment on all zones of life we might be brought back to Philip Goodchild's assertion that neoliberal deregulation has trapped us in the eschatological shadow of money. Money without a material referent is all about the promise of future wealth, which every realm of our lives is held cruelly captive to. That the referent has become deregulated does not free us from this captivity, but rather insists we must be ever more flexible in how we play the game, or in other words how we become obedient actors under deregulated neoliberal regimes of power and the cruel promises they make.

While this eschatological promise may be indeterminate because money no longer refers to a stable referent, it serves not as a source of freedom, but rather as one of

²¹⁵ Crockett, *Radical Political Theology* 102.

²¹⁶ Berardi, *The Soul at Work*, 148.

entrapment. To counter this mode of violent entrapment Berardi, similarly to Goodchild, redefines wealth as time: “time for pleasure and enjoyment,” which includes time to travel, learn, create, and make love.²¹⁷ This wealthy time is not a time that asks, “What have you done for me lately?” Rather it is unproductive time, it is a time to be lazy, to be pleased, to play, and to just be. It is not discipleship in action; it is not worth in productivity; it is not a man who is a worker or nothing at all; rather it is a soul who is wealthy because she is much more (and perhaps much less) than her labor. In other words to break free of neoliberal time and feeling might be to say that we need not overcome our unproductive sensibilities or inefficient embodiments to be of worth. To be sure, there is political work to be done in order to democratize the availability of this wealth of time (work I return to through further engagement with Weeks in my conclusion), but by reorienting wealth and worth away from work, indeed in finding it in the refusal of work, Berardi rejects hegemonic structures of value.

Both SemioCapitalism’s rejection of wealth as time and its degradation of unproductive time lead to a mental and soulful breakdown in individual and social psyches. Berardi diagnoses this breakdown as a panic-depressive cycle (2009) and exhaustion and depression (2011). Acknowledging Baudrillard’s prescience, Berardi further notes that, “The dominant pathology of the future will not be produced by repression, but instead by the injunction to express, which will become a generalized obligation.”²¹⁸ The constant demands to be expressive and productive combined with the overwhelming flow of information and signs without stable referents lead to panic, which

²¹⁷ Berardi, *The Soul at Work*, 140.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 179.

eventually leads to depression. Elsewhere, Berardi marks the panic-depression cycle with Baudrillard's concept of exhaustion.²¹⁹ Exhaustion sets in because "in semiocapitalist hyperreality, the brain is the market. And the brain is not limitless, the brain cannot accelerate indefinitely."²²⁰ Rather than, or perhaps as both counter and supplement to, an emphasis on the plasticity of the brain (an emphasis embraced by followers of Catherine Malabou, including Robbins and Crockett) Berardi asks us to look to the limits of the brain—to our exhaustion—for the rethinking of how we might come to *be* differently.²²¹ This rethinking should remind us of Robin James's resistance to resilience, which produces surplus value out of exhausted material (including our brains).

The depression and exhaustion—the markers of the limit of the brain (or perhaps better: the "bodymind")--that follow the panic induced by our overstimulation can be traced back to the demands for the brain to accelerate indefinitely (a bias toward action).²²² In other words, "the constant mobilization of attention is essential to the productive function: the energies engaged by the productive system are essentially creative, affective and communicational."²²³ Rather than rejecting the need for creative

²¹⁹ Berardi, *After the Future*, 135-8.

²²⁰ Berardi, *After the Future* 136.

²²¹ See for instance *Religion, Politics, and the Earth: the New Materialism* (Robbins and Crockett, 2012); as well as essays by Randall Johnson and John Thibdeau in *The Future of Continental Philosophy of Religion* (Crockett, Putt and Robbins eds., 2014).

²²² I get the concept of bodymind from a virtual roundtable on "cripistemologies" convened and edited by Robert McRuer and Merri Lisa Johnson in which Margaret Price (who found the concept of bodymind in the work of Babette Rothschild) uses the term to be represent how we can't talk about mind or brain split from the body (McRuer and Johnson, 2014, p.153).

²²³ Berardi, *After the Future*, 107.

and affective communication or for action tout court, Berardi—through his diagnosis of the overstimulation of the brain--illuminates how *the demand to be* productive and expressive pushes the individual and collective psyche to their breaking points. He writes, “Not silence, but uninterrupted noise, not Antonioni’s *red desert*, but a cognitive space overloaded with nervous incentives to act: this is the alienation of our times.”²²⁴ We might say that “our times” takes on a double meaning in this case, as it is the very demand for more of our *time* that defines the nature of the *Time* of Neoliberalism or in Berardi’s terms, SemioCapitalism.

This is not to uphold all manner of dulling the mind, but rather is an injunction to seek out new ways of thinking and feeling ourselves through the affectual experiences of the bodymind under such temporal and evaluative demands. For instance, the chaotic hyperactivity of indeterminate signs that often engenders depression can also contain a sense of creative ecstasy (what I might call a manic sensibility, that calls to mind a bipolar sensibility that refuses to disentangle mania from depression): “The world-chaos that Guattari talks about in his last book is not only depression, fog, and miasma. Chaos is much more than this. It’s also the infinity of colors, dazzling lights, hyperspeed intuitions, and breathtaking emotions (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 203).”²²⁵ In this way, a turn toward our exhaustion or depression need not be the silencing of the sounds of indeterminacy and chaos, but rather a slowing down to the point where we take pleasure in the cacophony of singularities; when exhausted we would grant ourselves permission to fall back into bed and just listen.

²²⁴ Berardi, *After the Future*, 108.

²²⁵ Berardi, *After the Future*, 160.

No longer trying to harmonize sounds that will not or will *to* not come together, we might clear a path to see what can happen on the other side of exhaustion when we aren't fueled by the panicked desire to numb our depression. For this fall into bed, the being exhausted, need not be a passive nihilism. Rather, feeling ourselves to be backwards in a society that says we must move forward recalls the backward feelings of being queer explored in the last chapter and as explicated by Heather Love. If, as we read, backward feelings are, "all about action: about how and why it is blocked, and about how to locate motives for political action when none is visible"²²⁶ then perhaps witnessing to our depression and exhaustion might actually be a way of asking how we might feel, become, and even act differently. In other words, a turn not toward the productivity of the multitude but rather toward its depressing exhaustion might uncover invisible political possibilities, including an at times depressing and at times manic chaotic creativity.

The slowness and quotidian nature of depressing passive-acts like the fall into bed, or the listening for the sounds of chaotic miasma and those of the infinity of colors, further troubles a productivist politics within contemporary political theology. In other words, we can locate within these theological fields (or of theologies and philosophies arising in the wake of the death-of-God) a discomfiting emphasis on eventive action. Whether it takes the form of multitudinous productivism, event, exodus, messianism, or revolution, none of these concepts (no matter how immanent their theological constructions may be) seems to sensitively attend to the slowness, often banal, and backward feeling of the everyday. Indeed, they often come burdened with forward

²²⁶ Love, *Feeling Backward*, 1.

momentum won at the expense of the receptive/nonproductive/bipolar times of those not able or unwilling to participate in rapid change or forceful action.²²⁷

This sort of revolving and revolting (a sort that risks its own version of a teleological fantasy) is reflected in leftist movements nostalgic for the time of labor uprisings.²²⁸ As Steven Shaviro has noted:

Given the failure of economism, many Marxists have instead gone to the opposite extreme: they have embraced a kind of voluntarism. Capitalism can be abolished by sheer force of will—as long as this is supplemented by proper methods of organization and mobilization. We see this sort of approach in the Leninist doctrine of the vanguard party, and also, I think, in the ultra-leftism of such contemporary thinkers as Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou.²²⁹

Shaviro continues, “We cannot wait for capitalism to transform on its own, but we also cannot hope to progress by appealing to some radical Outside or by fashioning ourselves as militants faithful to some ‘event’ that (as Badiou has it) would mark a radical and complete break with the given ‘situation’ of capitalism.”²³⁰ Berardi counters the Badiouian/Žižekian event with radical passivity. Instead of viewing exhaustion as the inability to escape capitalism the position of radical passivity acknowledges exhaustion’s

²²⁷ See for example: Slavoj Žižek’s work on revolution and his deployment of the work of Badiou which spans across his work; Alain Badiou’s *Being and Event* (2013), *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event II* (2013), and *Philosophy and the Event* (2013); Crockett’s *Deleuze Beyond Badiou* (2013) and *Radical Political Theology* (2011); Robbins’s *Radical Democracy and Political Theology* (2013); the collected volume *Theology and the Political: the new debate* (Davis, Milbank, and Žižek eds., (2005)); and John D. Caputo’s *The Weakness of God: a Theology of the Event* (2006).

²²⁸ Speeding *up* change, moving *upward* might be reworked through slowing things *down* or moving *downward*.

²²⁹ Steven Shaviro, *No Speed Limit: Three Essays on Accelerationism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015) 5-6.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

capability to clear a way toward an autonomous collectivity.²³¹ Might the slow down of exhaustion serve as a radical opening for radical thought? In other words, can political theology embrace its own times of exhaustion and depression?

To counter, or perhaps reencounter but with a difference, the radicalism of the event we may need to look to the radicalism of the everyday. We may need to seek out a slowness performed in quotidian acts of refusal. For instance, instead of waiting for *or* forcing the revolution we might wander toward ways of slow living proposed by Lauren Berlant in her counter to “slow death,” (a concept touched on briefly in the previous chapter). Slow death might come in the form of the panic-depressive cycle, a crash from the over stimulation of the brain, or as Berlant traces it, in the wearing down of bodies through excessive food consumption, which she ties not only to exploitative food and labor policies, but also to the exhaustion of work and the search for momentary pleasure in food.²³² To counter slow death, Berlant offers the possibility of counter exploitative activities, those that are anarchist, cooperative, and radically antiwork.²³³ Examples of such activities might be found in the European “slow food” movement briefly touched on by Berlant. Slow food marks a movement in which practices of food cultivation, preparation, and consumption, “[recalibrate] the pacing of the day into a collective program for deliberative being in the world in a way opposed to the immediatist productive one of anxious capital.”²³⁴ Berardi similarly offers counter exploitative

²³¹ Berardi, *After the Future*, 138.

²³² Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, chapter 3

²³³ *Ibid.*, ch.3 footnote 64, 276

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, ch. 3 footnote 64, 276

practices through the slow life of a “relaxed soul”.²³⁵ “Rather than a swift change in the social landscape, we should expect the slow surfacing of new trends: communities abandoning the field of the crumbling economies, more and more individuals giving up their search for a job and creating their own networks of services.”²³⁶ These quotidian microtactics will take *time*, but if time is wealth then perhaps slowing time down is a way of honoring the worth of life. A relaxed soul might let us honor, attend to, our depressions and manias without anxiously trying to overcome them.

This slow down will not be easy. Berardi offers a mode in which politics and therapy are no longer separate. He asks us to learn to better take care of those made depressed and anxious by what he names as the “post-growth” economy.²³⁷ This might be in sympathy with the redistribution of care work on offer by James’s concept of “bad investing” or by the care work implied in the Foucauldian erotic ethics that I draw on in chapter five and the grave attending I further elaborate on in the conclusion. But who will lead the way? Who are we that are too anxious and on whom are we placing the therapeutic responsibility? Who gets to decide which type of depression is being exhibited—the exhaustion that leads to a slow movement toward a new civilization, or that of those made hopeless by the coming of such a civilization? Berardi suggests, playing on a post-Fordist adjustment from the proletariat to the cognitariat, that, “Poetry and therapy (thera-poetry) will be the forces leading to the creation of a cognitarian self-consciousness: not a political party, not the organization of interests, but the reactivation

²³⁵ Berardi, *After the Future*, 148

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 152.

²³⁷ Berardi, *After the Future* 153-4.

of the cognitarian sensibility.”²³⁸ This cognitarian sensibility, that which Berardi hopes to reactivate, might be best understood through affirmations proffered in his “Post-futurist” manifesto: “Poetry is a bridge cast over the abyss of nothingness to allow the sharing of a different imaginations and to free singularities,” and “We sing of the rebellious cognitariats who are in touch with their bodies. We sing to the infinity of the present and abandon the illusion of a future.”²³⁹ Perhaps this is the cognitariats who refuses a bias toward action, who is in touch with the body that needs to remain seated and not get up and walk, but also who is the adjunct that *actively* or through strategies of the refusal of work “passively” demands her right to paid vacation and sick leave: the right (to the time) to rest and make love.

For the productivism Berardi, Weeks, and I hope to counter we may need to look to some poetic bodies, to bodies rebelling from an ethic of work that defines our worth through our efficient labor. Indeed, whose poetics might help lead the way, such that our political therapy not reaffirm a redemptive individualistic resilience? Perhaps, moving into the realm of the embodied sensibilities of those already living slowly—already refusing productivity and efficiency; those living in the interstices between flesh and body; those we have marked as monstrous--will help us to seek out such rebellious poetry.

Crippling Cure

What would it mean to embody an unproductive monstrosity (one in which little monsters do not grow up to be resilient citizens)? Re-reading the productivity of the

²³⁸ Ibid., 163.

²³⁹ Ibid., 165-166.

multitude through a crip sensibility helps us to unpack this question. Crip theory is a version of disability theory that rejects assimilationist politics and apologetics. To be crip is to be unwilling to come back together as part of a productive whole when coming back together strengthens the system that abjected you in the first place. It is to refuse to wear the prosthesis so that the non-crip need not rethink the wholeness of her body. It is to refuse the cochlear implant such that mainstream society might rethink how communication looks and sounds. It is to learn to live differently from within exhaustion and depression and not only to medicate them. According to crip theorists Anna Mollow and Robert McRuer a crip politics says, “Fuck employability: I’m too sick to work.”²⁴⁰ To embrace the stigma of sickness is not to chain oneself to suffering but rather to question the demands of productive labor on offer by society. To embrace one’s own stigma is to turn the gaze back on the sickness of the society that stigmatized one. Hence a similar crip politics, one that tells the Empire it is too sick to work and that it is too depressed to produce might loose the multitude from its redeployment in the very technologies of power it hopes to resist. In other words, to say fuck employability might also be to say fuck productivity, as long as productivity too easily slips into commodified resilience or neoliberal redemption.

As McRuer and Mollow note, many disability studies projects “often [emphasize] the project of securing places for disabled people within what Deborah A. Stone calls the ‘work-based system’ (21), rather than challenging the structure of that system itself.”²⁴¹ Hence, similar to the productivist ethos risked by Rieger and Kwok’s reading of the

²⁴⁰ Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow, ed., *Sex and Disability* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012) 32.

²⁴¹ McRuer and Mollow, *Sex and Disability*, 31.

multitude, access-based disability studies often seek to return a sense of productivity to the disabled. Cripness on the other hand refuses assimilation, and rejects recognition by the systems that have betrayed us. To say fuck employability, I am too sick to work, might be to embrace a poetics of refusal on offer by Berardi's out-onomy.

For instance, in *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* McRuer exegetes *Gary in Your Pocket: Stories and Notebooks of Gary Fisher*, the collection of Gary Fisher's work published by his former teacher Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick three years after his death from HIV/AIDS. Fisher identified himself as a "black, queer, sociopath."²⁴² In this work Fisher's identities as queer, sociopathic, and black destabilize one another as well as compulsory heterosexuality and able-bodiedness. According to McRuer: "as Fisher himself well knew, almost thirty years of collective action had made available (through various machineries of publication) understandings of black identity that specifically resisted white confluences of 'blackness' with anything 'sociopathic' or 'queer' (broadly and negatively understood)."²⁴³ We might think here of James's understanding of non-bourgeois blackness as the exception. Queer blackness and sociopathic blackness are not options; they are forms of blackness that cannot be recycled into a rehabilitated narrative of blackness as goodness. Fisher resists this rehabilitation, living instead into the parts of him that are "bad investments."

This destabilization is further intensified in what McRuer names as Fisher's noncompliance with demands for "healthy" rehabilitation and redemption. Fisher's acts of noncompliance included sadomasochistic, often anonymous, sex, which involved

²⁴² Ibid, 104.

²⁴³ McRuer, *Crip Theory*, 105.

fantasies of racial degradation, and his frequent refusal to take his medication. In rejecting secur(e)ity and salvific health Fisher refused the system that had always already marked him as crip: as an untouchable monster. These acts of refusal performed a political stance of autonomy within Fisher's everyday life. They are not eventive revolutionary acts but rather the wealthy embodiments of time by a man rejecting the pressures to be sane, straight, and healthy.

McRuer ties Fisher's noncompliance to the work of seminal disability thinker Henri-Jacques Stiker, who writes "'rehabilitation marks the appearance of a culture that attempts to complete the act of identification, of making identical. This act will cause the disabled to disappear and with them all that is lacking, in order to assimilate them, drown them, dissolve them in the greater and single social whole' (128)."²⁴⁴ McRuer continues quoting Stiker "The practice of rehabilitation 'succeeded in making alterity disappear' and founded a world where 'identicalness reigns, at least a rough identity, a socially constructed identity, an identity of which citizens can be convinced' (131–132)."²⁴⁵ In other words, becoming identical to non-marginal identities redeems marginal ones. And yet this redemption is never complete. As James reminds us it is always conditional and instrumental. To be rehabilitated as one of the good queers, the good disabled, the good blacks, is not to achieve social and material equality but rather to fortify the system that marked one as bad in the first place. Fisher's quotidian resistance to such rehabilitation keeps the question of such marking open. He does not become part of the productive whole but questions the terms of wholeness and worth on offer. In other words, Fisher's

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 112.

²⁴⁵ McRuer, *Crip Theory*, 112.

crip sensibility, while bringing on death more quickly, honored the time of life through his “bad investing” and therefore refusal to be redeemed as surplus value.

Such bad investing might also be a kind of hyper-social or relational investing—a caring for all those made exceptions by MRWaSP, a going into the death, in order to attend to those that might short-circuit that which is killing us. The call to short-circuit what might be killing us can be read constructively through Fisher’s desire for a “big big room.” In commenting on what McRuer reads as Fisher’s “Whitmanian (or perhaps *Whitmanic*) efforts to think and write differently, expansively.”²⁴⁶ He surfaces Fisher’s desire to inhabit the “impossible space he imagined five months before he died... ‘40 million people will have it by the end of the decade,’ Fisher writes, ‘I’m in good company. I’m in plenty of company. I’m less afraid. It’s a big big room and it’s full of everybody’s hope I’m sure’ (272).”²⁴⁷ According to McRuer such a big room, full of *everybody’s* hope, cannot be achieved through rehabilitated identities that are made to become identical, but not equal. For McRuer, Fisher’s noncompliance keeps questions of subjectivity and worth (and so the hopes of everybody) alive within discourses on queer and disability identity. In other words, by refusing productive identities on offer, by refusing to take his mat and walk, or to become a good investment, Fisher refused to limit the size of the room or curtail whose hope inhabits it. In this way Fisher’s noncompliance might have been the care work on offer by James’s melancholy and the queer attention on offer by my grave attending—an attending which takes place when there is time to feel

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 144.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

both depressed about and manic for the world. Fisher's cripness in this way is an insistence on worth outside productivist ethics.

From within this big big room we might encounter and attend to the work of Janet Miles. Miles, (who Susan Schweik names as a poet writing in part from the lens of disability) engaged similar acts of noncompliance, including noncompliance with the mark of "disabled" in her work. In a discussion of Miles's life and work in the edited volume *Beauty is a Verb: the New Poetics of Disability* Schweik draws on Stiker's 1999 *History of Disability* to illuminate the importance of such acts of refusal:

The 'thing' has been designated, defined, framed. Now it has to be scrutinized, pinpointed, dealt with. People with "it" make up a marked group, a social entity... The disabled, henceforth of all kinds, are established as a category to be reintegrated and thus to be rehabilitated. Paradoxically, they are designated in order to be made to disappear, they are spoken in order to be silenced.²⁴⁸

Like (and as one of) the "mad" figures traced by Michel Foucault in *History of Madness* (to which we return in chapter 5) the disabled are named in order to either be saved out of disability (like the worker recognized as productive) or confined and silenced. Stiker's call in response to such confinement is to refuse the category of disability.

Fisher's noncompliance is similar. However, instead of refusing to be marked he embraces the stigma carried by the mark sociopathic. By refusing to be named as redeemable Fisher willfully goes unredeemed. This is the sensibility of the crip who embraces "the cripple" and so cannot be made straight. The term "disabled" (the term as deployed by disability projects critiqued by McRuer, Mollow, Stiker, and Schweik) marks those who we work to fix, and in fixing reassemble back into an efficient economy

²⁴⁸ Susan Schweik, "The voice of 'reason'" in *Beauty is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability*, Sheila Black, Jennifer Bartlett and Michael Northern, ed. (El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 2011) 70.

of production. But what of she who chooses to stay bent? Like the mad bipolar or hysterical woman who plagues society and so needs to be tamed, the willfully bent, and so unproductive, take on a monstrous character.

The Monstrous Multitude

It would be crucial to critique the issue of productivity within a theology of “the multitude” regardless of the term’s deployment by Hardt and Negri. However, in turning back to its original deployment we are better able to uncover some crip complexities. Hardt and Negri highlight the autonomy of the multitude from the Empire. If the Empire relies on the multitude to produce its wealth then to refuse to be productive is to refuse to contribute to the wealth of the Empire. As Hardt and Negri note: “Capital, in other words, must exploit the labor of workers but it cannot oppress, repress, or exclude them. It cannot do without their productivity.”²⁴⁹ They continue, “[The multitude] are, in fact, extremely powerful, because they are the source of wealth.”²⁵⁰ In other words, while the multitude could do without the Empire, the Imperial machine runs on the energy of the multitude. This emphasis on the productivity of the multitude opens pathways for the radical passivity proposed by Berardi. Instead of asserting that our faith traditions have been built on action and honoring the demand that the “invalid” in John stand up, take his mat and walk, to locate the potency of the multitude in its unproductivity is to ask why the man was sitting in the first place and for whom and what would he be walking?

It is this power that is recognized by Hardt and Negri when they write:

²⁴⁹ Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 332.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 333.

If sovereign power were an autonomous substance, then the refusal, subtraction, or exodus of the subordinated would only be an aid to the sovereign: they cannot cause problems who are not present. Since sovereign power is not autonomous, since sovereignty is a relationship, then such acts of refusal are indeed a real threat. Without the active participation of the subordinated, sovereignty crumbles. (Hardt and Negri, 2004, p.332)

Given the multitude's ability to make sovereignty crumble, why not focus on the unproductive side of the line that has been dismantled between productivity and unproductivity? Perhaps we worry that such a focus will lead the multitude into inertia and despair. Perhaps this is why Slavoj Žižek's own politics of refusal quickly move to a call for a Badiouian event and the *revolutionary* power of those in the urban slums.²⁵¹ And yet, this multitudinous refusal need not be that of revolutionary or eventive action. Rather, we might find a poetics of refusal within the bodies of the monstrous crip who in her everyday incapacities to productively come together with the whole declares along with Berardi "that the splendor of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of autonomy. Each to her own rhythm; nobody should be constrained to march at a uniform pace."²⁵² This new beauty should not be read as a wild individualism in which how we are sensitively entangled goes eclipsed. In fact it is just the opposite. The splendor of the world that allows for dis-uniformed pace is the splendor of relation that is only relation when one can recognize the importance of difference, a difference that is never a separation.

This type of entangled relation, one that honors the beauty of the singularity, might be the demand for a fairer distribution of care work as it is the demand that we attend to our differences instead of trying to attune them to one rhythm. Another name for

²⁵¹ Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).

²⁵² Berardi, *After the Future*, 165.

attending to or caring for our singularities might be reflective of Weeks's attention to the demand to "get a life" on offer by the *Postwork Manifesto*" edited by Stanley Aronowitz and Jonathan Cutler:

It is not *the* life that we are encouraged to get, not life as essential common denominator, but *a* life ... to draw on Deleuze's description, it is a life of singularities rather than individualities (1997 4) a life that is common to and shared with others without being the same as theirs," Weeks continues, "Finally, the injunction is not to get *this* life or *that* life; there is an assumption, by my reading of the phrase that there will be different lives to get. To borrow another formulation from Deleuze, the indefinite article serves here as 'the index of multiplicity' (5); to say that we should get a life is not to say what its contents might be.²⁵³

This is not the life on offer by rehabilitated identities that demand sameness or that of the Amabot worker whose life must become one with the system. To get *a* life would be to find *a* space in *a* big big room. To affirm the hope of this big bigness we will have to make *room* for those unwilling to come back together as part of the whole. This is not common productivity as bond, but rather multiplicity of life as relation.

Can we find the beauty of *a* dis-unified pace, *a* life, in Hardt and Negri's multitude? Perhaps one is there when they name the multitude a flesh that is not a body.²⁵⁴ Whereas Rieger and Kwok seem to focus on the potential unity of the social body Hardt and Negri are concerned with the uncontainability of the social flesh. As not-a-body, they argue, the flesh can often appear monstrous.²⁵⁵ In an essay in *A Conversation on Philosophy in Praise of the Common and Politics* that follows the published conversation between Cesare Casarino and Negri, Negri traces how Power

²⁵³ Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 232.

²⁵⁴ Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 192.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 190-5.

(which Negri uses with a capital P to differentiate the Power of the Empire from the potential force of the multitude) has historically been tied to eugenics, the establishment of those who are “beautiful and good” over and above those who threaten that good, those whom we name as monstrous.²⁵⁶ According to Negri, “[labor] becomes class by recognizing itself as monster. A monstrous subject that produces monstrous resistances. The existence of class is no longer spectral but monstrous—even better, such is its essence, which carries the inscription of the force that refuses capital’s productive labor.”²⁵⁷ The monster is monstrous in its refusal of capitalist productivity.

Negri develops the monster further as the “autonomy of the multitude,” as that which “shattered the eugenic teleology,” and that which “produces the common,” but also that which might be captured once again either in its return to its historic function in an eugenic economy as the site of alterity from which the “beautiful and good” are birthed, or through the techniques of the biopolitical which monstrously “improves” the monster’s functioning, saving him and so returning him to the productive labor of capitalism.²⁵⁸

Yes! The possibility of an autonomous monster who refuses productivity and capture!

I’m even willing to abide undisturbed by the return of the language of the event when

Negri writes:

Therefore, today is the moment to verify whether dialectics has truly ended; whether, consequently, the monster (as hegemon, through resistance of the class of those who work and are exploited) can triumph; whether the proletarian class can oppose, really, as monster, the masters’ eugenic Power, *kaloï kai agatoi*. We say: long live the monster! Long live his capacity to dissolve any idea or project

²⁵⁶ Cesare Casarino and Antonio Negri, *In Praise of the Common: A Conversation on Philosophy and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) 194.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 199.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 200-218.

of capitalist development and of order (both old and new) that organizes it! ... Today the monster is *the event waited for* ... neither miscarriage nor wreckage ... even though it could be such ... but it's not!²⁵⁹

Indeed it is this sense of the multitude's monstrosity, its ability to disorder the Empire that might be reclaimed and reread through a crip sensibility. And yet, uneasiness for me remains; something doesn't *feel* right.

In *Multitude* Hardt and Negri locate the monstrosity of the multitude in the figure of the vampire. The vampire is unruly; its desire for flesh (of all genders) is insatiable. It produces outside of the heteronormative family and outside of sexual reproduction all together. It creates new forms of family and sociability. The vampire marks how we must all come to recognize our monstrosity, our monstrous capabilities for imagining new forms of being assembled. And yet, I argue, the vampire's desire turns the subjects of its desires into other vampires, it is the making of one, an atonement-sameness over difference. Does the becoming-same of vampiric reproduction return us to a redemptive narrative too evocative of neoliberal rehabilitation? Have we managed to get out of a resilience narrative that teaches us that it is not in the monster's damage where pleasure might be found, but rather in its ability to overcome such monstrous markings? The vampire as the monstrous figure of the multitude might be disabled, but overcoming!

I seek not to reject commonality out of hand, but rather to push Hardt and Negri to be ever more monstrous. Indeed, we might wonder just how monstrous one can be if one's monstrosity begins to mimic, without ironic difference, the monstrosity of all the other monsters. For vampires (re)productivity is replication. What if instead we looked to Frankenstein's Monster who disappears into a frozen wasteland to the North, embodying

²⁵⁹ Casarino and Negri, *In Praise of the Common*, 203.

a monstrous impediment to social cohesion? Or to the disembodied hands from a slew of horror movies, hands that counter to Paul do not need eyes to see? This monstrous handness creeps away from demands for productivity and wholeness. This sort of crip monstrosity, a monstrosity unable or unwilling to cohere, might enflesh an alternate radical theology, one in which we need not be redeemed through our common productivity. In other words we need not overcome our brokenness (our existence as flesh and not whole body) in order to be considered valuable by society or by ourselves.

The vampire produces through over desiring. Conversely, Frankenstein's Monster and the horrific hand turn out to be unproductive. They are impediments to cohesion and communication. They say, "Fuck reproductivity I'm just a hand!" and "Fuck employability I'm too monstrous to work!" To reclaim that level of monstrosity within the multitude would perhaps better serve Hardt and Negri's assertion that, "We need to use the monstrous expressions of the multitude to challenge the mutations of artificial life transformed into commodities, the capitalist power to put up for sale the metamorphoses of nature, the new eugenics that support the ruling power. The new world of monsters is where humanity has to grasp its future."²⁶⁰ But what if Berardi is right when he declares in his post-futurist manifesto that the future is an illusion we must abandon in order to live in the infinity of the present?²⁶¹ What if the promise of the monster as humanity's future robs the monster of its melancholic complexities today?

Additionally, what of slowness? What of the everyday? Can the eventiveness of Frankenstein's monster coming alive, the disembodied and individualized hand killing its

²⁶⁰ Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 196.

²⁶¹ Berardi, *After the Future*, 166.

able-bodied prey, and the monster as event contain the kind of relational splendor of singular rhythms and slow living advocated by Berardi. What types of monsters can help us to resist an overemphasis in both SemioCapitalism and radical theology on movement, productivity, and revolutionary change? Who might be lurking in the shadows waiting for us, hoping we might finally come to recognize their singularity and through them possibilities for our own monstrously unproductive lives?

The Monster that therefore I Am Follows Me

In her “Dramatic Monologue in the Speaker’s Own Voice” poet Vassar Miller, who spent her life in a wheelchair (a result of cerebral palsy) writes:

I’m either a monster
in search of a horror movie to be in,
or else I’m a brain floating within a body
whose sides I must gingerly touch while you glance
discreetly away...

I wish you’d learn better before we all totter
into our coffins where there’s no straight way to lie crooked.²⁶²

Might *It Follows* written and directed by David Robert Mitchell and released in 2015 be the horror film of which Miller was in search? Can we read the *it* that does the following in *It Follows* as that figure of the monstrosity of the multitude that might both embody a radical slowness *and* diagnose the anxiety nurtured by an eugenic economy?

In the film the blond, thin, cisgendered, able-bodied teenage protagonist Jay Height “contracts” a “following *it*” through sexual intercourse with her boyfriend Hugh. The *it* that follows is singular, only following one person at a time (although others that

²⁶²Jill Alexander Essbaum, “Swimming on Concrete: the Poetry of Vassar Miller,” in *Beauty is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability*, Sheila Black, Jennifer Bartlett and Michael Northern, ed. (El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 2011) 50.

have been followed can still recognize *it*). *It* appears in human form and can look like anyone, including one's loved ones. In order to make sure Jay understands that she is now being followed by *it* Hugh drugs Jay and ties her into a wheelchair from where she will have to face *it*; incapacitation seems to be the only way one will fully grasp that *it* is coming for her. In other words, perhaps we do not see the incapacitation that hovers all around us until we feel the limitation of our mobility.

Hugh goes on to tell Jay that she should never be anywhere without at least two exits because *it* is slow, but not dumb. Indeed the viewer quickly realizes that we can spot *it* even within a crowd because of how slowly *it* moves. Like the "cripple" who cannot rush up the subway steps, whose slowness blocks our paths on crowded city streets, *it* is identifiable through its speed (or lack there of). And yet even though *it* is slow, one cannot escape. *It* is always following Jay. The *it* in *It Follows* behaves like our collective fear of disability and unproductivity, the specter that follows us around and is amplified in a culture bent on escaping from such a haunting.

This desire to escape remains palpable even/especially as *it/it* follows us home. Home and homey places are the key staging ground for most of the action in the film. Jay is trapped in her bedroom by her fear even after she has passed *it* on to her friend Greg (whom, believing he will not be infected/affected by *it*, sleeps with Jay). When *it* does eventually follow and then kill Greg, *it* appears as his mother and does so at his bedroom door. Additionally, the climactic battle with *it* takes place at the site of Jay's first kiss (a space of innocence in contrast to the wildness of the woods, the site of Jay's infection [through sleeping with Hugh]). Perhaps, *it*—depression, exhaustion, panic, and incapacitation--follows us home because the pressures of SemioCapitalism and

neoliberalism do. Everyday depression (and the many worldly worries which nurture it and which it nurtures) follows one home, breaking down the duality between domestic and public life. Hence, in these scenes of hominess we find not only depression, but also our anxious attachments to relations that might infect us. Greg is killed by what appears to be his own mother. Despite his assumptions of untouchability, his handsome masculinity and youth do not protect him from the attack of mortality we might see represented in the appearance of his mother, an appearance *it* takes on at the moment of Greg's death.

Further, the sexual nature of contagion in *It Follows* begs for a crip reading. Panic over sexually transmitted infections (STIs)—the designation of sexual Others as a plague on the “normal” and healthy, which enlivened decades of homophobia and queer politics—resonates with the disgust and panic induced by the creep of the slowness of disability. Disability as contagion. Before Miller voices her search for a horror movie, “Dramatic Monologue in the Speaker's Own Voice” reads:

I walk naked under my clothes like anyone else,
And I'm not a bomb to explode in your hands.
Of course, you are not (I would not accuse you of)
Thinking of holding me down, but of holding me up.
Yet sometimes I'd love to be eased from the envelope of sleep,
Stroked gently open (although it would take some doing—
on my part, that is). My lost virginity
would hurt me the way ghosts of their limbs
make amputees shriek, my womanhood
too seldom used. Have you ever viewed me this way?
No, none of you ever have...²⁶³

We have made of those with disability, like those with STIs, untouchables. Either too sexed or too desexed, the disabled are no longer or never were for stroking gently open.

²⁶³ Alexander Essbaum, “Swimming on Concrete” 50.

The cripple may not be held down, but being held up may still not be being desired for all one feels oneself to be. If ever viewed as desirable, and for Miller that seems to be a big if, she is now a bomb ready to explode in our hands. Careful *it* might catch you, or worse you might catch *it*. Tick tick ... boom. We panic, we flee, we fear, to the point of depression, that we will be caught by the bomb of undesirability, unproductivity, and so unmeaning—in essence, inexistence.

Attempts to flee this fate pervade *It Follows* (what would a horror movie be without a young girl running for her life?). Through modes of speedy mobility, like a car, Jay can get away for a brief time, but eventually *it* will always find her/us. Is this not the function of disability in a society that demands ever-more adaptability and rapidity? Like the driver of a car that cannot escape a breakdown in a crash our bodyminds pushed to the breaking point crash into depression—into *disability*. Indeed, like the depressive crash that comes from the demands on the bodymind to be ever more expressive, when Jay flees a place where *it* has attacked she crashes her car and ends up in the hospital with a broken arm. Becoming herself broken she is slowed down and driven mad by her desperate attempts to escape what follows.

Slowness and immobility is that which always follows; the disabled embody the one marginalized group that we are always already on the brink of becoming. They/we are often the ones too precariat and inefficient to be recycled back into MRWaSP; they/we are in this way exceptional. The true horror embodied by *it* might just be, therefore, its slowness. We run, panic, crash just so as not to be caught by an infecting immobility, one which will mean the death of our capable, productive, and efficient selves. Fittingly, in the film if one is caught by *it* one dies. And at least in the opening

death it is a death that is also a crippling. The film begins with a young beautiful girl frantically running. The audience does not see that from which she runs, we only experience her visceral panic. Then the screen jumps to the image of her dead body: her leg is broken and bent at a forty-five degree angle; it hangs over her in a seemingly impossible position, her kneecap directly over her stomach, the point of her shoe over her chest, the heel reaching up toward the sky. *It* has caught up with her; no longer mobile, no longer beautiful, she is bent. *I wish you'd learn better before we all totter/into our coffins where there's no straight way to lie crooked.* The death of the straightness of youth and beauty births the cripple.

What if we had learned better? What if in addition to being haunted we were halted by what follows? What if besides being spooked we let what follows spoil us, making us toxic with *it* such that we cared not to escape *it*, but rather to attend to *it*. Can we see that which haunts as also that which halts? That which spooks as that which spoils? Halts and spoils the flow of neoliberal economics? For when one reads a “Dramatic Monologue in the Speaker’s Own Voice,” who exactly is in search of a horror movie? Whose “womanhood” (read desirability) haunts like an amputated leg? Who has gone untouched? From whom have others glanced away? Is it not the “I” reading such a monologue now in my own voice? The *it* that follows me, even in its singularity is also of course the me that is afraid of being followed. Running counter to the eugenics of neoliberalism, a wealth that is time and a beauty that comes in true singularity encourage the touching and desirous care of all, regardless of how bent we might be, regardless of how long it might take to stroke us gently open. In this wealthy cripple time there is a listening to the cacophony, not merely a frantic taming of the noise. In attending to the

monster that therefore I am follows me we might clear room for a slow living that would represent a different kind of assembly than that birthed by the eventive productivity of the multitude.²⁶⁴ We might find an unproductive value, and so a release of worth from the chains of our work.

(Un)commonly Unredeemed

If the horror of disability spreads like that of an STI then perhaps there is something we can learn from a return to noncompliant and counter-redemptive quotidian acts, like those embodied by the mark of the sociopath (the mad) as represented in *Gary in My Pocket*. For instance, a similar counter-redemption can be found in the work of Ann Cvetkovich, which we began to discuss in the last chapter. Berardi's use of depression resonates with that of Cvetkovich. Like Cvetkovich's proposition that individual depression cannot be divorced from political depression, Berardi argues that since depression is so intimately entangled with affectual demands of the economy, one cannot divorce the individual pathology from the social one. Berardi sees a certain kind of potency in the depressive mood. For instance he notes:

There is a truth within depression. And in fact, as we have read, 'it is as if the *struggle against chaos* did not take place without an affinity with the enemy.' Depression is the vision of the abyss represented by the absence of meaning. Poetic and conceptual creativity, like political creativity, are the ways of chaosmotic creation, the construction of bridges over the absence of meaning. Friendship makes the existence of bridges possible: friendship, love, sharing, and revolt.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ Here I refer (with a *différance*) to Jacques Derrida's *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, which more accurately translated from the French would be *The Animal that Therefore I Am/I Follow*. (Jacques Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am* [New York: Fordham University Press, 2008]).

²⁶⁵ Berardi, *The Soul at Work*, 129.

And yet what Berardi finds useful in depression falls short of that which Cvetkovich does.

For Berardi depression is the lament over the loss of meaning, whereas for Cvetkovich one can find meaning from within depression. For Berardi depression marks a lack of desire, the absence of the libidinal energy needed to make meaning, and the space of incommunicability. For Cvetkovich, depression can mark the refusal to give up on one's desire for a different kind of world; "[she] asks how it might be possible to tarry with the negative as part of daily practice, cultural production, and political activism."²⁶⁶ Instead of negative feelings getting in the way of politics, and a proper politic as in need of more action than depression can provide, Cvetkovich's work, "attends to felt experience as not only already political but as transforming our understandings of what counts as political."²⁶⁷ This is the bad investment of melancholy that serves as a care for those made exceptions by MRWaSP. This is the Holy Saturday that may not need or seek the certainty of resurrection, but too does not succumb to hopelessness of crucifixion.

Both Cvetkovich and Berardi find in depression a diagnosis of how neoliberalism and SemioCapitalism feel, but whereas Berardi finds depression useful as a way into a political plan for healing depression and so redeeming the soul through a refusal of work, Cvetkovich, I argue, finds depression itself to be a mode of living estranged from labor relations. She writes of "the utopia of ordinary habit," in which one might learn to live into the impasse, and so does not force oneself to be productive and expressive in times

²⁶⁶ Cvetkovich, *Depression a Public Feeling*, 3.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

of blockage.²⁶⁸ Rather, Cvetkovich embraces movement in the everyday, even the slow movement of brushing her teeth, as a kind of resistance both to the demands to be efficient and productive, and an utter numbness within depression. The utopia of ordinary habit lets one move with depression and so opens up new forms of creativity not in spite of depression but alongside and in it.

Berardi and Cvetkovich are of course not in total opposition. For instance, Berardi writes: “The passive estrangement named alienation, the painful estrangement from the self, must then be overturned to become a delirious, creative, refocusing estrangement.”²⁶⁹ Here we see traces of Cvetkovich’s utopian thinking. Cvetkovich depathologizes and devindividualizes depression. She rejects cure, or what we might call redemption, in favor of the utopia of ordinary habit. This utopia is inhabited by acts not of salvation but rather of *spending time* in manners that counter both panic *and* the frantic attempt to numb depression. Like in the example of the singing of cover songs which both expressed Cvetkovich’s loneliness and made her feel a little less lonely, ordinary utopian habits are habits of spending time over saving it. Hence, this ordinary utopian thinking asks us to consider how we might begin to *feel* ourselves differently through quotidian moments of feeling otherwise in relation to that which has got us so lonely in the first place.

Cvetkovich’s utopianism shares some sympathies with Kathi Weeks’s “utopian demand.” According to Weeks, “A utopian demand should be capable of producing an estrangement effect and substantial change, while also registering as a credible call with

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 154-202.

²⁶⁹ Berardi, *The Soul at Work*, 138.

immediate appeal; it must be both strange and familiar, grounded in the present and gesturing toward the future, evoking simultaneously that 'nowness and newness' that has been ascribed to the manifesto (Caws 2001)."²⁷⁰ Like Cvetkovich's utopian habits, the utopian demand is both ordinary and imaginative. It exists concretely in the present, attendant to the past, and yet without foreclosing on possibilities in the future. Whether as demand (Weeks) or habit (Cvetkovich) these utopias asks us to gravely attend to our estrangement by investing in that which makes us strangely alien from the system such that we might imagine our alienation as refocusing and delirious and not only a source of despair.

The alienation of our souls, taken to their poetic level might be for Berardi a return to our soulfulness and the breaking-down of the systems that demanded we put such fullness to work. He suggests that:

The collapse of the global economy can be read as the return of the soul. The perfect machine of Neoliberal ideology, based on the rational balance of economic factors, is falling to bits because it was based on the flawed assumption that the soul can be reduced to mere rationality. The dark side of the soul—fear, anxiety, panic, and depression—has finally surfaced after looming for a decade in the shadow of the much touted victory of the promised eternity of capitalism.²⁷¹

The resurfacing of the dark sides of the soul, the breaking out of depression from within a Prozac economy that sought to quell the darker moods in order to keep the brain productive, can function for Berardi as a way into a refocusing estrangement. And this is indeed what happens for Cvetkovich when she writes of ordinary habits. For Cvetkovich the question becomes not how to cure depression (rehabilitating Fisher, overcoming

²⁷⁰ Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 221.

²⁷¹ Berardi, *The Soul at Work*, 207.

melancholy) but how to live in such a way that keeps moody possibilities open. In contrast, for Berardi the crucial political question is how to heal depression.

It is in a chapter section titled “How to Heal Depression,” where Berardi offers up the Deleuzian/Guattarian schizoanalytic method as political therapy touched on above. Such political therapy would, according to Berardi, start from desire, unlocking the pathological obsessive loci of desire tied to SemioCapitalism in order that new investments in desire, for instance the desire for time as wealth—time to make love and to create—would become possible. These investments would be, “autonomous from competition, acquisition, possession, and accumulation.”²⁷² To get to a place where this reorientation of the field of desire becomes possible, however, the depressive must submit to such a political therapeutic process. For Berardi, the depressed person is one who lacks desire, and quoting Ehrenberg, “the depressed individuals are not up to the task, they are tired of having to become themselves.”²⁷³ While we might agree that the depressed are exhausted by having to become “happy” this might actually be because to be happy with what is on offer would be the opposite of becoming oneself. And yet, Berardi prescribes the following “simple steps,” for the overcoming of depression and the reorientation of desire: “the deterritorialization of the obsessive refrain, the re-focalization and change of the landscape of desire, but also the creation of a new constellation of shared beliefs, the common perception of a new psychological environment and the construction of a new model of relationship.”²⁷⁴ These steps reflect steps taken by

²⁷² Berardi, *The Soul at Work*, 140.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 99.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 217.

Cvetkovich in her construction of the utopia of ordinary habit. However, whereas for Berardi these are steps that would overcome depression, for Cvetkovich these are steps that can be taken not because one has overcome her depression, but rather because she has learned to live differently in relation to the demands of SemioCapitalism precisely because of her depression. Depression that seeks resistance instead of resilience involves fields of desire that refuse neoliberal demands that have nurtured in the social psyche such levels of panic, including those in which one's value is inseparable from one's productivity and efficiency. This is not a glorification of the suffering the depressed feel, but rather a reinvestment in ourselves over and against the systems that profit from our attempts to rehabilitate ourselves back into the social body.

Depression as a kind of resistant mood becomes a mode of communication unable to be recycled back into SemioCapitalism as surplus value. It resists the demand to be ever more expressive. Here the incommunicability found within depression is not something to be redeemed, overcome, and rehabilitated (made straight) such that better human friendship and allegiance might be found; rather it is a mode of disorientation that can form assemblages (to borrow a term from Jane Bennett and William Connolly) of estrangement and so encourage collectives of singular rhythms to be ever-more autonomous from labor relations. That the depressed woman is not up to the task is exactly the short-circuiting potency the crip, the disordered, and melancholic bring through a politics of the refusal of capitalist labor relations. In other words, bringing us back briefly to Rieger and Kwok, it could be in the invalid's inability to take his mat and walk that we might feel resistance to and a short-circuit of the systems of his invalidation. Such resistance takes the form of our sensitive attention to what had him sitting in the

first place and for what or whom he would be walking. To be sensitively attuned is to find within disability a crip poetics that opens new spaces for questioning and dreaming. This is space cleared through grave attending—attending to those bent on not laying straight in the grave.

To rethink one's value through invalidating systems of valuation is not the redemption of depression or its glorification as much as it is remaining with a difference from within moods, both depressing and hopeful. In other words in attending to what depression and the depressed might become from within our estrangement, we might clear the imagination for formulations of value that ask not what we can *do* for one another or how in common we might be, but rather *how* we might become in coexistence alongside one another.

At the end of *It Follows* Jay walks hand in hand with her childhood first kiss Paul, whom she has now slept with and so we assume she has infected with *it*. At first blush Jay seems the image of innocence and beauty, her golden locks flowing down onto her white summer dress. But then we feel it, the affect in her eyes; she is exhausted from panicked fleeing and fearful hiding. As Paul and Jay walk the audience sees a slow moving “person” following them in the distance. *It Follows* and this poetics of disability do not offer a happy ending; both refuse to shake the specter of our own cripness. Jay has not overcome the damage that follows her.

At the end of *After the Future* Berardi acknowledges that proposals such as these often leave his audience with a sense of bitterness. He doesn't have a happy ending either:

And I don't like to cheat at the game. I don't like empty words of self-reassurance, or rhetoric about the multitude. I prefer to tell the truth, at least, the

limited truth as I see it: there is no way out, social civilization is over, the neoliberal precarization of labor and the media dictatorship have destroyed the cultural antibodies that, in the past, made resistance possible. As far as I know.²⁷⁵

And yet he persists. *It* persists. The *crip* persists. We persist not only through grief over a lost civilization, but perhaps more so because in our melancholy we realize what was on offer was never really that civil in the first place. For instance writing about Miller's poetry Jill Alexander Essbaum acknowledges that, "While [Miller's] poems are often grave and dismal in their imagery, by their tone they are backlit with hope."²⁷⁶ While, as Essbaum notes, Miller's hope may come from her commitment to her Christianity I want to offer an alternate theological reading.²⁷⁷ Perhaps hope backlights the dismal and the grave, because it is through this gravity (a pulling down as opposed to a speeding up) that we might recognize, perhaps to our horror and delight, our own crooked natures. This recognition might better prepare us to willfully go our own autonomous (out-onomical not individualistic) ways. In other words, perhaps this kind of hope, a hope that comes through and in our brokenness, illuminates ways to remain *bent* on not lying straight in the end.

For Berardi this hope comes in the very fact that his brain is limited—that while, "his knowledge and understanding don't see how any development of the social catastrophe could cultivate social well-being," he also knows that he doesn't need to know or understand how because, "the catastrophe (in the etymology of *kata* and

²⁷⁵ Berardi, *After the Future*, 158.

²⁷⁶ Alexander Essbaum, "Swimming in Concrete," 51.

²⁷⁷ Alexander Essbaum, "Swimming in Concrete," 51.

stopherin) is exactly the point where a new landscape is going to be revealed.”²⁷⁸ In attending to the catastrophe (of our own bodies, our psyches, our souls, our societies) we hold out faith that we might actually be able to reclaim the wealth of time and the beauty of our singularities. We might reclaim value outside our commodifiable surplus and worth outside our work. And we might push this faith even farther, asking how we can embrace the crip that follows, how we can attend to it. We might follow the following where it *wills*.

The willfully monstrous need not wander away from all senses of collectivity. Monstrosity might come apart from a risky commonality of productivity on offer by Rieger and Kwok only to come noisily together in what Fred Moten and Stefano Harney name the Undercommons (a marooned community--, particularly in the University--, already considered to be fugitive invaders—never productive or professional enough). For example, Halberstam notes in his introduction to the *Undercommons*, that “the disordered sounds that we refer to as cacophony will always be cast as ‘extra-musical,’ as Moten puts it, precisely because we hear something in them that reminds us that our desire for harmony is arbitrary and in another world, harmony would sound incomprehensible. Listening to cacophony and noise tells us that there is a wild beyond to the structures we inhabit and that inhabit us.”²⁷⁹ Halberstam continues, “And when we are called to this other place, the wild beyond, ‘beyond the beyond’ in Moten and Harney’s apt terminology, we have to give ourselves over to a certain kind of

²⁷⁸ Berardi, *After the Future*, 162.

²⁷⁹ Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (New York: Autonomedia, 2013) 7.

craziness.”²⁸⁰ What if this craziness, and this dream of another place, came not only in a wild beyond, but also in a depressive attention to the everyday? Might a crazy beyond be a melancholic bad investing? Might it be a sociopathic refusal to be rehabilitated?

We can give ourselves over to this madness, to the ecstasy and depression of a chaotic cacophony murmured by those crip monsters on whose effacement harmony was built. This crazy (depressed, exhausted, inexpressible, and unreasonable) we is not a we that will come from a suppression of each singularity’s maddening noise into a harmonious battle hymn of a productive multitude, even if we *will* wage our own, perhaps slow, war. For this cacophony is the sound of Sara Ahmed’s willful politics, which, “[refuses] to cover over what is missing, a refusal to aspire to be whole.”²⁸¹ No common battle hymn, but rather, “A queer army...that is not willing to reproduce the whole, an army of unserviceable parts. You can be assembled by what support you refuse to give. A queer army of parts without bodies, as well as bodies without parts, to evoke Audre Lorde’s call for an army of one-breasted women.”²⁸² This is a call to arms that in its monstrous unproductive handness is also a refusal. It is a refusal not of worth, but of the value on offer by neoliberalism. It is a refusal that demands and “exalt[s] tenderness, sleep, and ecstasy, the frugality of needs and the pleasure of the senses.”²⁸³

This refusal is the willfulness of affect alien prophets, figures of faith whose moody mattering have gone too long eclipsed in favor of making them productive parts

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Sara Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014) 184.

²⁸² Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 199.

²⁸³ Berardi, *After the Future*, 166.

of a mainstream theological narrative. Affect alien prophets are those that might pray for relaxation more than redemption; for sleep more than salvation; and for pleasure more than productivity. Such willful prophets, and the transformations we might find in even their most “negative” of senses, are to whom we now turn.

Chapter Four: Unwilling Feeling

To resist both the eschatological shadow of money and a redemptive work ethic is to flow against the temporal and emotional demands of capitalism. It is to live into the prophetic role, and so the space, of what Sara Ahmed has termed, “the affect alien.” In *The Promise of Happiness*, Ahmed examines the affects and effects of happiness, and how the objects it forms shape our ontological and political relationships with society. In her critical reading of happiness Ahmed identifies those who through their distance from socially mediated “happy objects” are considered failures or threats. These threats, or affect aliens, include: the feminist killjoy, the queer, the revolutionary, and the melancholic migrant. Affect aliens are those who do not fit the affectual script handed down by mainstream society; they are those who flow emotionally against the normativizing tide. Conversely, the affect alien’s opposite, the happiness-making subject, is shaped by and fortifies neoliberal capitalism and multi-racial white supremacist patriarchy. For instance the figures of the happy housewife or smiling domestic servant exists as products of the heteronormative white nuclear family *and* fortify the idea that if one is not happy with one’s gendered or raced position that her unhappiness is her problem and not that of the societal forces that shaped the subjectivity of women in relation to the serving of men and children. The demand to be happy in one’s present circumstance is a demand to let systems of subjectivization go unquestioned. Following on the previous chapter’s suggestion that we listen for a cacophony of singularities, reading with Ahmed this chapter strains to hear where certain biblical affect aliens might be prophetically lending such alienation a prayer. In embodying counter-capitalist resistance affect aliens act as prophets of another way. Ahmed’s concept of affect

alienation, I argue, lets us touch on prophetic biblical laments from within unexpected textual terrains.

According to Ahmed, “to be a good subject is to be perceived as a happiness-cause as making others happy. To be bad is thus to be a killjoy. [*The Promise of Happiness*] is an attempt to give the killjoy back her voice and to speak from recognition of how it feels to inhabit that place.”²⁸⁴ From within this space of threat, the path tread by the killjoy, Ahmed finds possibility. This possibility rests in what can be learned from pausing awhile and inhabiting, or if one can never fully inhabit the Other’s terrain, then working to attend to the space of the affect alien. To emotionally attend to the alienated is to be willing to have our terrain up-titled, reshaped, and differently plotted.

In this chapter I suggest that in attending to the prophetic call of the affect alien, we might learn to reorient our ordinary and extraordinary practices such that they better affirm a political theology suited to counter the affects and effects of neoliberal capitalism. Such a prophetic witnessing requires attention to *our* temporal, ontological, and emotional marginalization and attention to those whom have come before and been willing to go and feel another way outside of normative biblical *and* neoliberal narratives. This grave attending, which in this chapter takes an allegorical form, might be a listening for those affect aliens long ago buried and those that exist at the margins of our cultural or theological imaginations. Attending to the alienation whether embodied by our fellows in the present, or in the ghosts of the past, is to welcome the prayerful lament of those willing to invest in the damage, to take care of and for the exceptions, those that had or have become the exceptions themselves.

²⁸⁴ Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 20

In other words, might welcoming a haunting help us learn to *feel* our way through the world differently? This feeling may not be a happy one. And yet to give up a certain form of happiness (one dictated by neoliberal biopolitics) in order to get *a* life, and to live together differently, is the recognition that to remain alienated from the emotional flow on offer is to remain desirous of other options. Other options will contain a range of moods, including surprising joys and an alternative happiness. The feminist killjoy, hence, does not kill all joy out of hand, but rather short-circuits the joy of the system achieved through her denigration. Indeed, Ahmed's recognition that "political freedom is the freedom to be unhappy" (a freedom discussed further below) resonates with Berardi's insistence that our goal must be increased alienation from the modes of productive labor on offer. The freedom to be unhappy and the goal of alienation do not necessitate a nihilistic embrace of alienation for alienation's sake, but rather offer an amplification of alienation as resistance to those systems that alienated us in the first place. Hence, to emotionally flow in counter-capitalist streams is to attend to the prophetic weight of affect alienation.

The prophetic nature of unhappiness comes in its insistence that the happiness on offer can never fully capture alternate possibilities of joy. Unhappiness as prophesy is the prophetic negation of the neoliberal belief systems into which we have been inculcated. The demand to be happy by those who affirm the systems that have constructed our unhappiness serves a catechistic function. Feeling despair? Come to Jesus. Feeling unfulfilled? Come to Walmart. Feeling tired? Take a pill. Feeling envious? Get a job. Don't worry, be happy. But of course each part of our neoliberal catechism multiplies worry as the solutions on offer rarely lead to sustained happiness or more importantly to

one's present flourishing. Good pupils, we come to trust our teachers, and so blame ourselves when the solutions on offer leave us still in a state of alienation. This is the structure Linn Tonstad names as the promise-fault coupling.²⁸⁵ We are promised wealth, worth, and happiness if we only follow the rules of both the neoliberal economy and the nuclear family, but when achieving such promises ends up being impossible we are blamed; it is our fault for not being flexible, innovative, and productive enough to successfully follow each and every capitalistic twist and turn.

It is perhaps in this dynamic coupling that an investigation of affect is particularly appropriate. Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, editors of the *Affect Theory Reader*, remind us that where affects are concerned any dichotomy between promise and threat cannot hold. Looking to the work of Patricia Clough they argue that even in the moments of utter despair and unimaginable threat there is always a chance for something different. The slipperiness of affect, its structural resistance to being merely good or bad, allows Seigworth and Greg to affirm, "This inextricability of affect's *promise and peril* is... what is pried apart and/or relayed through the patho-logy of a body's doings in the pedagogic encounter with a world's shimmerings."²⁸⁶ In other words, since affects arise between and besides bodies, and make up the pathways of being affected and affecting, they can never be merely promise nor merely peril. They teach us what has been and what is, but they also open us to the possibilities of what might be. Indeed, affects are instructive, and as such a faithful attending to the affect alien asks us what it means to learn from and so witness to the lessons brought by their/our alienation.

²⁸⁵ Linn Tonstad, "Debt Time," in *Sexual Disorientations*, Stephen Moore, Kent Britnall, Joseph Marchal, eds. (New York: Fordham University Press, forthcoming).

²⁸⁶ Seigworth and Gregg, *Affect Theory Reader*, 17.

As detailed in previous chapters, the eschatological judgment of money formed under neoliberal economics holds us cruelly captive to an exclusivist salvation many of us can never achieve or are perhaps uninterested in achieving. Indeed, can a salvation that comes through indebtedness to either the Market or a monarchic Christ ever fully liberate us from our chains? In this chapter I want to look to how moments of prophetic moody blockage within the bible help to insist that the breaking of the chains remains possible, if at times only through the limited freedom of willfully remaining enraged and depressed about our situation. Hence, to resist our marching orders by refusing to *feel* happy or even okay with the narrative of a salvific life dictated by Fundamentalisms, whether they be neoliberal or explicitly religious, is to prophetically say no to the redemptions on offer by secular and religious theologies that profit off our cruelly optimistic attempts at becoming rehabilitated.

Instead of looking to characters of hopeful overcoming, this chapter reads for affect alien prophets of another way. To do so I return to a hermeneutic of bipolarity. Reading both the moods of depression and mania, as well as their interpenetration, as affect alienating moods I surmise that expressions of affect alienation can be read theologically as prayers of lament. To explore this supposition I look to Jonah and Martha, biblical characters I name as affectually marginalized. Looking to biblical figures helps me to ask what moodiness has to teach us about political theology. In turning to the bible I seek not an authoritative reading, as much as a thought experiment, one whose hypothesis suggests that in finding representatives of bipolar prophesy in the bible we can listen to theological affect anew, and in doing so question contemporary emotional

complacency with teleological salvation and divine obedience.²⁸⁷ This critique of salvation and obedience follow previous chapters' problematization of affectual demands—complacency with the status quo, docility in the face of suffering, and happiness in the face of oppression--made by the constructions of temporality and value on offer by neoliberal ethics.

Hence, it is particularly fitting that once again I place in conversation with affect theorists, radical political theology, in this case that of John D. Caputo. Like Crockett and Robbins (and from a less theological standpoint Hardt and Negri), Caputo writes in the wake of the death-of-God. A foundational thinker in the field of radical theology, Caputo finds theological potency from within the immanent world. His theology claims a radicalism and materiality with which I am in sympathy. And yet like Crockett and Robbins, and Hardt and Negri, I find a lack in Caputo's thinking. There is a moodiness missing in Caputo's materiality. The radical theological turn to the material, once again seems quite ethereal. Hence, this chapter asks radical theology to be ever more radical in its attention to the material. It asks the field to gravely attend to the messy materiality of affect and to the moodiness of those of us its events have eclipsed. This chapter demands a radical theological hearing through its own attempts to listen anew to some affect alien prophets.

The Prophetic Potential of Affect Alienation

²⁸⁷ As thought experiments my exegeses of Jonah and Martha are not meant to be canonical nor do they cover the depth of commentaries on each figure. Rather, in a constructive theological vein they hope to take seriously the hard work of biblical scholars and biblical interpretation while feeling free to wander where the affect in the text takes us even if that is far afield from the field of biblical scholarship.

For Sara Ahmed feelings are pedagogical. The promise of happiness teaches us what to associate with happiness. And as such it teaches us to desire to be associated with such associations. Through socially mediated emotions we are taught value, and through the learned experience of what society deems properly valuable we are engendered to be either satisfied or dissatisfied. Along with the epistemological and pedagogical force of feeling Ahmed finds a sense of political possibility from within the ways in which we might reorient happiness: “we might need to rewrite happiness by considering how it feels to be stressed by the very forms of life that enable some bodies to flow into space.”²⁸⁸ The call to rewrite happiness is similar to my calls to rethink salvation and productivity. To rethink these terms is not to deny the interesting ways in which they function; rather it is to analyze to whom a normative construction of each has granted worth. To rewrite happiness is to follow happiness where it has wandered, to see around which bodies and objects of desire it has cohered, and to reopen paths for its incoherence. To rethink happiness is to look to the damming and damning of certain lives, in order to find cracks in the dam/n through which life might flow regardless of one’s submission of lack there of to manufactured “happy objects.”

For instance, in her discussion of Alfonso Cuarón’s film “Children of Men,” based on the book by P.D. James, Ahmed notes that the revolutionary character does not flow easily. The revolutionary is stressed, experiencing the world from the position of resistance. Ahmed asks what we might learn from this experience of counter flow, and suggests that “we might revolt by revolting against the demand for happiness”²⁸⁹ To

²⁸⁸ Ahmed, *Promise of Happiness*, 12.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 102.

revolt against the demand for happiness is not to reject the utility of happiness. Indeed, Ahmed finds happiness interesting. It is rather to reject the idea that to be happy is to be free. More authentic political freedom comes when we are free to be unhappy, particularly in a society that engenders such unhappiness: “The freedom to be unhappy would be the freedom to live a life that deviates from the paths of happiness wherever that deviation takes us. It would thus mean the freedom to cause unhappiness by acts of deviation.”²⁹⁰ Deviants become freedom fighters. Those who find cracks in the dam/n expand the fissures through which the rest of us might follow. They fight for our freedom to be unhappy in the face of oppressive demands for docility and coherence.

In the creation of an archive of affect alienation (the collecting together of figures who flow emotionally counter to the historical narrative, deviants who deviate) Ahmed finds what Deleuze found in political cinema: the reappearance of the people that have gone missing from history. In this reformulation of political freedom, *The Promise of Happiness* aims to tap into bad feelings as creative responses to an unfinished history.²⁹¹ What types of creative responses might be found when one lives not only into a bipolar sense of time and into a crip sense of slowness, but also the space of the affect aliens that embody moods of madness (mania, depression, stubbornness, shame, and anger)? And, in terms of theology, might deviation from the paths of happiness be deviation from happy-ending theologies, those neoliberal, fundamentalist, and liberal sorts discussed in the previous chapters, and perhaps a radical one we will discuss below? This political freedom to be unhappy is the loosing of the chains that behold us to a theology that

²⁹⁰ Ahmed, *Promise of Happiness*, 195.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 220.

claims we must be saved from the dangers of an anarchic freedom, one which radical theologians find in the multitude, and which in the last chapter I found in the singularity of each crip body illuminated in a poetics of unproductivity.

Reading Ahmed's description of the feminist killjoy in conjunction with Ann Cvetkovich's description of depression, the moods of depression and madness come to inhabit a renewed and re-imagined feminist response to an unfinished history. Such a response takes shape below in two biblical figures. My first biblical feminist killjoy and bipolar prophet cries out through the manic--potent self-inflating, rapid, and melodramatic--feelings of rage found in the book of Jonah. I read Jonah's refusal to go with God's emotional flow as an act of pedagogical lament. I ask how Jonah's anger can serve as an affect alien lament against interpretations that temper any sense of moral ambivalence within the text. Listening to both Jonah's prophetic mania and depressive silences reveals that while we might find in the God of Jonah a God of mercy, we might equally find a God who seems to choose cheap repentance over concerns for justice. In hope not to settle the issue of which God appears in Jonah, but rather to refuse such binary thinking, I seek to reclaim a righteous character to Jonah's anger. Jonah's rage, I surmise, may not represent a rejection of mercy, but rather a rejection of the need to feel happy in the face of the comfort shown to those whom have caused his people such discomfort. Jonah's anger, his affect alienation keeps questions about the present material wellbeing of those outside a normativizing script at the fore.

My second affect alien prophet similarly attends to present material wellbeing. This embodiment of the feminist killjoy takes shape in the character of Martha, primarily

as she is depicted in Luke's Gospel,²⁹² as read through the lens of Caputo's *The Insistence of God*. Affirming Caputo's assertion that Martha embodies a theology that keeps the question of the material world at the forefront of a life of faith, I argue that what we might read as Martha's quotidian depression--represented in her insistence on going about the daily business of life when Jesus comes to visit and her complaint to Jesus over Mary's lack of help-- has prophetic character.

I read Martha's worrying and weariness in two key ways. First, I argue that her worry over the daily business of hospitality ties the question of faithfulness to the needs of the present world; in being what I'm calling "mad for the world" Martha resists the demands to be satisfied in a future resurrection and in a spirituality that ignores the material reality of the present. In this reading of Martha I do not refute the possibility of Mary's own prophetic role. To be sure, that Mary is the one who leaves behind domestic duties and chooses a kind of mad love for the teachings of Jesus means she also might be read as prophetic. Rather, in looking to Martha's mood and to how her emotions are refuted I hope to imagine Martha's own unfinished history. I want to imagine how we might hear her worry and dissatisfaction not as moral lessons for our own satisfaction, but rather as prophetic in their very worrisome and dissatisfactory nature. I want to rewrite Martha's unhappiness and Mary's "better part" in order to re-imagine the

²⁹² The passage reads: "Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.' But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'" NRSV. Elsewhere in the New Testament, Martha is found only in John 11:1-44 passim and 12:2.

pedagogical and so prophetic promise Martha's mood might hold for both Jesus and reader.

I turn explicitly to Martha not so much as to favor Martha over Mary, but rather to stem the tide of interpretations that either allow Mary to flow more easily into the role of faithful disciple, or that have "dammed/damned up" Martha's moody character, even as they have tried to redeem her fidelity.

Further, I argue that Martha's weariness with Mary and her frustration with Jesus serve as a prophetic lament against a structure of hospitality that risked slipping into coercive obligation instead of persuasive relation. In posing questions to the possible coerciveness of the demands of discipleship and hospitality in Luke I hope to rethink what has gotten Martha so down. In contrast to a madness that takes the form of crisis Martha's steady commitment to the present moment is reflective of the type of affecting depression described by Cvetkovich when she notes that depression follows one home such that feelings of depression and anxiety become ordinary, infused in quotidian worries. Reading Martha's worries alongside Cvetkovich, we might glimpse in Martha's busyness the formation of everyday habits that keep the body moving despite the weight of both ordinary worries and those of an extraordinary character. To read Martha's affect in this way is to uncover the possibilities for a more radical reading of the everyday within the biblical text. These possibilities would resist a sense of redemption out of depression and worry, the comforting salve that might come with interpretations of the Martha and Mary story that claim utter fidelity to Christ's promise of future salvation and to Mary having "the better part" of faith. To interpret Martha's affect as prophetic is instead, to keep the question of what's going on right there and right then for Martha,

Mary, and Jesus alive. But also, it is to keep our senses attuned to how narratives of faithfulness often transform prophetic complexities into historical complacency.

Having established a biblical rationale²⁹³ for a theology of affect alienation, and returning to Ahmed's work, this time on willfulness, I attempt a preliminary sketch of what this affect alien theology has to teach us about prophetically living in the face of coercive narratives of obedience, including that of neoliberal capitalism. I argue that while the Lukan Jesus and Jonah's God might seem like strange targets for such a counter-capitalist critique (Luke's Jesus encourages a detachment from material possessions and Jonah's God shows mercy to Jonah's enemies) an affect hermeneutic begs of more complexity. It looks to the moods of those characters that seem to have gone denigrated even in the establishment of our more liberal theologies. It problematizes any clear moral lesson in these texts. Indeed, might learning to inhabit a rebellious mood even in the face of what seems like a friendly theological offering (service with a smile, resilience in the face of damage) be the type of prophesy we need from within the shadows of a system that hides its coercive nature under the guise of capitalistic freedom?

This chapter is shaped by the above question and a series of others: To whom or to what are these mad prophets lamenting? Might it be to a God *affected* by the madness

²⁹³ By rationale here I mean in no way the final word on or an expert exegesis of the pericopes explored here. Rather, I argue that each of these texts can be read against such expertise, against canons of interpretation. I argue that indeed to do so is to reappear those parts of the biblical characters that have been disappeared from history. Additionally, given queer affect theories rejection of mastery, I seek to do anything but master the texts. Further, following Ben Highmore, whom "suggests, the description of the ordinary (or depression) requires a science of the singular, which disrupts statistical and scientific understandings that operate through generalizations," I argue that the stories of Jonah and Martha's depressions (while simultaneously parabolic in function), must also be reading their singularity, such that they need not be the final word on a generalized theology of affect in the Bible or the only or defining characteristic of each character within their own stories.

as much as to those of us made alienated by such a world? Further, can God be made affectually alienated by theological demands for future-oriented salvation, affectual obedience, and the caged-freedom of capitalism? In other words, can God be made alienated by theological propositions that resonate with neoliberal concepts of redemption and fidelity? If so, can God be made depressed? To answer these questions a theology that critically interrogates the promises of both happiness and God will be key. Reading Ahmed's exploration of the hap of happiness and Caputo's theology of the perhaps helps me to open up such a theology.

What might a return to the "hap" of happiness do? This question drives the constructive and ethical turns made within Ahmed's investigation of the promise of happiness. According to Ahmed happiness is etymologically tied to the "the drama of contingency."²⁹⁴ Stemming from the Middle English word "hap" which meant fortune, happiness in its original context would have meant having good fortune or luck.²⁹⁵ For Ahmed, this understanding of the "hap" of happiness would suggest that while today we understand happiness to be the result of hard work or a cultivation of a certain outlook on the world. In its original intent happiness was a result of what *happened to you*. The experience of happiness was not your reward for a fidelity to certain modes of living, nor was unhappiness your punishment for infidelity. To be sure, that happiness contains this sort of contingency might be, for some, profoundly troubling. If we have no control over our happiness then what's the point in striving to be happy? Yet, for Ahmed it is the reaffirmation of the contingency embedded in the hap-ness of happiness where we might

²⁹⁴ Ahmed, *Promise of Happiness*, 22.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

find different possibilities for thinking happiness--possibilities divorced from the assumption that those whom are happy are good subjects and those whom are alienated from happiness are bad ones. Indeed, in resurfacing happiness's contingent nature Ahmed hopes to, "refocus our attention on the 'worldly' question of happenings."²⁹⁶

This form of hap-ness resonates with John Caputo's understanding of the theological potential of the "perhaps." Compare Ahmed's assertions on the world reorienting and remaking of the hap with the theological reorientations of the "perhaps" in Caputo's material theology. Ahmed on the potency of the 'hap':

The wretched ones might be full of hap, might be hapfull, because they deviate from the paths of happiness, because they live in the gaps between its lines. To be full of hap is to make happen...to make hap is to make a world.²⁹⁷

When we are estranged from happiness, things happen. Hap happens...a stance toward possibility might be a happenstance.²⁹⁸

We can value happiness for its precariousness, as something that comes and goes, as life... to turn happiness into an expectation is thus to annul its sense of possibility.²⁹⁹

Hope is about desiring the "might," which is only "might" if it keeps open the possibility of "might not."³⁰⁰

And Caputo on the potency of the "perhaps":

In a theology of "perhaps," we side with the infidels and we think the true faith requires more infidelity and less mystification.³⁰¹

²⁹⁶ Ahmed, *Promise of Happiness*, 311.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 223.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 219.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 220.

³⁰⁰ Ahmed, *Promise of Happiness*, 183.

If “perhaps” is a saving power, it is one that also means that nothing is safe.³⁰²

If things had greater clarity and security and a more certain outcome, we would not need to make vows or to pray or, better, we would be unable to, as the vow and the prayer would suffocate with self-complacency.³⁰³

The insistence of God means that God too is asking to be rid of the God of peace and quiet.³⁰⁴

The insistence of God read through Ahmed’s hap-ness and Caputo’s perhap-ness is the insistence that the character of happiness and that of fidelity be not tied to certain outcomes, actions, or people. Reading Ahmed and Caputo together along with forms of prophetic madness (depression, mania, melancholy, ecstasy, crip monstrosity) I have hoped to trace in this dissertation we can answer the insistence of God with our own adherence to the mad imaginaries that might happen when we wander away from the happy theological scripts we have been offered. This adherence to what might happen is what I develop in the next chapter as a madness for a grave attending, by which I mean an unreasoned desire to be brought down, to gravitate toward both the mattering of the material world and to those voices that we thought were gone and buried.

To attend to graves and gravity is to ask to be haunted; it is to be open to the gift of madness. Such a grave attendance insists that instead of fidelity to the script we might be faithful to a hap-ness which grants us the freedom to question given teleological

³⁰¹ John D. Caputo, *The Insistence of God: a Theology of Perhaps* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013), 48.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 120.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 40.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

narratives, including but not limited to a Radical Orthodox Christian telos and a captive adherence to the Market. It is the wretched ones (the infidels), full of hap, that might therefore best answer God's request to be rid of the God of peace and quiet. It is as Ahmed and Caputo might jointly say, in giving up happiness for life we might refuse self-complacency in order to pray. This prayer would not be, as Caputo makes clear, a prayer for salvation out of insecurity into security (a certainty that a rising tide will indeed lift all boats), but rather a prayer that nothing will remain safe. This would mean, most specifically for our purposes, that those granted the most security, those that make up what Ahmed has named "the institution of White Men"³⁰⁵ and their hegemonic Christian accomplices would never be safe. This would further mean, that no construction of God, not even the one proposed by this dissertation, would ever be safe. It is a prayer that we would give and be given space to see what can happen—for happenings to arise from places and sources not yet known. This arising will come with our maddening attention, our careful practices of attending to both the dam/ns and their cracks, our attending to the depressing state of the world *and* to the manic possibility (promise and threat) of what might be. For now let us attend to two such prophets crying out to us from within the cracks of the biblical text.

"Angry enough to die": The Madness of Jonah

³⁰⁵ According to Ahmed, "When I am saying that 'white men' is an institution I am referring not only to what has already been instituted or built but the *mechanisms* that ensure the persistence of that structure. A building is shaped by a series of regulative norms. 'White men' refers also to conduct; it is not simply who is there, who is here, who is given a place at the table, but how bodies are occupied once they have arrived; behaviour as bond." (Sara Ahmed, "White Men" post on the *Feminist Killjoys Blog*, November 4, 2014, accessed December 2, 2015).

The Book of Jonah, that story of a ‘foolish’ prophet who ran from God and was swallowed up by a big fish, has been retold many times. One such telling is found in *The VeggieTales*, a popular Christian cartoon series in which adorable vegetables act out biblical stories. In the *VeggieTales* Jonah’s alienation is not prophetic; it honors what Halberstam has diagnosed as the adult demands for, “sentiment, progress, and closure,”³⁰⁶ and what Ahmed might diagnose as the demand to be a happiness-making object for others. During the movie, when Jonah, a scared Hebrew asparagus, is in the belly of the fish he is visited by a gospel choir. These veggies, acting out this *Hebrew* tale, are shaped like crosses. Chastising Jonah they, sing:

You’re feeling pretty blue, you didn’t do what God requested o/Yea I’d be bobbin too if I was going to be digested./This ain’t a pretty picture no, I said it ain’t a pretty sight./You ran from God this morning, and you’re whale chum tonight./But hold up, hang on, not so fast/You see God’s a God of mercy, God’s a God of love, he’s going to help you *from above*./Praise the lord he’s a God of second chances, you’ll be floored by how his love your life enhances. You can be restored from your darkest circumstances. Our God is a God of second chances. (Emphasis added)³⁰⁷

Similarly, another musical number goes: “Jonah was a prophet, ooo ooo, but he never really got it, sad but true, if you watch it you can spot it, doodilydoo, he did not get the point.”³⁰⁸ These two songs resonate with a body of Christian interpretation that reads Jonah as a foolish Hebrew stuck in a theology of vengeance. Jonah refuses to go to Nineveh because he thinks the Ninevites deserve God’s wrath.

³⁰⁶ Halberstam, *Queer Art*, 119.

³⁰⁷ *Jonah: A VeggieTales Movie*. DVD, Directed by Mike Nawrocki and Phil Vischer. USA: Big Idea Productions, 2002.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

Yet, reading the Book of Jonah through the position of the affect alien this prophetic foolishness can perhaps be read as a lament against theological sentimentality, obedience, and closure. According to Justin Ryu Chesung we can read Jonah as a postcolonial subject. Israel was invaded and destroyed by the Ninevites in 722 BCE, and Nineveh (the Assyrian capital) was considered the “‘City of bloodshed, utterly deceitful, full of booty-no end to the plunder!’ (Nahum 3:1).”³⁰⁹ Certain scholars refuse a reading of the Ninevites as representative of gentiles in general, preferring instead an interpretation of Nineveh as referring specifically to the Assyrians who conquered and oppressed the Hebrews. According to Yvonne Sherwood: “...reading Nineveh not as the exemplary ‘gentiles’...but as ‘the Assyrians’...The book can no longer be resolved into a simple morality play based around a triangulation of Jew, God, and gentile, but becomes a tortuous labyrinth of argument and counter argument.”³¹⁰ If we follow this reading the lessons of the text become more complicated. If Jonah was asked to save those who were slaughtering his people, then perhaps Jonah’s anger is more justified than a mainstream Christian reading of Jonah as vengeful can contain.

Further, while some have located the time of the book’s writing to come at a moment when the Hebrews were in power, Sherwood points to counter interpretations that place the writing of Jonah as right after or right before the atrocities committed

³⁰⁹ Justin Ryu Chesung. "Silence as Resistance: a postcolonial reading of the silence of Jonah in Jonah 4.1-11," in *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 34.2 (2009): 195-218, 202.

³¹⁰ Yvonne Sherwood, *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 126.

against the Hebrews at the hands of the Assyrians.³¹¹ For instance, Medieval commentator Mahari Kara interpreted the ‘wickedness’ assigned the Ninevites in the text to be about the pending wickedness Ninevites were about to commit.³¹² And Chesung reads the historical audience of Jonah as the Hebrews colonized by the Assyrians, and so views the author of Jonah as giving voice to this historical position.³¹³ These interpretations open up the possibilities for how we interpret Jonah’s anger.

We might find in his “negative” affect a demand for protection and justice, or at the very least a plea to not be the one to save the people about to slaughter or already slaughtering his people, particularly if God does not need Jonah in order to perform divine acts of mercy. This reading might be supported by Jonah’s own words when he says in 4:2, ““O Lord! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for *I knew* that you are a *gracious God* and *merciful*, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing”” (emphasis added). If we are to take Jonah at his word, an issue to be further addressed below, then Jonah-- despite interpretations like that in *The VeggieTales* and those of what Sherwood calls the mainstream --believes in God’s mercy. What Jonah may reject is the necessity of it being Jonah’s task, as a member of the colonized, to save his current or soon to be oppressors. It should be noted that others have read Jonah as

³¹¹ Sherwood, *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives*, 125.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 126.

³¹³ Chesung, “Silence as Resistance,” 197.

representative of the powerful and the Ninevites as the postcolonial subjects.³¹⁴ Yet, following the possible timelines suggested by Sherwood and Chesung this reading can perhaps be read as anachronistic, overlaying the current subjugation of non-Jews, and particularly Arabs in the “Holy Land” onto the Jonah text. Even if we find Jonah to be closer to the seat of power, Jonah’s anger toward God and the ambivalent ending of the text beg for a different kind of hearing. To let Jonah’s affect wander, following it where it *wills*, opens us to a multiplicity of peril and promise that cannot be contained by making Jonah, God, or the Ninevites easy victims or heroes.

To follow Jonah’s affect where it will is to follow the underside readings Sherwood offers.³¹⁵ Following Sherwood, I attempt a reexamination of this text as a method of listening for the ghosts that haunt and so counter a history of Christian interpretation that while saving the Hebrew God from being characterized as vengeful, has at times slipped (unwilling or unacknowledged) into the grounds of anti-Semitism.

To resist an oversimplification of Jonah’s character, we need not negate the importance of God’s mercy. Rather, in allowing Jonah his full due, we call for a dynamic narrative of faith, one that sees in each promise: peril, and in each peril: promise. Further, to attend to the underside stories that haunt the mainstream readings of Jonah is to impede the ability to co-opt the “moral of the story” into something easy to digest. To allow Jonah his due is to problematize theologies that turn even mercy into a biopolitical tool in an economy of exchange. In following Jonah’s affect to unexpected places, places

³¹⁴ Jione Havea, “First People, Minority Reading: Reading Jonah, From Oceania,” in *The One Who Reads May Run: Essays in Honour of Edgar W. Conrad* ed. Roland Boer, Michael Carden, and Julie Kelso (New York: T&T Clark, 2012).

³¹⁵ An underside reading is a reading that looks to surface that which has been repressed, erased, and eclipsed by mainstream readings.

that question God's own affect (even that of mercy), we can resist our own inclusion as part of the faithful, when Jonah's effacement is the ransom paid for such inclusion.

One such alternate narrative, one I hope attempts to hear Jonah's complexity better, is the postcolonial reading of Jonah begun by Chesung and acknowledged by Sherwood. Through these readings we might entangle Jonah with other postcolonial subjects and affect aliens, or what Halberstam has named 'shadow feminists' and 'queer failures'. For instance, Jonah's various acts of refusal might resonate with those of the character Xuela in Jamaica Kincaid's *Autobiography of My Mother* detailed by Halberstam. According to Halberstam, Xuela refuses her role as colonized by refusing to be anything at all.³¹⁶ This is an enactment of shadow feminism, which refuses the identity categories on offer by a society that has limited one's choices.³¹⁷ Perhaps in running away from God's command to warn Nineveh, Jonah similarly inhabits such shadowy terrain. In fleeing he refuses to be Nineveh's savior or condemner. Perhaps this act of refusal is the request for prophetic roles besides those on offer.

Further, in his refusals Jonah may allow for the dynamic of argument/counterargument suggested by Sherwood to *happen*; he inhabits a postcolonial position that refuses to acquiesce to a project that may have eclipsed the justice owed to those colonized. In this way Jonah's infidelity might better attend to a God of the perhaps, one responsible to the 'hap' allowed for by the wretched and the affect alien. The opening to a different hearing and reading from a postcolonial underside continues to have consequences for a theology that attends to the madness of what might happen,

³¹⁶ Halberstam, *Queer Art of Failure*, 132.

³¹⁷ Halberstam, *Queer Art of Failure*, 135.

particularly from within the last lines of the book, the part of the story most prominently used to portray Jonah's "foolish" and "vengeful" nature.

Let us attempt such a hearing: the hearing of the voice of Jonah from the underside of mainstream interpretation. At the end of the book after God has spared Nineveh Jonah is not pleased. He tells God he knew God would spare them and that this is why he fled. According to Jonah, his anger is not about the actual result of Nineveh's salvation, but rather the process of salvation. Perhaps it seems to Jonah that God would have spared his oppressors, whose repentance appears at best too easy and at worst inauthentic, all along. In 3:5-9 immediately after Jonah has proclaimed to Nineveh that they have 40 days to repent or they will be overthrown the narrator tells us that:

And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: 'By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. *Who knows?* God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish' (emphasis added). (NRSV)

God, through Jonah, has given Nineveh 40 days, and yet almost immediately, without time for discussion and reflection, the Ninevites repent going as far as to throw sackcloth over the animals. The extremity of this repentance can be read as a farcical swing of the pendulum—the city going from one of 'bloodshed, utterly deceitful, full of booty-no end to the plunder!' to one of immediate and complete repentance. We might interrogate not only the sincerity of repentance given the extremity of the response, but also whether it was widespread and lasting.

For instance, the king of Nineveh says, “Who knows? God *may* relent,” (3:9) which could imply that his performance of repentance is an act of hedging bets. He does not claim certain belief in God’s conviction and power, but rather affirms the threat of destruction and so takes action just in case. Indeed, as pointed to by Gerald O’Collins (albeit as a way to take the side of the Ninevites), “But in a *sudden* and total conversion, the *whole* people and the king of Nineveh ‘believed God’” (emphasis added).³¹⁸ Is it unreasonable to assume that this suddenness was suspect to Jonah? Further, might we question the verity that a *whole* people would come to a stance of repentance immediately? While a theology of the per-haps, a mad attending to what might happen, may not reject such a hedging (a God that *may* be and so one who *may* save) nor be in search of a complete repentance, we can find in this melodramatic tone and questionable sincerity a resistance to any clean-cut reading of the moral nature of the characters in the Jonah tale.

Additionally, we have no previous narrative of Jonah as hostile towards the gentiles. Those who are innocent do not get his wrath. In chapter 1 God sends a storm that threatens not only Jonah’s life, but also the sailors with whom Jonah was fleeing. When it becomes clear that it is Jonah who is to blame, Jonah tells them to, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea then the sea will quiet down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you” (1:12). Jonah here is willing to sacrifice himself in favor of saving the whole ship. Might we not then assume that something different is going on with his reaction to the salvation of the Ninevites? Additionally, while Daniel C. Timmer, citing Jonah’s melodramatic tone, questions the sincerity of

³¹⁸ Gerald O’Collins, SJ, *Salvation for All: God’s Other Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 38.

Jonah's statement in 4:2 about how he knew all along that God was a gracious God, slow to anger, he does not allow for the same possibility in terms of the sincerity of Nineveh (an issue discussed further below).³¹⁹ Hence, might Jonah's anger be heard as a response to what I'm calling, the cheap repentance of Nineveh and the risk of a too cheap acceptance of such repentance on the part of a safe God, as much if not more so than as a rejection of Nineveh's ultimate salvation?

Or perhaps, Jonah's anger arises not only from skepticism over Nineveh's sincerity but further out of trauma from the divine ordeal endured in the process of being coerced into prophetic action. God threatened Jonah's life with a storm and the belly of a beast, and then made Jonah responsible for the lives of those who had been slaughtering or would slaughter his people. Might the affects of such a trauma be those that bubble up in the dialogue between Jonah and God at the end of chapter 4?

'And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.' And the LORD said, 'Is it right for you to be angry?' Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city. The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.' But God said to Jonah, 'Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?' And he said, 'Yes, angry enough to die.' Then the LORD said, 'You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?'³²⁰

³¹⁹ Daniel C. Timmer, *A Gracious and Compassionate God: Mission, Salvation and Spirituality in the Book of Jonah* (Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2011) 101.

³²⁰ Jonah 4:3-11 (NRSV)

By refusing to be happy about being coerced back into the role of prophet (and to be comforted after God has granted him shade from the desert wind, only to cruelly take the shade away, exposing Jonah once more to the sweltering heat) Jonah is once again refusing to become what God has demanded. Jonah's repeated proclamation that it is right for him to be angry and angry enough to die can be read as an act of masochistic refusal. Jonah does not seek easy remedy (like the cheap repentance of Nineveh) for his anger or his discomfort at having been left un-shaded in the desert sun. Rather, Jonah persists in his posture of refusal and so resists through his inaction and his affect.

This affect, as noted briefly above, can be read similarly to the excessive, and so comical, repentance of the king of Nineveh, and yet this does not dampen its prophetic character. We can affirm Jonah's melodrama, particularly since we have affirmed that of the Ninevites. Indeed the parallel between the excessiveness of the two reactions, those of the king of Nineveh and of Jonah, perhaps strengthens the prophetic importance of Jonah's anger and depression. If the Ninevites repent so quickly, in a manner that may seem insincere, then even if Jonah's anger is itself an inflated performance, it is one that refuses to give this story's God too simple of an ending--a cheap (easy) acceptance of His command.

Jonah of course has already not made things easy for God, nor has God for Jonah—each killing the other's joy--but this moment, coming in the story's final lines leaves a particularly lasting impression. To be sure, the impression left might be one in which we see non-Israelites understanding God better than this Hebrew Prophet (“Jonah was a prophet but he never really got it, doodilydoo”), a message that has been read as a pre-Christian acceptance of a merciful God (perhaps an important message for those

hoping to contest a supersessionist reading of the Hebrew God as one of vengeance and particularism). Yet, there is another way to interpret this exchange. That the book ends not on the turning of his heart, but rather in a question, may mean that Jonah's challenging of God (his infidelity) is his greatest act of faith. Like Martha who we will see below is dutiful, but with disdain, Jonah once coerced back into his prophetic duties complies, but with complaint. As Ahmed reminds us, sometimes being unhappily willing is its own kind of resistant willfulness.³²¹ Both of the biblical figures followed in this chapter found moody ways to keep their wills crooked in the face of the straightening rod of mainstream interpretation. Jonah will do God's bidding, but he need not be happy about it, his affect, perhaps all the resistance he has left, will not be swayed. And so even in the face of his God, and even in *silence*, Jonah may be refusing to go unheard.

The narrative complication brought when we follow Jonah's mood remains even if we read Jonah's affect as other than righteous anger. For instance, Michael Snediker, drawing on Eve Sedgwick's reading of shame in the writings of Henry James, offers us the possibility of a different account of Jonah's desire to die. Imagine a teenager embarrassed by a parent or nervous in front of a crush in such a situation:

I could just die! More often than not a performative of shame rather than a literal threat (shame, after all, is as Sedgwick suggests, the performative affect par excellence), this articulation of shame nonetheless speaks to the ways shame, as an affect, erupts not just in the space between one version of self and another (as in James), but also in the space where one *wants* another self, and more acutely, wants to give up the self one *has*.³²²

³²¹ Sara Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 140.

³²² Michael Snediker, *Queer Optimism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 18.

Perhaps Jonah is ashamed. Perhaps he wishes he were someone else, either someone more merciful, or someone who had not saved Nineveh. Perhaps, the self that has come out of the fish and gone into Nineveh looks back on the self that fled with shame. In its performativity shame “inhibits not only enjoyment, but continuity.”³²³ Shame disrupts the continuity of an unquestioned self, and so the enjoyment of a safe self. Perhaps it is from this sense of a discontinuous self, one arising over the course of his journey, from where Jonah’s joy is killed. Perhaps it is not God, but Jonah’s own shame at his shifting position in relation to God that has got him so heated.

For Sedgwick, Snediker reminds us, “Shame... ‘generates and legitimates the place of identity ... but does so without giving that identity space the standing of an essence’ (64). While identities are not to be essentialized, however, Sedgwick claims that ‘at least for certain (‘queer’) people, shame is simply the first, and remains a permanent, structuring fact of identity’ (64).”³²⁴ While Snediker embraces Sedgwick’s understanding of shame as a disruption to continuity and accedes to its place as a queer affect, he rejects shame as *the* queer affect par excellence and uncovers where positive affects like joy actually precede shame. And yet it is the disruption of joy that shame may bring and shame’s queering of a sense of self that become important for our current reading of Jonah. Even if we decide Jonah’s anger comes more from shame than from a righteous adherence to justice (or better if we remain ambivalent about just what affects Jonah is performing) it is in the disruption of the continuity of Jonah’s self in relation to God, that we might still find in Jonah’s affect a prophetic haunting of accepted histories.

³²³ Snediker, *Queer Optimism*, 18-19.

³²⁴ Snediker, *Queer Optimism*, 19.

In finding a queer sense of shame in Jonah's anger we might see that not only does shame act pedagogically on Jonah, but also on God and reader. To feel Jonah's shame with Jonah is to ask what need he be ashamed of? What are the systems of subjectivization on offer that have constructed his actions and his characterization in the story as shameful? Is there shame in being afraid? In being disobedient? In anger? In vengeance? Is it shameful to desire shade for which he did not labor? Perhaps, Jonah's shame is pedagogical toward God, asking God to be ashamed. What parent doesn't feel the force of the child's melodramatic wish for death at the moment of embarrassment? Even if one finds the other's shame ridiculous, the embarrassing action that has brought on such shame is still surfaced. Shame, like all affects, cannot be easily parsed—its pedagogical lessons are not clear-cut. It is both promise and peril. Indeed, the discontinuities of self illuminated by Jonah's potential shame may actually be like the postcolonial rejection of the choices of self on offer—condemner or savior—in which while the joy of the one shamed (Jonah) may be disrupted, so too might his affect disrupt any uncomplicated and continuous theological shaming committed against him. At the end of the story we do not get Jonah's final decision on whether it is right for him to be angry. We are left with God's questioning of Jonah's rage. To be left with a question and no clear answer might be an affecting request that the reader sit with the force of Jonah's mood and the divine question it provokes. The question of mood and not its coherence might be most instructive.

The question of the question that ends the book of Jonah can fortify the importance of affect theory for biblical interpretation. To be sure, we might assume that Jonah's silence at God's final question is a sign that Jonah has lost the argument, leaving

readers of the text with a clear moral lesson about Jonah's failing and God's just mercy. For instance, Albert Kamp argues that Jonah's silence at the end of the book, and the abruptness with which the book ends, allows for God's perspective to hang most heavy in the air; God has, literally, the last word.³²⁵ And yet there is more to be found in Jonah's silence and silencing. Silence need not be read as acquiescence, it might be exasperation; Jonah's heart has not necessarily turned toward God. *Perhaps*, Jonah has become exhausted with a God whom he feels doesn't get it. Jonah's silence may be another moment of the mad being *unwilling* to let (it) go. Additionally, Sherwood (whom I quote at length as her reading exemplifies and inspired the counter reading of Jonah I attempt here) argues that the interpretations of silence as acquiescence do not represent Jonah's intent as much as the wishes of Jonah's interpreters:

A good pupil-prophet is evidently seen and not heard. When Jonah speaks uninvited the post of teacher-critics instantly tell him to sit down and shut up: his protest in 4-2 is dismissed as a 'lame excuse' for disobedience or as an irreverent 'attempt to limit the scope and intention of God's word'. The hushed atmosphere of the classroom promotes quietism in the most literal sense. And as Jonah's speech is converted to silence, so his silence, ironically, is interpreted as speech...the space at the end of the text (where Jonah, for his own reasons, does not answer God's rhetorical question) is interpreted as either a moment where Jonah bows the knee and acknowledges his error, *or* a moment where the reader and Jonah's education come to a climax in an exam. 'The reader has to carry away the question, think about it, and decide rightly', Wolff declares.³²⁶

Indeed, why assume that Jonah now affirms God's argument? His affect and actions have perhaps shown otherwise.

When Jonah does *feel* like repenting or has had his heart turned (even if out of fear from being swallowed by a giant fish, or gratitude for having been saved by such

³²⁵ Albert H. Kamp, *Inner Worlds: A Cognitive Linguistic Approach to the Book of Jonah* (Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), 147.

³²⁶ Sherwood, *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives*, 63.

swallowing), he does so. In chapter 2 he prays a prayer of repentance to God saying: “But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Deliverance belongs to the LORD!” (2:9-10). If the narration can include this kind of prayer, why would it not appear once again, Jonah repeating, and so emphasizing, his fidelity to God in the final moments of the book? Rather, than a prayer of repentance, what gets repeated is one of affect alien lament: “angry enough to die”, “yes angry enough to die.” Jonah’s litany takes on a mix of rage and despair, a kind of bipolarity in which Jonah’s depressive exhaustion becomes manic melodramatic rage. To refuse to be happy with God, to leave the space open for his unhappiness, but also for myriad emotional reactions in the reader, Jonah has gifted us the possibility to leave a happy-ending theology for a living one, for God’s life with us to contain a promise that may or may not be fulfilled—a promise for justice, for mercy, for a different kind of faith.

Having been left uncertain of Jonah’s faith and fate, *and* of God’s justice and mercy, we are unsettled. And hence, interpreters may be projecting their own theological desires onto Jonah’s silence (a risk of which I myself may not yet be free). The pedagogy of the text, according to these readers teaches us that silence is paramount in the face of God, that obedience to God, the bowing of the knee is the final moral of the book. Yet the actual dialogical and affectual structure resists such a clear and clean ‘happy’ ending. For instance, even while arguing that the story ends more squarely on God’s side, T.A. Perry notes that, “The narrator also carefully records Jonah’s point of view. And it is especially this latter voice that, in a more sympathetic mode, we must try to recover.”³²⁷ The dialogical nature of this text allows, if not for total recovery, then at least for a kind of

³²⁷ T.A. Perry, *The Honeymoon is Over: Jonah’s Argument with God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), xxv.

prophetic haunting. This is a haunting that would not assume we knew why Jonah was so heated, but rather would see what might happen if we took up in hot pursuit of his anger or shame. For, it is in attending to the wretch, he who will not be happy with a reading of God as one of peace and quiet, that things might happen.

Further, it remains uncertain whether God win's Jonah's heart, even if in the eyes of most readers God wins the argument. An underside reading affirms the lastingness of Jonah's anger and/or shame. His material situation has not changed, there is no sign that the Ninevites' repentance was indeed sincere, there is no comfort from God. Hence, Jonah's affect alienation may indeed persist. In the end, Jonah is silent but not quieted, and so the reader *and* God need not be either.

The biblical Jonah does not have a happy ending. In contrast, The VeggieTales narrative is one in search of a clear moral lesson. Reflective of Sherwood's resistance to interpretations that view Jonah as a silent pupil-prophet we might, along with Halberstam, again find Kincaid instructive: "I think in many ways the problem that my writing would have with an American reviewer is that Americans find difficulty very hard to take. They are inevitably looking for a happy ending. Perversely, I will not give the happy ending. I think life is difficult and that's that."³²⁸ The happy ending provided by The VeggieTales is not a happy ending for Jonah, but one that hopes to make us feel uncomplicatedly good and certain about God. It is one that offers us a God of peace and quiet and not one of the hap, of potentiality. Scapegoating Jonah, we are able to say, you with your foolishness and anger, it is your kind of attitude we have overcome. Hence, to

³²⁸ Halberstam, *Queer Art of Failure*, 137.

refuse to empathize with Jonah's anger may be to theologially empathize with the mainstream, and so with the victors.

In a theo-ethical reading of Jonah, Miguel de la Torre writes that Jonah has failed to understand God's message of mercy and chooses retributive justice instead of reconciliation.³²⁹ Yet the request that the oppressed not make waves, that they find 'peaceable,' 'positive,' or 'productive' modes and moods of dealing with their oppression allows the very structures that demand such reconciliation to go unquestioned. An affect alien Jonah refuses this type of liberal politics. He queerly fails, a la Halberstam, at a theological game, but in failing he reveals that this game was one he could never win.

Several Jewish readings also challenge this happy-ending version of Jonah. According to Sherwood Jewish interpreters tended and tend to read toward insecurity and questioning.³³⁰ For instance, Rabbi Eliezer's reading, "seems to empathize with, and in fact actively encourage protest against the deity and to work on the basis that, as Elie Wiesel puts it, 'The Jew may oppose God as long as it is in defense of God's creation.'"³³¹ Jonah indeed while remaining angry in the face of God, never expresses unfaith in God. Hence, might Jonah be angry over the part of God's creation that may be destroyed by the Ninevites if their repentance is indeed insincere? This question does not deny the value of repentance writ large, but rather (instead of quickly marking Jonah as vengeful) attends to how Jonah might have felt and to what prophetic role that feeling might have.

³²⁹ Miguel De la Torre, *Liberating Jonah: Forming an Ethics of Reconciliation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2007) 1.

³³⁰ Sherwood, *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives*, 184.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 122.

Sherwood argues that while Jewish readings have historically embraced this kind of questioning, a questioning that leaves all involved (God, prophet, and reader) uneasy, “The mainstream gratifies the reader, comforts and reassures her, places her above the vacillations of the text. The role of the book is not to teach, to surprise, or even less to dislocate us; the view of life is sanguine: God is on our side, the plot flows in our interests, it vindicates our position, and God throughout, is demonstrating his love for us, his Ninevites.”³³² Here again we can call to mind *The VeggieTales*’ need for moral closure versus Kincaid’s refusal to give her reader a happy ending. In siding with Kincaid via Halberstam we can refuse the comfort on offer to us by *The VeggieTales* and other mainstream readings that sacrifice Jonah for our vindication. We can choose instead to make the bad investment of sticking with Jonah in all his moody tension.

Indeed, in attending more closely to the tension between Jewish and mainstream readings of Jonah, as described by Sherwood, we can locate another postcolonial mood in Jonah. Regardless of the dating of the book, that Christian readings of the text have become the mainstream crowding out the Jewish tradition of questioning and protest, has also meant that too often Jonah’s foolishness and vengefulness have served as shorthand for Jonah’s Jewishness. From Sherwood again:

Like all monstrous aberrations, Jonah is too hot and too cold: the excess is important, not the temperature. Thus he is situated at the heart of the anti-Jewish rhetoric in which ‘Jews are too smart and innately incapable of genius...over-intellectual but over-emotional, hyper-rational but superstitious’...The spectre of one who is at once too hot and too cold explodes the very binary system on which his existence depends.³³³

³³² Sherwood, *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives*, 185.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 74.

Jonah as a Jew, in this way, is already an affect alien. He is overly upset about his own life, but not upset enough about those of the Ninevites. He is foolish enough to think he can run and hide from God, but cunning enough to try and convince God he believed in God's mercy all along. He is melodramatically overheated (manic) when left in the sun and coolly detached (depressed) from the lives of the Ninevites who "do not know their right hands from their left" (Jonah 4:11). Jonah the Jew is already too bipolar, already too monstrously affected. Whether he would like to be or not he has already been affectual alienated from the mainstream. What remains to be recognized within this bipolarity is a prophetic voice, a faithful refusal to get his disordered emotions in check and his moral lessons in order. Such refusals become prophetic when they re-focus us on those whose complexity of life we have erased for our own "moral" formations of community and self. While not giving a clear alternate vision, I consider Jonah's anger prophetic because it troubles the stability of narratives and so asks for other options.

Read through Halberstam's "queer failure", Ahmed's "affect alienation", and Caputo's "theology of perhaps", in the book's final question we can find a refusal to choose clear sides—fidelity or infidelity, obedience or disobedience, moral or immoral, and as such a way of keeping the promise of God's mercy *and* justice, promises which may or may not be fulfilled, alive. Hence, asking if it is right for Jonah to be angry can also lead us to ask if it is right for God to be so. Even if we are to side more closely with Jonah, finding in Jonah the site of the oppressed and not the oppressor (queer failure and not cheap success), his refusal to be either the happy servant or the unbelieving sinner, can shake any stable sense of what faith in God might mean. In other words, in his shamefully discontinuous self he opens alternate flows through the story that the

mainstream had sought to dam/n up. In rejecting the mainstream premise of faith Jonah opens us to the fracturing of the term, but also to the fecundity found in asking for other options. It is in finding power not in a successful political or theological program, but rather in failing to get (with) it and refusing to be comforted where Jonah becomes an affect alien prophet pushing our material theology to be ever-more fleshy and ever more radical.

What May/be of Martha

We might rediscover another fleshy happening and explore what *could happen* if we were to allow the characters of biblical events to continue to happen in new and unexpected ways is in the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42. Jonah, himself haunts Luke's gospel. Our affect alien prophet, redeemed as the symbol of the importance of repentance is a warning about condemnation in Luke: "When the crowds were increasing, he began to say 'This generation is an evil generation; it asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. For Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be to this generation...The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here!'" (Luke 11:29-33). Jonah has given way to something better; the Son of Man has arrived to turn even more hearts, to save even more sinners. Jonah's presence in Luke not only serves as a tie between our two affect alien prophets, but it also keeps the question of condemnation at the fore of this analysis. Just as we slowed down to attend to the complexity of Jonah's affect, what might happen if we were to attend not to the hero of the Lukan tale (the Son of Man), but to one who seems to go, if not condemned, denigrated for not following the

right signs? What might *happen* if we read Martha as one of the wretched, as an infidel (a reading Caputo has already begun for us), and as an affect alien prophet?

Martha's affect alien lament can be read as that prayer invoked by the insistence that nothing, not even Jesus, be safe. In her quotidian refusal to ignore the material necessities of the world and to refuse to be quieted in a structure of hospitality that may have placed her into obedience to an itinerant Jesus movement she makes the hap happen. She reorients our assumptions about the outcomes of fidelity and happiness. It is not obedience to a safe God, but rather madness for the world—for the present needs of daily life and for her own present condition, which Martha's response to Jesus invokes.

Of course, only a "safe" God and world can be placed into such a competitive relationship. Hence, it is not a God divorced from interpretation that this reading of Martha seeks to undo, but rather the God constructed from the follies of both traditional interpretations that position Martha and Mary into binary opposition (the material vs. the spiritual), and contemporary readings that while embracing or rescuing Martha from her denigrated position eclipse her mood. In other words, my reading of Martha's madness for *and* moodiness about the world might illuminate how she shows her fidelity to a God of the world, and so a God willing to be made, unmade, and remade by the world, a God that brings less condemnation and more constructive contestation (a God to whom we return in the following chapter). Or as Caputo might put it, "to be faithful to the soul is to be faithful to the ground of God."³³⁴ Indeed, taking Caputo a step further, we might say Martha's soulfulness is reflected in *her dissatisfaction* with both Mary and Jesus. In her *unhappiness*, Martha may be responding to the event of Jesus' arrival. Attending to

³³⁴ Caputo, *Insistence of God*, 48.

Martha's alienating and alienated laments teaches us to resist the dichotomy between faith and unfaith, between comfort and conflict, between the spiritual and the material; it risks giving up happiness with God in order for God to live.

While traditional interpretations often placed the sisters Mary and Martha who welcome Jesus into their home in the Gospel of Luke as diametrically opposed—Mary the representative of the contemplative (and better)³³⁵ life, and Martha the embodiment of preoccupation with the matters of the world—contemporary scholarship has taken a much broader and complex approach. To be sure, many interpreters, following a pattern already established in the ancient and medieval church, have read Mary and Martha in this dualistic way placing Mary on the side of spiritualism and Martha (disparagingly so) on that of materialism and to do so have emphasized Jesus' assertion that Mary has chosen the "better part" (Lk 10:42). Additionally, early feminist interpreters read the verse as Jesus' encouragement for the breaking-open of gender roles, arguing that he urges Martha out of the kitchen and toward the role of spiritual disciple.³³⁶ Yet, along

³³⁵ Interpreters get this assignation of "better" to Mary's role from Luke 10.42, which follows Martha's complaint that Mary will not help her with the work of the household, but rather chooses to sit silently at Jesus' feet: "...there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her." (NRSV) As Kathleen E. Corley has pointed out "Many consider this to be a story about discipleship or the elevation of devotion to the word of God over other worldly concerns—even ministry" (Kathleen E. Corley, *Private Women Public Meals: Social Conflict in the Synoptic Tradition* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993], 135. See also: Adams, *The Hidden Disciples*, 108; Schüssler Fiorenza *In Memory of Her*, 330-333; Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, 103.

³³⁶ Many interpreters concerned with feminist issues suggest that here Luke's positive concern for women as members of the Christian community can be discerned. Mary, seated as a disciple at the feet of Jesus the teacher, embodies the new, unique image of a woman who is allowed to learn from Jesus as a rabbinical student, a role denied to women within Judaism. [Adams, *The Hidden Disciples*; 104; D'Angelo, "Images of Jesus," 204; Ellis, *Luke*, 160-1; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 2.892-93; Robert J. Karris, *Luke: Artist*

with more recent readings of Martha, including that of Loveday Alexander and Caputo, we can request of this Gospel event even more complexity, allowing Martha her due.

I will read Martha's story through: Loveday Alexander who attempts to "rescue" Martha through a reengagement with the text; an inter-textual look at the discipleship in Luke; Caputo, who views Martha as the representative figure of a material theology, a figure whom through a perceived infidelity actually shows a greater commitment to the carnality of God;³³⁷ and Ann Cvetkovich's discussion of the everydayness of depression. Reading with this constellation of texts we might hear Martha's worry and anger as the prayers of an affect alien prophet, one who leaves open the potency of the hap of a material theology attentive to the mattering of our mood.

The Double Bind of Female Discipleship in Luke-Acts

An inter-textual reading of the Mary and Martha story from within the larger theological discussion of discipleship within Luke-Acts helps to support an alternate affect theory reading of Martha's complaint to Jesus: "'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself?'" (Lk. 10:40). Read through a feminist affect theory lens this complaint may become not only justifiable, but also prophetic and pedagogical. In order to flesh out some possible grounds for Martha's justified frustration an exegesis of the consequences for women in terms of Luke's understanding of discipleship will be helpful. Particularly helpful is an investigation into verses 14:25-33, a

and Theologian. Luke's Passion Account as Literature, 135. While other feminist interpreters have rejected such a reading, complicating Luke's treatment of women (Schaberg, 1992; Seim, 2004; Schüssler-Fiorenza 1983; Alexander 2002), even they have not fully engaged Martha's affect in as forceful a way as I argue here; and so have missed even more radical feminist potential within the character and her role in the Gospel story.

³³⁷ Caputo, *Insistence of God*, 65 and 248.

direct statement in Luke-Acts on the cost of discipleship, and so one might say, criteria for “the better part” of faith granted to Mary by Jesus:

Now large crowds were traveling with him; and he turned and said to them, “Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.
(NRSV)

Reading the above verses in conjunction with further elaboration of discipleship in Luke-Acts reveals issues of gendered alienation. As will be explored further below, one might find issues of alienation in terms of the role of women in the balance sheet of discipleship. In the Martha and Mary pericope the Greek reads, “But Martha was distracted with much serving [*diakonian*]” (10:40). Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in *In Memory of Her* famously and influentially argued that *diakonia* here is a lightly coded reference to Christian service or ministry, and that Luke is engaged in a critique of women who took on active roles in the early Christian movement. Mary, who adopts a more passive, “properly subservient” role, is elevated over Martha.³³⁸ This raises the question of who exactly was free or encouraged by the gospel writer to abandon kin in order to follow Jesus. What does it mean that Luke’s gospel includes the hating of wives?

³³⁸ Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: a Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983).

What might this mean for those women who try to follow and those that are abandoned?
Who served as ransom for the cost of discipleship?

Most importantly for our reading of Martha and Mary, while discipleship is available to some, it seems to be primarily for those unattached to households. According to Francois Bovon, since Luke describes Martha as the one who welcomes Jesus into her (singular) home we can conclude that Martha was the household manager (Lk.10:38).³³⁹ Further, he notes that the inclusion of what he names as the “event with unforeseeable consequences”, initiated by the welcoming of a guest into one’s home is representative of a critical concern in the early Christian community, that of providing hospitality to itinerant missionaries.³⁴⁰ The requirements of faith necessary of those that join such itinerant missions--the injunction to “hate” family in Lk 14:26 and to give up all of one’s possessions in Lk 14:33--carry implicit requirements for both those left behind (the hated) and those on whom the disciples would have to rely for sustenance after having eschewed their own familial and material supports to follow Jesus. In Luke, in particular, that “wife” is one of the things that must be hated and left behind helps to place Christian women into two categories: first, those that had or felt they could take the freedom to follow Jesus, abandoning home and family, and second, those without or unwilling to practice this freedom, those who while being a necessary part of the Jesus movement in their acts of hospitality, risked being considered to be taking part in the good, but not the better.

³³⁹ Francois Bovon, *Luke 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51-19:27* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 70.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

While it seems that neither Martha nor Mary were tied to the household because of husbands or children, Martha as the head of the household may have felt unable to abandon the work of hospitality on which Jesus in visiting her home would necessarily rely. We might go as far as to say that Mary had the freedom to take “the better part” because Martha took on the work of answering the event initiated by a guest coming to the door. Or as Augustine argued, Martha and Mary were utterly connected and consequent to one another: “[Martha] is disturbed [with feeding], so that [Mary] may [simply] feast; this one orders many things, so the other may [simply] behold one.”³⁴¹ The duties of Martha’s hospitality allows for Mary’s freedom to follow.

Loveday Alexander finds a similar double bind in the story of Martha and Mary. Her reading, which attempts to “rescue” Martha by honoring both the integrity of the text and that of her feminist concern, unearths issues within a dualistic reading of Martha and Mary that vindicates Mary by rebuking Martha. In such a dualistic reading, “Mary’s elevation is only achieved at the expense of Martha’s humiliation. Mary crosses the cultural boundary between female and male domains, and is praised for it, but what does this do for her sister?”³⁴² The making of Martha as an exception for the inclusion of Mary as the better disciple (perhaps Mary’s “look I overcame gender” narrative) persists as long as Martha, while doing what was necessary did not do what was better. And yet Martha’s service is needed to support the itinerant Jesus movement. As such, “Told in this [dualistic] way, the story encapsulates an all-too-familiar double-think, whereby a

³⁴¹ Blake R. Heffner, “Meister Eckhart and a Millennium with Mary and Martha,” in *Lutheran Quarterly* vol. 5 (1991), 174.

³⁴² Loveday C. Alexander, “Sisters in Adversity: Retelling Martha’s Story,” in *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine (London and New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 198-199.

dominant social group simultaneously assigns certain necessary but unpopular tasks to helot class and denigrates their importance.”³⁴³ Alexander recognizes such denigration when male preachers, siding with Mary, chastise their congregants for making too much fuss over work in the world (“women’s work” perhaps in particular); these same preachers then expect the table to be set and dinner to be ready when they get home. We might further see such denigration today when during labor struggles, like the fight to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour (the fight for 15), opponents ask whether fast-food workers (and other immaterial service laborers, who are often women of color and recent immigrants [documented and not]) should really be making more than paramedics. We rely on those providing necessary service (servant leaders perhaps)—sanitation workers, janitors, those that prepare and deliver food—while denigrating them. We deem them to have the worse part (and so assume they deserve worse pay, which means they possess less value under Market Fundamentalism). Thanks to their service, we “professionals” (often also paid poorly) have more freedom to choose “the better”. Allegorically speaking, we might say that the structure of discipleship in Luke, and under neoliberal economics today, remains unquestioned.

This is a structure of duty and freedom that is mirrored in Luke’s larger concept of discipleship. Indeed, the Lukan Jesus assumes this sort of hospitality when in 10:8-12 he says:

Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come

³⁴³ Alexander, “Sisters in Adversity,” 199.

near.' I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town. (NRSV)

Here, the promise of God's blessing is followed by the threat of God's curse. In this passage one welcomes not merely through an economy of grace, that is the kingdom of God given freely without obligation, but rather through an economy of obligation or threat: one will welcome or one will suffer worse than Sodom. Under such an economy of obligation, the women who are left behind implicitly must serve the disciples and followers who come to the town, presumably including men who have left other women similar to those who now provide the disciples with food and shelter. If they do not serve the itinerant movement they risk a fate worse than that of Sodom. If they do follow, the kingdom of God comes near to them, but this does not mean they have the "better part."

Martha, as she who can offer hospitality, must do so or risk a fate worse than Sodom, but yet she still does not get the "better part." According, to Bovon we should not read this parable as one in conflict with the demands for hospitality, but rather against Martha's excessive worry (an issue explored further below), which helped to obscure for her the one essential thing, that which Mary recognized in her act of sitting down at Jesus' feet to listen to his teachings.³⁴⁴ And yet can we truly blame Martha for carrying the worries a head of household responding to the demands of hospitality might have felt? Does granting Mary here the better understanding of the essential not still leave Martha in a sort of double bind? Greet guests with hospitality or be considered worse

³⁴⁴ "The second feature of this scene is *pollēn* ('numerous,' translated as 'many'), which Jesus contrasted with 'unique' (*enos*, translated as 'only one'). Martha did too much, with the result that her 'service' (*diakonia*), which could and should have been positive, was thereby affected negatively. Whatever criticism of Martha there might have been was not directed at either her hospitality or her desire to serve but rather at her excess activity and the worries that occasioned it." (Bovon, *Luke 2*, 71).

than Sodom, but do not worry too much over the material acts that provide for such hospitality, for then you are mistaken in your faith. This sense of the double bind placed on Martha will be key for coming to understand Martha as an affect alien prophet.³⁴⁵

In Lk. 14.25-33, the harmful action of “hating” family and abandoning home is expressed most conclusively in 14.33: “So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.” Here the “so therefore,” connects the giving up of possessions directly with the hating of family, including wife and child. This sentence structure implies that the Lukan Jesus is not simply referring to material goods that must be given up by his disciples, but in fact here “possessions” may refer directly back to one’s family.³⁴⁶ This key act of obedience might support a reading of Mary’s abandonment of the everyday business (and her sister in the process) that consumes Martha’s attention and brings about her complaint, as a better act of fidelity. Even when we come to see Martha’s acts of hospitality as a good if not better part, she still falls short of this command to abandon. She is left to carry the quotidian worries of the household alone, *and* is rebuffed for the frustration nurtured by such acts of abandonment.

On the one hand we might read in Mary an allegiance to a theology of worth that asks not what you have done for me lately, but rather finds value in a relaxed soul. And

³⁴⁵ We might see this double-bind further reflected in Luke 8:1-3. In these passages even though three women, Mary, Joanna, and Susana are named as being with Jesus along with the twelve, they are also listed as providing for the twelve, “out of their resources” (8:3). If discipleship requires the giving up of material possessions (14:33) then perhaps while these women were necessary supports for the disciples they were denied the better part of discipleship.

³⁴⁶ Here I do not seek to undermine an important source of counter-capitalist theology in the command to give up possessions and Luke’s subsequent teachings on common property in Acts 2:44-45; 4:32—5:11. Rather, I want to raise the question of for whom these demands become more or less burdensome, and to note the ways in which wife (the personal) becomes another thing to be sacrificed for the cause.

yet, the demand for acts of abandonment suggested in chapter 14, and in particular the cost-analysis tied to such a demand begs us to take a second look at just what sorts of actions and inactions are happening in that house in Bethany and in Luke's gospel in general. Who exactly can help build the tower? Who is ready for a successful charge? This sense of accounting for the *cost* of discipleship, this economy of obligation, places those unable or unwilling to be included in the count into affectual precarity. To be sure we can read Mary as recognizing such accounting and taking her freedom to follow Jesus and sit at his feet, slowing down life in ways perhaps reflective of a poetics of unproductivity advocated in the previous chapter. But just as if not more interesting is a reading of Martha's inability to stop acting (even as her unwillingness to abandon the duties of the house prevents her from the actions of discipleship demanded by the Lukan Jesus) as a lament against the double bind inherent in a hierarchical economy of discipleship. Martha's worry over the cares of the household might indeed be a reminder that even my own injunctions to slow down imply a level of freedom of choice that for many is nearly impossible. Hence, we might hear Martha's worry as a lament that questions the structures of faithful subjectivity as opposed to the individual choices of each subject.

Additionally, while Mary has perhaps come closer to reflecting the demands of discipleship laid out in chapter 14, and while we might acknowledge a reading of Mary as a theological rationale for freeing women from domestic life, the story begs for further complication. For instance, as touched on above, Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza reminds us that Mary sits silently, receptively hearing Jesus, but making no proclamations of her own. Schüssler Fiorenza argues that a reading that privileges Mary and denigrates Martha

privileges female passivity and denigrates female activity, and as such the Mary and Martha passage is best read with Acts 6, in which Mary is not presented as preaching along with the men, but instead remains silent.³⁴⁷ In concert with such concerns Alexander notes that Mary while getting out of the kitchen, is pliable to male authority. She abandons her sister for a man. She does so seemingly undisturbed. Indeed in terms of affect: ““In Peter Ketter’s phrase, [Mary] is ‘a quiet, tranquil soul’, who is dear to the heart of preaching theologians, in complete contrast to the self-confident and eloquent Martha’ ... Martha, by contrast, is independent, feisty, argumentative, busy with her own world of work and refusing to subordinate it to male demands for attention.”³⁴⁸ Martha, when read through her affect, may appear more disruptive to cultural norms than Mary.

There are multiple ways to read Mary’s silence and contentment with Jesus as feminist; we need not eschew such readings in order to read Martha as preaching or proclaiming through her complaints to Jesus both in the scene of hospitality depicted in Luke 10 and in the story of Lazarus’s death and resurrection in John 11:21. In John Martha meets Jesus on the road (while Mary stays at home) and laments, “Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”³⁴⁹ To be sure, Mary too complains in John, but it is Martha who is more active, going out to meet Jesus and speaking up first for the sake of her brother. Caputo reads Martha’s lament in John as a refusal to ignore the pain of death and loss in the present, even while she is assured of resurrection in the

³⁴⁷ Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*

³⁴⁸ Alexander, “Sisters in Adversity,” 199-200.

³⁴⁹ By drawing on John I do not intend to imply that the two versions of Martha need to converge, but rather to continue to trace the character as she might murmur to us from within both texts.

(very near) future.³⁵⁰ The pain is not redeemed. Martha, once again, embodies a material theology that won't let the mattering of life and death *in the present* go.

This unwillingness to let go should remind us of the mad woman who cannot let go of the saliva on her tongue or the monstrosity of cripness that follows us wherever we flee. Martha's willfulness in this way can be read as a giving up of the happiness with a safe God in order to live--in order to make room for the hap of faith more than its certainty. Martha's worrying and weariness might therefore be a prophetic lament on behalf of the world. Mary's emotional acquiescence in Luke (represented by her silence) may not leave room for much to *happen*. Indeed perhaps it is from within Martha's state of anger, where the prayer that nothing remains safe gets launched; it is her affect that is full of hap.

Bipolar Busyness and Everyday Lament

To better understand Martha's affect alienation as prophetic, let us return to Francois Bovon's interpretation of her mistake being that of holding too many worries. According to Bovon the Gospel writer wants us to conclude that through Mary's attentiveness and devotion to Jesus, she has understood the essential thing that matters most for faith.³⁵¹ Bovon's analysis of *pollēn* and the differing interpretation of "single thing" versus "few things" help to bring this issue of what is essential to light. There have been four main ways these words have been interpreted, but according to Bovon only the first two can be legitimate:

³⁵⁰ Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 232.

³⁵¹ Bovon, *Luke 2*, 70.

In the first case, the reading ‘a few things’ encourages Christians to be content with having little here on earth. This being content with having little may be understood either from an ethical point of view (faith takes away excessive preoccupation that I have with myself) or from an ascetical point of view (I must practice self-denial).

In the second case, the only thing that counts is the practice of one’s faith. Caring about the Lord, expressed as fixing one’s attention on what is important, puts the cares of this world into their proper perspective and transforms them into expressions of love. This is what it means to talk about the ‘one thing’ that is necessary.³⁵²

This analysis, Bovon argues, does not mean that Jesus is telling Martha to care only about a few things, but rather points to how Mary understood that there is only one truly indispensable thing. Bovon further argues that Jesus’ issue with Martha is not that she is too tied to the material, but rather that she is preoccupied, overly worried, about everyday tasks of hospitality and so has not put the cares of this world in their proper perspective.³⁵³

Bovon carefully analyzes the Greek verb (*merimnaō*) which appears in 10:41 when Jesus says: “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing”:

Merimnaō (‘to worry’) is a verb with considerable implications. ‘*merimna*’ pertains to someone or something, looks on the future with anguish, either blocking or precipitating action. A theological meaning was added to this secular one, discreetly in the Septuagint, then more openly in the Gospels: insofar as worries are oppressing, they are certainly not miraculously eliminated by faith, but can be entrusted to God... *Martha’s many worries brought on an excess of activity (the Greek word thorubazō, which is less common than thorubeō, means,*

³⁵² Bovon, *Luke 2*, 73-74.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 73.

*in the active voice, 'cause trouble'; the first meaning of thorubos is 'noise'; but then it also means 'commotion,' for instance of a crowd). (emphasis added)*³⁵⁴

In understanding Martha's mistake to be an *excessiveness* of worry, Bovon urges readers to break free of a simple dualistic reading of Luke 10:38-42. He notes that we should come to understand that Martha is, "a well-intentioned woman, threatened by her good intentions and her multiplicity of activities, who was in danger of becoming *ungrateful* toward the one whom she meant to revere, and unjust toward her sister" (emphasis added).³⁵⁵

Alexander recognizes a similar dynamic, asking us not to read Martha's mistake to be that of her service--which being Christ-like Alexander argues cannot be at the heart of what Jesus rebukes in v. 40)--but rather of her worry:

It is only when Jesus begins to speak that we are given explicit clues about the nature of Martha's mistake. Martha is 'called' by Jesus in this verse, and the attentive reader of Luke's gospel should already know that being 'anxious' (*merimnas*) is not a good thing for the would-be disciple... (Lk. 12.25) a warning against worrying about food and drink which is embedded in a longer block of teaching on the dangers of riches as a distraction (12.13-34). Mary's 'one thing needful' is echoed ... in the ruler's 'one thing' is lacking in Lk. 18.22, which also picks up again the theme of 'treasure in heaven' (cf. Lk. 12.21, 33-34); but the theme of single-mindedness weaves in and out of Jesus' teaching in less explicit ways right through the central section of the gospel (cf. Lk. 9.57-62; 11.33-36; 12.30-31).³⁵⁶

In these readings the Lukan Jesus rejects not material service, but an anxious attachment to possessions. Alexander also notes the possibility that the Lukan Jesus rebukes Martha because he does not like sibling rivalry and as in Lk. 6.41-42, 12.13, and 15.31-32 he

³⁵⁴ Bovon, Luke 2, 72.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 73.

³⁵⁶ Alexander, "Sisters in Adversity," 212.

cares less about who was in the right (which Martha may have been in that she was following the command to serve Jesus), than he does about quelling the critical treatment of the sibling who may be in the wrong.³⁵⁷ In this way Jesus rebukes Martha not because she isn't right, but because she is being too harsh with Mary. Martha's problem in both these readings is one of mood not one of action.

But, are these interpretations still too dualistic? Can worry over the material world and the material demands of hospitality be separated out from the essential thing, the worry over spiritual teachings? Can Spirit and World be so easily disentangled? Further, if following Alexander, we are to read the freedom/obligation relation between Mary and Martha as reflective of how often the majority, while needing the minority, denigrates them for fulfilling majority needs, then perhaps Martha's frustration cannot simply be read as sibling rivalry. And perhaps her worry cannot simply be tied to an issue of riches or single-mindedness. If one must serve or face a fate worse than Sodom, what else was Martha to do, but worry over material sustenance? If we were under such economy of threat, might we have found ourselves similarly single-minded? Hence, even though my reading of Martha is indebted to Alexander's, I *worry*, that while she upholds Martha's emotions (being feisty and argumentative as feminist and subversive), she still struggles to rescue Martha without denigrating her mood.

What if we read this excess of worry not as an individual failing, but rather a moody lament against the dual bind those tied to everyday material needs who wished to be faithful to the Jesus movement may have felt? What if we read an anguished look toward the future as a defense of material life in the present or put differently, an *anger*

³⁵⁷ Alexander, "Sisters in Adversity," 209.

for the world--a fierce love of *this* world and a prophetic frustration flowing out of having to care for more than her share of the weight of the world? Further, what if in behaving “ungratefully” Martha, in dialogue *with* Jesus, through her affect is reminding Jesus of economies of grace and not obligation? Would reading “to worry” as “causing trouble,” “commotion,” and “noise,” help us to hear Martha as one who may be depressed, who may eschew happiness to live, and so who may challenge how we come to practice (in)fidelity to both God *and* world? What if Martha’s excessive worry is the affect appropriate for a feminist material theology that takes the role of women in the biblical story seriously and sensitively?

Caputo reads Martha’s complaint to Jesus as the embodiment of a material, if not yet feminist, theology. Martha’s response to the event of God, he argues, reading Meister Eckhart’s emphasis on Martha as the embodiment of both wife and virgin, makes room for the “perhaps.”:

In a theology of ‘perhaps,’ ... we take as a model the agency of Martha, the wife who was a virgin. Martha acts, but she acts from the ground of the soul, which is one with the ground of God. That means she is an agent mobilized in response to a provocation, to an event, who gives existence to an insistence, and that existence takes the form of the most material and *quotidian* reality. (Emphasis added).³⁵⁸

For Caputo Martha’s infidelity is an act of faith against a spiritual demand that would take her away from the material reality of the everyday world. Martha’s actions come in the form of a response to an event that “insists” on God “happening.”³⁵⁹ The event is a promise, but as a promise it contains the structure of the perhaps, the threat that perhaps the promise will not be fulfilled. Hence, Martha who responds to God with hospitality

³⁵⁸ Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 48.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 135.

and with an insistence on the importance of the material sustenance needed for such a response, in her act of infidelity to Jesus' request not to be distracted, may actually be faithful to the material demands of the event and so to the insistence of God.

According to Caputo, "The pulse of radical theology is taken by whether it has an impulse for the world, the stomach for flesh, the spine or heart—I multiply as many carno-corporeal images as possible—to displace the logos of two worlds, to transfer the funds of its heavenly treasures to earthly accounts."³⁶⁰ It is in Martha's worry over the everyday material world where Caputo sees this kind of radicality and names it as a radicality that exposes a kind of bipolar disorder (and not in the constructive way we have explored previously) carried by any dualistic thinking between a world of faith and one of matter. Indeed, Martha's response to the event of Jesus' visit is the active response to the insistence of God through the material existence of God with world. In contrast, as noted by Bovon, "Luke did not distinguish between a Mary who preached and a Martha who served, but rather a Mary who listened and a Martha who wore herself out extending hospitality."³⁶¹ In other words, as touched on briefly above, the distinction can be read as the difference between one who shows faith through trusting reception and a praised inaction (an inaction that has both been blessed by traditional interpreters as a support for placing the spiritual over the material and one that is opposed to the inaction of those made depressed through their mad adherence to the despairs of the present, those who have the wretched and not better part), and one who shows faith through busying herself in actions (and affects) that address the demands of the immanent world.

³⁶⁰ Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 65.

³⁶¹ Bovon, *Luke 2*, 74.

While there are important arguments to be made about the potency of inaction we can see two main problems with the distinction made between Martha's action and Mary's silence. The first as pointed to earlier is that we should be weary of assigning to Mary a more liberating role for women. As Schüssler Fiorenza, Alexander, and Bovon have noted, Mary does not preach, she listens. She may be out of the kitchen, but she is not out in the public world. Martha, while remaining in the kitchen, *does* make her feelings known, if not yet fully heard. This is not to say that Martha is closer to public preaching, but rather that those who prioritize Mary's silent presence out of the kitchen over and against Martha's vociferous kitchen-bound lament miss alternate feminist readings of the scene, and so commit their own damning/damming up of Martha, allowing her complexity to be effaced in the construction of Mary as a feminist figure.

The second, reading with Caputo, is that to prioritize Mary over Martha is to support the dangerous kind of bipolar disorder that sees material action and faith as diametrically opposed. Because Martha expresses both faith and concern for material hospitality, Caputo argues, she exposes the falsity of such bipolar thinking.³⁶² And yet might we expose a different kind of bipolarity in Martha, one that not only turns our attention to the material world in such a way as embraced by Caputo—that which takes the form as a response to the event *of* God—but also one that serves as a lesson *for* Jesus, a lament that might not only teach we readers of the text, but also God?

“Don't you care?” The Madness of Martha

³⁶² Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 65.

For all of his reliance on Martha as the embodiment of a theology of perhaps, I am left wondering, perhaps, whether Caputo's theology has given her the full prominence she deserves. In other words, is there a sense in Caputo's radical theology that Martha's radicalism comes still as a more receptive agent, responding to the event *of* God, but not causing an event *in* God? What if instead of seeing the crux of the action being Martha's hospitality, we saw both her worrying and then her *complaint* as climactic? What if it is not only that Martha shows concern for the material well being of her household (including the community and Jesus whom she serves through such concern), but rather the very fact that she is so worried about the quotidian world and annoyed at Jesus and Mary that shows her to be a faithful embodiment of a theology of (per)hap-ness? Could Martha's "excess" actually be a kind of faithful attendance to the madness of and in the world? Might it be her madness at and about a world in which her attunement to the material everyday places her in what I'm naming as the double bind of discipleship in Luke in fact be prophetic? Further, might her anxiety and anger over this double bind be the lament of the feminist killjoy? Such a lament, I surmise might kill even Caputo's theological joy when it arises at the very moments when he might seem to de-humanize Martha, even as he makes her his representation of a material theology. For Caputo Martha is a figure standing in for the carnality of the present world, but the specificity of her mood--how she is affected by and affecting in the scene of material hospitality--is left under-theorized and so eclipsed.

Caputo's own "redemptive" reading of Martha draws heavily on that of Meister Eckhart. In Eckhart's reading of Martha Caputo finds a material theology that is representative of the carno-corporeality, the stomach for flesh, and earthly accounting of

radical theology. Yet, when we return to Eckhart's own sermons and through them revisit Caputo's Martha, I am left to wonder just how much carnal flesh and earthly accounting we find. Despite Caputo's allegiance to the infidels, within both Caputo's and Eckhart's exegeses we can locate, perhaps, a problematic emphasis on obedience.

While Eckhart acknowledges Martha's commitment to hospitality and the specific historical position and wisdom she has as the elder sister, his reading refuses to let Martha's emotions be felt in a negative mood. Instead he redeems her anger and worry out of their negativity. Looking to the line in Luke in which Martha urges Jesus to get Mary to help her Eckhart writes: "Martha did not say this out of spite. Rather, she said it because of endearment; that is what motivated her. We call it affection or playful chiding."³⁶³ Martha has no contempt for Mary, only care. For Jesus she has no frustration, only favor. Similarly, Eckhart does not see Christ chiding Martha, but comforting her to ensure her that Mary, while not yet learning the lessons of life as Martha has, will still turn out okay.³⁶⁴ Eckhart's reading stands in fresh contrast to the medieval reading of Mary and Martha. Yet we *sense* that something is missing. If we find in Martha the wisdom of age and knowledge of life, why not let the wisdom of her frustration be found in the moodiness of frustration rather than in its positive redemption? Why must anger be sublated into affection? Why not let anger stand as its own force of wisdom, an insight into the weight of the world placed heavily on Martha? Does Eckhart here really have the stomach for both the promise and peril of a fleshy Martha? Does Caputo?

³⁶³ Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1986), 338.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 339.

Adherence to Eckhart's redeemed reading of Martha's materiality does not leave room for much to happen with Jesus. Jesus serves not as a dialogue partner, but more so as the voice of an omniscient narrator comforting those in the present about a future to come. Eckhart's redemption of the moodiness of the scene continues through his insistence that when Jesus names Martha twice in Luke 10:41 he does so "to indicate that Martha possessed completely everything of temporal and eternal value that a creature should have. When he said 'Martha' the first time, he indicated her perfection in temporal works. With his second calling out, 'Martha.' He affirmed that she lacked nothing of all that is necessary for eternal happiness."³⁶⁵ Once again we are told from a seeming omniscient place what Martha and Jesus must have been feeling. But if we are to take seriously the promise and peril of affect, if we are to refuse to keep a God of peace and quiet safe, we must allow for the possibility that Martha was in fact *not happy* with the temporal or eternal objects of happiness on offer. In doing so we clear space for a Jesus who says Martha's name twice in the way an intimate who thinks he knows better might. A caring, if condescending, friend might indeed say "Martha, Martha," shaking his head frustratingly *and* endearingly as he corrects what he perceives to be her folly. By making the saying of Martha's name a prescription about her temporal *and* eternal state Eckhart actually sets up greater affectual distance between Jesus and Martha, eliding the intimacy of fellowship in which disagreement and dialogue might blossom even (especially) amongst heated affects of anger, frustration, condescension, *and* comfort. Further, whereas Caputo finds in Eckhart's reading of Martha an insistence on the material ground

³⁶⁵ Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart*, 340.

of God, in eclipsing her moodiness with God he may be missing the heart or spine of messy carno-corporeal relations amongst *feeling people* and not just theological figures.

In his reading of Jesus' response to Martha Eckhart once again redeems any sense that Martha might be too materially tied to the world. His sermon continues: "Hence [Jesus] said [to Martha], 'You are careful,' by which he meant: You stand in the midst of things, but they do not reside in you; and those are careful who go about unimpeded in all their daily pursuits. Those people are unimpeded who perform all their works properly according to the image of eternal light, and such people stand in the midst of things, but not *in* things."³⁶⁶ This reading of Martha as unimpeded can perhaps only stand if Martha's anger is redeemed as affection, and if we come to ignore the excessive character of the Greek for "worry" as explicated by Bovon. To actually pause in the emotional path tread by Martha might instead be to feel a great sense of impediment. To worry to the point of "causing trouble" is not to flow easily with God, but rather to block such ease.

Further, while I would be weary of arguing for an over-attachment to one's possessions, to allow the things of the world to reside in you might actually be a more fitting description of the material theology Caputo seeks when he writes that, "In Martha, God happens with all the robustness of mundane existence."³⁶⁷ Indeed, to emotionally engage with the mattering of the *things* with which Martha resides (duties of hospitality, the care of her sister, the grief over Lazarus's death) might be to reside with those "hated" and so abandoned by Jesus' disciples who had or took the freedom to follow him. This, again, is not to say that there isn't something meaningful or interesting in the

³⁶⁶ Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart*, 340.

³⁶⁷ Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 45.

following, but rather that in Martha's anger and worry we might find a prophetic refusal to let be and let go of the stories of those that stayed, the stories of the *things* of this world that went "hated" (including wife and child).

This is a haunting refused by Eckhart in his redemption of Martha's "negative" affects. Indeed, unlike the willfulness I, and other feminist interpreters like Alexander, find in Martha's refusal to stay silent in the midst of her frustration, Eckhart finds in her "playful chiding" an obedience to God's will: "Obedience is when the will satisfactorily carries out what insight commands."³⁶⁸ Eckhart understands Martha's concern as arising from a fear that Mary was too quick to cling "to consolation and sweetness," and so would not learn to live the virtuous life of Martha and find what Martha had found in such a life: happiness.³⁶⁹ The first way toward such a virtuous life, according to Eckhart, "is to give up one's will to God. This is necessary in order that one rightly know whether to perform or avoid an action."³⁷⁰ Hence, for Eckhart Martha is happy because she has aligned her actions with God's will, and this is the happiness she wants for Mary. It is, "work and activity" that therefore lead Martha to eternal happiness.³⁷¹

Again this is a look at Luke's gospel from on high and not from the gravity and intimacy of a God who is at home *with* Martha; it is a view that obscures Martha's own words in favor of making of Martha the "happy housewife." Such a reading cannot stand if we are to allow for Martha's affect to open us to the hap of both promise and peril. Yes

³⁶⁸ Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart*, 344.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 342.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 344.

she is active in the house, yes she may, for Eckhart at least, be a working “*wife*,” but this need not mean she is happy. Indeed, it is the persistence of her negative affect throughout the fulfillment of the demand to be hospitable that opens a pathway to the questioning of both action and inaction within the scene. If Caputo wants a theology that sides with Martha as it “comes to grips with unrest and threat” he might be cautious of aligning too closely with Eckhart. Indeed, Caputo seems at times to advocate for a risky serpentine like Martha, while simultaneously affirming her happy housewife status. He uncomplicatedly lauds Martha’s work and activity: “Martha is busy about the many works, the many material things—meals, clean linens, a swept house—that are needed to welcome Jesus and make him comfortable (via *activia*).”³⁷² For Caputo this activity is the response to the event of God, a response that honors quotidian material life.

In this responsive life he finds that “Martha knows that to ask for Jesus to come is to call for peace and accept trouble, both the promise and threat, and that peace cannot be purchased separately.”³⁷³ And yet, can we really say that it is just in her activity where Martha recognizes this promise and threat? An obedience to the structure of discipleship that has placed her in an economic relation to the material “costs of discipleship,” what must be sacrificed (hated, abandoned, ransomed) in order for the tower of discipleship to be built, seems less like the welcoming of an earthly accounting and more like the settling of heavenly debts. Indeed, as Eckhart has it, Martha may be material, but she is also in her obedience to her role as both “wife and virgin” a figure of detachment: “A virgin who

³⁷² Caputo, *The Insistence of God*, 44.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 45.

is a wife is free and unpledged, without attachment,”³⁷⁴ by which Eckhart means that like a virgin Martha cannot be distracted by attachments to husband and child, but like a wife can produce fruit with God. It is Martha’s ability to detach from the world as “a virgin” that gives rise to her function in a divine plan of making for God more product, producing material and spiritual fruit. Here, perhaps, Martha as divine instrument does not refuse a God of peace and quiet as much as she serves one.

This Martha too eerily falls prey to biopolitical and bio-Logos control, a control that asks Martha, “What have you produced for me lately?” In “On Detachment” Eckhart writes:

I find no other virtue better than a pure detachment from all things; because all other virtues have some regard for created things, but detachment is free from all created things. That is why our Lord said to Martha: ‘One thing is necessary’ (Lk. 10:42), which is as much to say: ‘Martha, whoever wants to be free of care and to be pure must have one thing, and that is detachment.’³⁷⁵

Is the detachment from created things (particularly when it easily slips into the service of obedience to a husband God) truly the highest of virtues in a material theology that seeks an earthly accounting over and against heavenly treasures? In eclipsing these moments in Eckhart’s material theology and in finding a radical theology solely in Martha’s activity and not the emotion that accompanies such a material life Caputo does a disservice to his prized figure.

However, Alexander finds Eckhart’s redemption of Martha similarly helpful. Pointing to the readings of both Eckhart and Calvin she notes that each wants to redeem

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 178-9.

³⁷⁵ Meister Eckhart, *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises and Defense* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981), 285.

the necessity of labor for the service of God: “If they accept the polarities of the tale they are compelled to condemn something which independent moral judgment tells them is admirable: but they cannot simply abandon the text, so it must be reinterpreted.”³⁷⁶

Eckhart and Calvin’s redemption of Martha is redemption of work, even, and this is important for Alexander, women’s work. Alexander worries that past feminist prioritization of Mary have denigrated those women who “fuss” with the work of women, with what we can call care work. This is problematic because, “Women as a group simply cannot afford to buy in to the traditional male devaluation of ‘women’s work’ as inferior or unnecessary, much less to despise the women who (from choice or necessity) spend their time in doing it.”³⁷⁷ While I agree with Alexander about what women simply cannot afford to do, we might recognize in both this assertion and the unproblematic inclusion of Eckhart’s theology in the rescuing of Martha similar questions to those raised by Kathi Weeks in reference to feminist activism that sought to legitimate women through affirming women’s work as work. While both Weeks and I acknowledge how materially necessary this activism has been for women, and so might also affirm Alexander’s worry over the denigration of women’s work in Luke, we can also assert that such a narrative does not challenge cultural norms as much as sustain a productivism in which it is what service you bring and not who you are that matters for an ethic of obedience to God.

I, like Caputo, find in Martha a stomach for flesh and the gripping allegiance to the very promise and peril that accompanies the event of God. But, unlike Caputo, I find

³⁷⁶ Alexander, “Sisters in Adversity,” 204.

³⁷⁷ Alexander, “Sisters in Adversity,” 202.

it in the revelatory ambivalence of being dutifully hospitable but being so *with hostility*. The tension created by hostile hospitality is the tension that might allow for the hap to happen, it is the prayer that not even God remain safe. Further, if even in theologies that claim an allegiance to Martha, Martha's own moody reality must go silenced or under-theorized, than how much more closely and ardently must we readers of alienation attend to her affect? How much more might we read her anger as a prophetic voice from the past still haunting all her critics *and* saviors in the present?

Or, perhaps, I have just undone my argument. Must this critical look at Eckhart, Caputo, and Alexander convince me to cohere to interpretations of Luke that view Mary as the way out of happy housewifery? I think not. For returning to the problematic elements of Eckhart's material theology reminds us that radical theology needs Martha's mood. We need to ponder what her anger can do. And, ask, where her worry might help us wander. To be both dutiful and dissenting at once, as Martha seems to be, is to open a dialogue on just what is demanded of Martha and of discipleship more generally. To let Martha's feelings remain negative, without redeeming them into secretly happy moods, is in fact to feel our way toward different readings and hearings. It is to open ourselves and Jesus up to a hearing of Martha's lament such that we can affirm that from within her knowledge of life and her material attention to the things of this world we can find righteous reasons to be angry. It is therefore not just that Martha is tied to the material, but more so that she is worried for and pissed at the *matter* at hand that makes her a theologically potent member of an archive of affect alienation. Martha's moodiness is perhaps a particularly poignant addition to our archive as we find her within a gospel that has in other passages excised "negative" feelings from Jesus. Jesus is permitted to cry out

on the cross in Mark, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34) In Luke he is tamed: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Lk. 23:46). The pains of the flesh are erased. Martha’s mood might re-enflesh a Lukan archive.

I want to suggest that the eclipsing of Martha’s mood and the lack of theological attention to the question of what in life had got her so bothered, might reveal in part why some of us have flowed more easily into theological spaces, including those of radical theology, than others. In an essay on mood Ahmed writes, “How is it that we enter a room and pick up on some feelings and not others? I have implied that one enters not only *in* a mood, but *with* a history, which is how you come to lean this way or that. Attunement might itself be an affective history, of how subjects become attuned to others over and in time.”³⁷⁸ For Ahmed, attunement to the atmosphere of the room can mean learning to not bring up certain topics. What is it about historical and contemporary theological moods that impeded Eckhart and Caputo from picking up on some of Martha’s moody possibilities? Which topics have we learned not to bring up from such redemptive readings of Martha’s “hospitality,” as though it shouldn’t and therefore couldn’t have been hostile? Which feelings are we afraid to follow? Whose affect alienation can we hear? Can we have a theology that welcomes not only Martha’s hospitality, the material attention to the event of God, but also her hostility, the material attention to *her* embodiment? Can we have a theology that recognizes the two are consequent to one another?

To re-enflesh Martha in all her potent prophetic character, is to look to her embodied response to the event, to her worry and her anger, to what I’m calling her

³⁷⁸ Ahmed, “Not in the Mood,” 18.

madness. We can see two sides of madness in Martha. First, is a manic sense (the excess illuminated by Bovon's reading) of busyness reflective of the many worries placed on Martha as the head of the household. Second is Martha's possible killing of Jesus and Mary's joy through her unhappiness and complaint. These moments of madness can be read as Martha's prophetic affect alienation and so a different kind of bipolarity than that worried over by Caputo--one with the infidelity needed to leave room for the hap of the perhaps.

Reading artist Allyson Mitchell's series, "The War on Worries," Cvetkovich notes that "War on Worries is an apt description of [Cvetkovich's] *Depression Journals* narrative, whose stories are frequently about the logistics of housekeeping and self-care and the everyday habits of living inside bodies and houses that are the intimate and material locations of depression."³⁷⁹ Cvetkovich describes part of the "War on Worries" piece:

Two plastic toy soldiers fight it out inside the confines of a matchbox, which is mounted on a background of fluorescent print wallpaper from the 1970s that recalls the home front. Scrawled on the silver frames in the style of a things-to-do list are labels that structure the war on worries as a series of decisions to be made: organic meat vs. cheap groceries; clean bathroom vs. visit to art galleries; serenity vs. wild partying; work vs. vacation; casserole in front of the TV vs. outdoor picnic; suburban background vs. urban present; periodical upkeep vs. antipoverty actions.³⁸⁰

For our purposes here we might add to this list: household activity vs. spiritual reception; or life in the face of death in this world vs. new life in the next; or paying the cost of discipleship vs. practicing hostile hospitality. Hence we might find in this piece a depiction of the tension between Mary and Martha, and so Martha and Jesus.

³⁷⁹ Cvetkovich, *Depression*, 155.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 154.

Indeed, “The War on Worries” depicts both the tension between everyday worries and the call to be involved in larger social justice struggles (periodical upkeep vs. antipoverty actions), sustainable consumer choices (organic meat vs. cheap groceries), healthier living (serenity vs. wild partying), and pleasure (work vs. vacation), *as well as* the way in which the domestic sphere is often anything but comforting. As witnessed in the previous chapter, everyday depression (and the many worldly worries which nurture it and which it nurtures) follows one home, breaking down the duality between domestic and public life. Hence, it is from within this quotidian reality that Cvetkovich looks to ways of acknowledging the pervasiveness of depression and finding hope from *within* a worrisome world. Most significantly, she finds this hope in “utopia of ordinary habit,” touched on in the last chapter. For Cvetkovich habit and the everyday routine become a crucial way of keeping the body moving in the face of depression and worry. In various routinized activities: swimming, cleaning, going to the dentist, or just getting out of bed in the morning,³⁸¹ Cvetkovich finds “forms of transformation,” which she then describes as part of the “sacred everyday.”³⁸² She further asks “how it might be possible to tarry with the negative as part of daily practice, cultural production, and political activism.”³⁸³ And suggests that sometimes “magic and mystery sit alongside the banal and the routine.”³⁸⁴ Perhaps we can read Mary as that magic that sits beside the routine and banal that Martha inhabits, but for Cvetkovich it is precisely not that mystery and banality

³⁸¹ Cvetkovich, *Depression*, Chapter 3.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 197.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 74.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 190.

come to be opposed, but rather that sometimes in just keeping oneself moving and engaged in the world one allows for magic to *happen*—in this way Martha’s routine does not rule out her magic.

This reformulation of the sacred everyday performs a breaking open of a duality similar to that performed by Caputo. To carry magic alongside the banal is also to carry the material alongside the spiritual, but more so to come to see the two as not sitting alongside one another, but rather as intimately enfolded in and unfolding from one another. To respond to the promise of a God of perhaps is not to sit and wait for an event to happen from with out, but rather to embrace the hap-ness embedded *in* everyday material life; life that comes with a vicissitude of perilous and promising moods. According to Cvetkovich, an aim of the Public Feelings Project is the articulation of new approaches to the relation between the macro and micro; in other words a turn toward how everyday feelings of depression and worry might get reformulated not as distractions from more important macro issues (Mary’s better part), but rather part of a new narrative that takes the micro material reality of those historical exceptions as important ways into macro issues. For instance, Martha’s everyday worries might be read as an acknowledgement of the importance of present activity, and of the activities of all members of the community (those inside and outside the home—those itinerant disciples and those ‘hated’ and abandoned) from within an incarnate faith. Martha in this way may carry within her worry over the everyday--what has too often been read as a distraction--a point of view on discipleship and faith within the Jesus movement that God and we needed and need to hear.

Additionally, it is not just in Martha's embrace of the everyday where we can see the breaking open of dualities; read through Cvetkovich's work on depression, we can come to view Martha's "excessive" worrying and her refusal to give up the habits of the everyday as indicators of a refusal to give up on both the affects of depression and anxiety that mark a life responsible for the material sustenance of a movement and the rituals of remaining vigilant to a God of this world. Bovon recognizes the intensity of affect expressed by Martha in his description of Luke 10:40-42:

Fatigued and feeling abandoned, Martha laid into Jesus, *taking him to task* for his indifference ('don't you care...'), and into Mary ('that my sister has left me...by myself'). Martha made a *pitiful sight* and called for help. Jesus' retort was more a diagnosis than a criticism. At first look, this retort appears severe, but it was aimed at redirecting Martha to what was essential, to that part that was singular and had priority, the part that Mary had chosen all on her own. (Emphasis added)³⁸⁵

There is some sympathy for Martha's feelings in this reading, and in Bovon's affirmation of Jesus' care for Martha. Yet, Bovon may be too quick to overlook the importance of Martha's taking of Jesus and Mary to task. Martha's words, but also her refusal to give up on worrying, can be read as pedagogical. She is teaching Jesus and Mary how it feels to carry the worries of the world, and what it has meant to be left to face such worries "all on her own." An interpretation of Jesus that sees him diagnosing Martha as having an excess of concern does not lessen the cares of the material world that remain in need of attention. This is not to say that the recognition of bad feeling has no use, but rather that in turning so quickly from the diagnosis of Martha's excesses to that of Mary's superiority in faith—which according to Bovon she chose all on her own, but which we

³⁸⁵ Bovon, *Luke 2*, 42.

might say she was able to choose thanks to the material labor of Martha—Bovon's Jesus instead of alleviating Martha's worries may have increased them.

Here the story ends; we do not know what each of the characters have learned. Like in the story of Jonah we are left to sit with the mood and decide for ourselves how we have been affected. Has Martha given up on "excessively" worrying about everyday concerns? Perhaps, perhaps not. Has the Lukan Jesus come to a greater respect for the emotional effects the demands of hospitality and the felt experience of being responsible for the movement's material well being even as Jesus proclaims that you must be 'hated' by his disciples? Perhaps, perhaps not. Will Mary be more helpful to Martha next time? Perhaps, perhaps not. Will Martha get out of the kitchen? Perhaps, perhaps not. Have we adequately come to feel Martha's worry, listened differently for her lament? Perhaps, perhaps not. And yet in reclaiming Martha as a *moody* prophet we can indeed allow for this level of uncertainty, for a more dialogical faith in which the questioning of God is done by some of the most beloved (if also, and importantly so, wretched and pitiful) actors in the bible. Martha's manic worrying and depressing complaint leave open a greater possibility for something novel to happen than more traditional narratives of fidelity can allow. That we cannot know whether her heart is turned from anger to affection leaves the space open for a reading of the Gospel in which part of the lesson is that there is an (in)fidelity in questioning God and in remaining affectually alienated from God as long as God may not yet have heard/felt our lament.

In other words, in the moodiness of this gospel tale we might hear an injunction to find from within Martha's embodied reality the spark causing an event *in* God. Martha affects God through her mood. In other words Martha might help us to welcome a God of

promise *and* threat (one who might bring promised comfort, or threaten the comfortable) by moving us to better attend to the moods of those we find threatening.

From Willing to Willful

Jonah and Martha's killing of joy—God's, Jesus', and the theological joy of mainstream interpreters—are acts of will. They *will* not obey requests and demands made to them by Jesus and God. They *will* not give up on their material present realities, and the maddening feelings that accompany such persistence. We *will* insist that how they feel matters for how they and we *may* continue to *exist*. Hence, we might place Jonah and Martha alongside Ahmed's recent archive of *Willful Subjects*. For Ahmed, collecting such an archive helps to mark how certain forms of what we might call persisting and insisting are considered willful because they "pulse with desire," but a desire directed in ways other than what the mainstream has dictated as the right way. According to Ahmed, "If authority assumes the right to turn a wish into a command, then willfulness is a diagnosis of the failure to comply with those whose authority is given."³⁸⁶ Willfulness, therefore, is not marked by strength of will, but rather by the aim of will. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to engage in a definition of the "will" or to give a proper genealogy of its terminological ties to freedom, direction, and desire. Hence, for the purposes of this reflection I take Ahmed's attention to the difference between one's will aligning with (willing) or opposing (willful) the will of society. For instance, we might say that the structure of neoliberal capitalism critiqued in the previous chapters requires a large amount of desire-fueled will, but such desire is a form of willing that supports

³⁸⁶ Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 1.

contemporary hegemonies, and so subjects are seen not as willful, but as willing—willing to get with the program, and so good. Willful ones are those, like the feminist killjoy, the bipolar woman, and the monstrous crip whose will is disordered. From within this disorder or what Ahmed describes as failing to take the right form we might learn to tread different paths.³⁸⁷

In treading different paths with willful subjects, Ahmed argues that we are also able to find a form of subjectivity with an uncertain and more impulsive form of intent.³⁸⁸ This does not mean that we find no motivation or intent behind Martha or Jonah’s willfulness, but rather that following the will around, seeing where it might wander off the path, allows for a kind of resistant action that does not know where it will end up. It knows that it desires to *not take part* in what is on offer, but leaves open what might come from “coming apart”³⁸⁹ in the face of such a desire. In this way a willfulness archive might be an archive of the wretched that affirms the happiness described by Ahmed in *The Promise of Happiness* and the perhaps-ness that Captuo sees as necessary for the insistence of God as a promise that may or may not be kept.

Resonant with how the promise of God can serve as an uncertain gift, is Ahmed’s suggestion that the coming apart (as in the parting ways from the mainstream) of the willful part as well as a mood of willfulness, “can be gift[s] given, [willfulness can be] a gift relayed between parts, a gift that allows noncompliant or resistant action to be carried

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 175.

³⁸⁸ Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 175.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 176.

out *without intent*.³⁹⁰ This is not to say that wills of the willful lack desire or purpose, but rather that they resist the making out of the resistant will's direction a new program, one easily co-opted into another form of hegemony. Such wills might invest in damage instead of overcoming it.

A willfulness that opens up resistant action without intent might be a ground for *becoming* rather than a demand to *be* one way or the other. Willfulness without intent is not a program toward redemption out of our crookedness—a straightening salvation that comes from getting in line. Rather, such willfulness might allow each singularity to pulse at its own pace, to follow its own rhythm where it wills. We can see this sort of willfulness pulsing amongst Occupy Wall Street protesters whom refused to have their program of resistance straightened out and made palatable. For instance, in response to a speech given by Slavoj Žižek during an Occupy rally in which Žižek warned that we should not forget to ask what happens the morning after the occupations when we return to normal life, Halberstam wrote: “Like many anti-colonial and anti-capitalist movements, these movements refuse to conjure an outcome, eschew Utopian or pragmatic conjurings of what happens on the ‘morning after’ because the outcome will be determined by the process. All we know for sure is that the protests announce a collective awareness of the end of a ‘normal life.’”³⁹¹ In this collective awareness of the end of a ‘normal life,’ one which looks to the process and not to pragmatic conjurings, we can hear the affect alien laments of Martha and Jonah asking, through their hostility, that God and we take seriously the material present—demanding, through an attention to the

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Jack Halberstam, “Riots and Occupations: the Fall of the United States,” in *Make/Shift*, Spring/Summer (2012), 14.

affects and effects of our mainstream 'normal' theological lives, perhaps and on to such lives.

The end of a normal theological life might be the killing of theological joy found in the affects of Jonah and Martha. Jonah's anger with God kills the joy of the mainstream. This is a mainstream that rejoices in and whose force relies on Jonah being a foolish vengeful Hebrew unaware of God's merciful goodness. To follow Jonah's *unwillingness* to let such joy stand unquestioned might be to challenge a mainstream joy that becomes justified through reading the protesters in the streets of Ferguson, MO, after the murder of Black teenager Michael Brown at the hands of White police officer Darren Wilson, as foolish with rage and as ignorant of more "productive" moods like peace and forgiveness (with or without justice). To hear Martha's excessive worry as her killing of the theological joy of those who wish to disentangle the banal from the magical, might be to attend to and invest in the enfolded burdens placed on those whom have been left out of history--the women 'hated' and abandoned, and yet relied upon, by the Jesus movement. Hence, to follow Martha's will around may be to question the erasures of the domestic worker who toils away so that those in the household she serves may have the freedom of contemplation or of the depressed woman who cannot let be long enough to become the model consumer.

This killing of theological joy is indeed a gift, one given from the willful part of society to those who have been all too willing to let be and let go. It is an offering from those who have been bowed down so that we might better walk the straight and narrow. It is a kind of blessed cursing given in the structure of lamentant prayer, which says no to

what is on offer as the only possible salvation. This “blessed no” allows for the impossible to *happen*, perhaps.

If willfulness is a gift given from willful parts past to willful subjects present, then might the willfulness of Jonah and Martha be holy offerings, ones full of peril *and* promise. This is a perilous promise that may or may not be fulfilled, but that still grants us permission to will another way. The prophetic willfulness of these biblical affect aliens can help to remind us that as Ahmed writes, “Perhaps some have ‘ways of life’ because others have lives: some have to find voices because others are given voices; some have to assert their particulars because others have their particulars given as a general expression.”³⁹² Our mainstream interpretations have given God voice, and left Jonah to fight for his. Our traditional interpretations have given a silent Mary or an obedient Martha the voice of the good, and left the moody Martha to fight for hers. Our mainstream theologies have given the global North, rich, white, cisgendered, able-bodied, able-minded, heterosexual, male voice and have left others to fight for ours.

This is true of the theologies of neoliberalism that claim freedom and choice for all, but only if we aspire to share in the uniform desires dictated by our capitalistic catechism, and also of the Radical Orthodoxy, as they grant us the freedom of voice as long as it is one in doxology to a catholic Christ. But also, we can see this type of univocity insisted upon by liberal theologies, which want to find a God of uncomplicated mercy and reconciliation in even our most dialogical of Hebrew texts. And as we began to see in the previous chapters this might be true even in counter-capitalist theologies with which I find most sympathy. For, like Caputo’s ignorance of Martha’s mood, in

³⁹² Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 160.

radical political theologies we have found a worrisome eclipsing of the material complexities of those who have had to fight for ways to live (those deemed unproductive) while others were always already assumed to have lives.

An affect alien theology resists such univocity, even in those theologies that have been similarly alienated from the mainstream. To be sure, the affect alien theology proposed here risks its own slide into the univocity of the negative. This is a risk I acknowledge and hope to counter in not killing joy out of hand, but rather listening for the moods that surface at the site of the Other's erasure. Hence, it is a cacophony of feeling and not the harmonizing of thought that my theology seeks. I want a shameful *and* righteous Jonah. I want a dutiful *and* dissident Martha. This ambivalence in the archival ghosts that haunt and populate the pages of this dissertation, an ambivalence surfaced through the very promise-peril structure of affect, is the one too quickly eclipsed by theologies that look to figures for material representation without questioning which moody histories they pick up on, and which they have let fade to the background.

In fact could both the call to place utter faith in the Market and that to place utter faith in any theology that too quickly eclipses contextual histories, fortify the very institutions and theologies counter-capitalist and radical theologies hope to challenge? This is what Ahmed gets, but Caputo leaves unspoken. Ahmed's "hap" is fleshy with not only emotion, but also race, gender, sexuality, ability, and history, whereas Caputo's "perhaps" remains, perhaps, too spectral. For Caputo, Martha, as a figure of hospitality, insists on the event of God. For an affect alien theology, Martha's worry as a woman in a particular role within a particular movement and Jonah's despair as a Hebrew in the face of oppression, *matter* for material theology.

A theology for the affect alien might remind us that even from a place of embodied will intent and position remain in flux. To follow willfulness down the paths its 'disordered' form takes us might be to allow a theology of perhap-ness to happen in such a way that challenges the normativizing theologies of neoliberal and orthodox salvation history. Yet in its affect this willful challenge will neither offer up a clear redemption narrative nor eclipse the contextual realities that make us not in the mood to be saved.

A Hermeneutic Circle of Affect Alienation

If the affect alien is not, or perhaps better if *we*, are not, in the mood to be saved, this does not mean that we find despair in the being damned. Reading Ahmed with Caputo, ever watchful of the materiality of our willful prophets Jonah and Martha, we glimpse an affect alien theology, a willfully materialist theology. Such a material theology of affect alienation might take on a kind of hermeneutic spiral of persistence, insistence, and existence. The persistence of a different kind of world and God, leads to the insistence by world and God for this different kind, which brings about (perhaps) the existence of a different way, which allows for the persistence that the other way is possible, and so the insistence that we find another way, and so the existence of another way. It is the affect alien lament that allows for this spiral. Getting with the program blocks novelty (Deleuze's unforeseen event). Straightening your singularity into stable subjectivity dam/ns discontinuities. A different kind of damming and damning, one that impedes the programs of subjectivization on offer, is where we might feel our way toward different flows. Indeed only with the promise/peril of unintended consequences can such theology leave happiness on offer and the willingness it demands behind in order to willfully get *a* life.

To persist in the will to go another way can be seen as a queer act. Ahmed points to Sedgwick's reading of queer politics as 'voluntary stigma.'³⁹³ She writes that the attempt to order one's disordered will is the act of a straightening rod. We can see this rod at work in the seemingly benign form of a Christian cartoon series, and in the much more obviously troubling anti-Semitism risked by mainstream readings of Jonah. Today we see the rod all the more violently in the form of the actual rod of a police Billy club. To persist in the face of such rods is an insistence that we all might have a life.

Ahmed notes how persistence, not only marks a survival or a remaining, but also a, "deviation from a trajectory, what stops the hurtling forward of fate, what prevents a fatality."³⁹⁴ Jonah's persistence in his anger and Martha's persistence in her 'excessive' worry, interrupt a theological trajectory that has affirmed a kind of fatedness of faith in which God commands and the faithful follow. In resisting such fatedness Jonah and Martha prevent the fatality of God. In disrupting this trajectory, both Jonah and Martha allow for the possibility that stories of faith can take unexpected turns. By giving up happiness with a commanding God they allow for *a* life. A material theology lives in the present, relying not on future resurrection (and hence death); Jonah's postcolonial soul lives (remaining queerly bent) in the face of the straightening rod of God's storm, big fish, and perpetual questioning; Martha's point of view, her feelings of depression and anxiety, lives on and in doing so diagnoses *a* way of life that has been erased. Such a theology seeks out a God who wants to be rid of a God of peace and quiet; one that we

³⁹³ Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 161.

³⁹⁴ Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 10.

might find lurking in the in-between formed by the dialogical and prayerful space of the transmission of such lamentant affect.

The gift of these lives is also a gift of *a* life, a parting gift for those whom need to give up happiness--complacency with the system, happy-ending theologies, optimism that one day they too will be saved if they just swim willingly along—in order to live. In this way affect alien prophets persist in order to insist that there is more to feel and learn *with* God and reader than any theology of peace and quiet can contain. We insist that from within the feelings of the wretch new ways of feeling oneself through and being in the world might happen.

Willfulness as insistence might be another way of naming hap as potentiality. For Ahmed it is in the will where we find possibility, in that it is in the will where we might refuse to be dictated from without—whether that be from the secular or divine sovereign, or the sovereignty of neoliberal capitalism that attempts to dictate what we are supposed to be and become. Willfulness is therefore the insistence that we need not affirm that which we have been shaped to be. As Ahmed notes an archive of willfulness is not a philosophy, but it is also a philosophy of the not, by which she means the will is the possibility not to be compelled.³⁹⁵ And yet the will is not utterly free. To be sure real power manifests itself as compelling, often conquering the willful and working to bend us (or straighten us) toward the general will.³⁹⁶ Insistence then is that which comes from the persistence of the affect alien in a state of alienation. It is the demand that one will continue to kill theological joy as long as the joy of mainstream theology is based on

³⁹⁵ Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 15.

³⁹⁶ Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 150.

killing off a God of possibility in favor of a God who desires us to be silent pupil-prophets.

An affect alien lament is the insistence that whether or not we let a God of risk and uncertainty get *a* life matters for whether or not we call into question the certainty of our neoliberal Gods, that of Money and Market, but also of Whiteness, Ability, Productivity, Efficiency, Sanity, Straightness, Maleness, Youth, Reason, Health, Beauty, Wholeness, and Redemption. In order for those of us made unhappy by the demands placed on us by this pantheon to exist, we will insist on putting them at risk, through our persistence in the mad (depressed, manic, unhappy, unreasonable, envious, wrathful, impotent, desirous, and willful) state in which they have placed us. As Ahmed insists, willfulness is that which impedes the assumed happiness that is on the way. In other words, our madness (our killing of theological joy) poses a threat to these gods and their promises of happiness. In insisting that these gods not remain safe, we will come to exist as that which they have already labeled us to be, and so will cease to acquiesce to the false promise that it is by following their demands that we might be happy. Instead we will persist in unhappiness, in bad investments, such that another way to wander (a possibly joyous way) comes into existence.

Following William Jameson Ahmed argues that we can read the will not only as that which impedes the coming of happiness, that which halts a future actualization, but also that which halts the disappearance of other possibilities. Or as I would have it in the previous chapter to be willful might be to let the monsters that haunt us also halt us. To be halted is to be slowed down enough to gravely attend to those we have too often erased or captured as Other, monstrous, vengeful, inconsequent, foolish, and mad. For

instance, Jameson “describes how an act of will is required in situations where an object would otherwise slip away.”³⁹⁷ In this way the persistence of the affect alien is not only an insistence that other possibilities of feeling and being in the world not slip away, but also that willful parts (those parts of society, those people, and objects, and figures, and histories) that haunt not slip away. To persist therefore is the gift of a life, not only the gift of one’s life, but also the gift to make space for other forms of life to keep living. It is a grave attending, a mad desire for the grounds of becoming *and* for the lives presumed buried and gone. To read the biblical figures of Jonah and Martha in such a way that insists they persist in their affect alienation and not be turned into clear moral lessons, is to refuse to let the existence of underside theologies slip away—it is to refuse to let a God of the perhaps be buried alive.

This refusal is also a pedagogical call, it teaches us to be willing to will. If happiness is pedagogical teaching us with what to desire to be associated (wealth, beauty, whiteness, straightness professionalism), then willfulness is pedagogical in that it teaches us to question the rods of association. Rods of association are often less obvious than those of coercion, like that of the Billy club. Rods of association are how systems like neoliberalism, which claim a democratic ethos, persist. Evidence of the rods of association might include: straightening one’s hair to look more professional, adjusting one’s accent or grammar to sound “smart”, refusing to cry in public, finishing work on deadline, wearing a prosthesis at the expense of comfort and mobility, marrying this person instead of “living in sin” with that one, or obeying laws of assembly. These rods of association are not those explicitly enforced on us by the outside, but rather come to be

³⁹⁷ Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 38-39.

internalized techniques of repression such that, as Ahmed makes clear in her concluding chapter, our own arms become the straightening rod of the absent sovereign. The straightening rod of the absent sovereign is of course also the chokehold of the invisible hand of the Market.

This is not to say that all whom seem to go willingly along, arm in hand with the market, can be seen as lacking in resistant will. Sometimes, “subjects become willing if not being willing is made unbearable.”³⁹⁸ Indeed, we need not demonize those who find it impossible not to go with the flow. Still, we *can* learn from those who bear the unbearable placing their bodies dam-like across the rushing tide. And if it is impossible to stop the flow of the mainstream, it may still be possible to feel a different way through it: “It is thus possible that disobedience can take the form of an *unwilling obedience*: subjects might obey a command but do so grudgingly or reluctantly and enact with or through the compartment of their body a withdrawal from the right of the command even as they complete it.”³⁹⁹ When one must obey, one may do so unhappily, with expressions of unwilling acquiescence. This is the type of willing encased in the affect of our biblical characters who obey God, but do so with hostility. This is the sort of damming we see in Martha and Jonah. They dam/n the theological flow, not by denying God, but by damning God. Jonah tries to fully disobey and cannot bear/live in the face of God’s coercive rod (the storm, the fish), but he still practices unwilling obedience through his affect. Similarly, Martha practices both disobedience--she does not cease in her worry--and an unwilling obedience to the demands for hospitality--she actively shows hostility toward

³⁹⁸ Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 139.

³⁹⁹ Ahmed, *Willful Subjects*, 140.

the uneven burdens under which the obligations of hospitality have placed her. Damning her sister and Jesus for their lack of care, she also impedes the flow of the story. These affect alien prophets exist as blockage; their existence stops up or slows down the neoliberal flow. To *feel* rather than to *flow* is their prophetic character to persist, and so insist, and so exist, and so persist, per-haps.

In the persistence of affect alien prophets we should recall the crip sensibility that demands with Berardi for a return of singularity and the affirmation of the pleasures of a relaxed soul. We can find in the tapping into bad feelings a creative and, dare I say, crooked response to demands to straighten up and get in line with the panic and exhaustion inducing happiness on offer by neoliberal capitalism. Indeed, might we find in the bad feelings explored throughout this dissertation the specter of all those whose histories have gone missing from the historical archives? And if so, as I argue in the following chapter, might we find the potential for new ways of being from within these unfinished ghost stories? In other words might we be both haunted and halted by those who did not and do not go with the flow?

Prophetic madness (whether it comes in the form of the impeding neoliberal joy or of the ecstasy of breaking through biopolitical blockages to get a life) is the rejection of a theological certainty that says salvation will come through our fidelity either to the supreme value of money or that dictated by exclusive and monarchic readings of the Christian Church and of Christ. The political freedom to be unhappy is not, as I will demonstrate in the following chapter, akin to the purported freedom of neoliberalism that rejects our relational responsibilities. Rather, following Lynne Huffer's analysis of eros in Michel Foucault's work on madness in conjunction with the disjunctive synthesis

embedded in the Process God, I argue that the political freedom advocated for by the feminist killjoy and the bipolar prophet, is one that requires a more faithful response to our entanglement with others. In other words the freedom to be unhappy, while rejecting the demand to be happy *for* others, is actually the demand to attend to the suffering and flourishing *of* those others too often left out of both political and theological narratives of happiness and redemption, those crip exceptions that are bad investments. The freedom of the other to feel bad is our command to no longer ask to be comforted by another person's mood—demanding those who are unhappy to become happiness-making-objects. This command might be James's care work, Berardi's therapoetry, and my grave attending, all of which hope to find *a life* through our individual and collective discomfort (our madness). This chapter attended to the laments of affect aliens, the next chapter attempts to respond theologically to such cries.

Chapter Five: Unreasoned Care

In *Mad for Foucault* Lynne Huffer invites us to return to *The History of Madness*, Foucault's early exploration into the shifting conception of insanity from the Renaissance through the Age of Reason. Of particular significance to Foucault was the shift from the dark and untamable side of reason, that of "unreason," to the category of madness, which in being diagnosed as such was emblematic of both exposure and erasure. For Foucault, unreason was the tragic underside of reason, that which hovered at the edge of thought as the unthought. Madness was what unreason became through its medicalization and confinement. Madness was that which reason could distance as other-than itself. Through the expulsion of madness from reason the moral subject was birthed. In making madness a recognizable thing, the forces of unreason, as well as the actual lives of those marked as mad, got silenced. As Foucault articulates this process, "If this evolution was to be summed up in one sentence, we might say that the kernel of the experience of Unreason was that madness was there its own subject, but that in the experience that came into being in the late eighteenth century, madness was alienated from itself through its promotion to a new status as object."⁴⁰⁰ Huffer puts this turn thusly: "Both summoned and driven out, madness becomes a plenitude that can appear in the order of reason, as 'the opposite of itself,' to give science 'a rational grip' (M 243/F 261)."⁴⁰¹ Unlike Derrida who views Descartes as *Madness's* primary target, Huffer recovers Freud as Foucault's

⁴⁰⁰ Michel Foucault, *History of Madness* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 443.

⁴⁰¹ Lynne Huffer, *Mad for Foucault* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 144.

foil. Huffer elucidates the importance of Foucault's own assessment of the wounding grip scientific rationalism had on those gone silenced by the objectification of madness.⁴⁰²

A long history of confinement, legalism, and medicalization took shape during this vital shift from the wild terrains of unreason depicted in the art and literature of the Renaissance to the making of madness into an object of study in the 18th and 19th centuries. In tracing the epochal shifts Foucault also begins to uncover ethical shifts, and in looking to the past opens up possibilities for the future. Huffer finds in these shifts, and in Foucault's careful attention (or what she calls Foucault's curiosity-as-care) to the archives, a source of transformation through the possibility (and not promise) of resurfacing unreason as an inescapable part of reason, rather than as madness in need of expulsion and confinement.

Following Huffer into an erotic encounter with the archive, this chapter will argue that it is from within the impossibility of ever making unreason (the limit of thought) fully speak that I offer an erotic ethics, or what I have called elsewhere a grave attending, as fitting for a theology of unredemption constructed in this dissertation. It has not been my hope to surface affect alien prophets so as to make of them idealized subjects we might now worship, follow, or capture for our own knowledge. For instance, I sought to listen to Jonah's anger not to know him, know his mind, and so cure him, a la the VeggieTales, nor to stabilize a reading of Jonah's anger in such a way that might efface the limits of his anger. Rather, I sought to listen for Jonah's anger (even/especially in his silence in the face of God) so as to keep the unlimited nature of thought alive even in a moment of God's limited mercy. In trying to feel Martha's mood, to be weary and

⁴⁰² Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 36.

worrisome with her, I sought not to redeem her as a model feminist citizen, nor to denigrate the affects of Mary, but rather to see where her moodiness might take us, and to ask what has been lost by covering over such a mood. In other words, in finding hope in what Huffer and Foucault might name as an eros in excess of bios (a point further elucidated below), I find a resistance to a redemption of the suffering of the unreasonable, while at the same time an opening for the hope that their suffering might have been otherwise.

Hence, this chapter argues that we might attempt with Huffer and Foucault a different listening to our own murmuring mad ones, to the unreasonable prophets that have populated these pages, and to those that have haunted it (and dear readers, haunted you) in the background. In an interview with Roger-Pol Droit Foucault reminds us that, “for twenty years now I’ve been worrying about my little mad ones, my little excluded ones, my little abnormal”: “mes petits fous, mes petits exclus, mes petits anormaux.”⁴⁰³ It is my hope that in these pages I have joined Foucault in his worries for my own petits fous, those that I want to name as my little monsters—the monstrously unproductive, the cripple waiting to be stroked gently open, Jonah that killer of theological joy, a worrying and worrisome Martha, the bipolar woman all too aware of the saliva on her lips, and Berardi’s panicked and exhausted masses—monsters who, unlike Lady Gaga’s, cannot or will to not grow up to be model citizens. Foucault’s ethical attention to the archive, to history, to the little excluded ones, and to the powers of effacement enacted by sovereign

⁴⁰³ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 23.

secular reason will be a key frame for why and how we might begin to hear again so as to recover the possibility of what Foucault calls “becom[ing] again what we never were.”⁴⁰⁴

For Huffer, Foucault’s injunction that we might “become again what we never were,” can be read as the possibility of transformation:

The ethical stakes of this book engage the question: what is at stake in self-transformation? How, to echo Nietzsche in *The Gay Science* (1882), do we become ‘the poets of our life?’ And how, as the ethical poets of our life, can we become again what we never were? To ask about ethics in this way is to pose ethics as a question about subjectivity,. And to ask about ethics from a queer feminist perspective is to ask about a desubjectivating ethics of eros. Such an erotic ethics practices the art of living as a specifically historical, archival task whose political stakes are the transformation of the present.⁴⁰⁵

To the questions of an ethics of eros, which are also those of this dissertation, I want to add the question of whether we find a sense of divinity within this transformation of the present as a result of an erotic attention to the past. Might we find a becoming sense of divinity that has itself never been--again?

This chapter suggests that while Foucault, read through Huffer, seduces us into a practice of erotic listening for our irredeemably unproductive ghosts, Alfred North Whitehead’s cosmology lures us to understand such ethical practices as also those on offer by a divinity whose actuality is dependent on our “making [God] feel.”⁴⁰⁶ A God that feels all of our becomings and perishings lures us to attend to how we affect and are affected by one another. An erotic Foucauldian ethic lures us to feel for all those ghosts that we have disappeared as inconsequential, but on whose effacement our becoming-

⁴⁰⁴ Michel Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982* (New York: Picador, 2001), 95.

⁴⁰⁵ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 244.

⁴⁰⁶ Isabelle Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead: A Free and Wild Creation of Concepts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 461.

subject has been built. Further I suggest that reading Whitehead along with Foucault and Huffer (perhaps my own kind of mad conjoining) illuminates the ethical import of a divinity that serves simultaneously as a limiting force for our actuality and an opening spark for our potentiality. According to Whitehead, in the Galilean origin of Christianity, in the figuration of God as Love, we might find a divinity which, “dwells upon the tender elements in the world, which slowly and in quietness operate by love; and [which] finds purpose in the present immediacy of a kingdom not of this world Love neither rules, nor is it unmoved; also it is [521] a little oblivious to morals. It does not look to the future; for it finds its own reward in the immediate present.”⁴⁰⁷ God in the form of the Eros of the World is freed from the orthodox Unmoved Prime Mover and released into the present immediacy of what might be in *this* world. The felt experience of the world brings God into actuality with the world; but it is God as Eros, the appetition of Love in the world, where despotic moralizing might rupture in favor of an ethics seeking erotic reward (what Huffer names as a yes to life) in the immediate present. God in process with all other actual entities with the world takes *care* for all other actual entities in the form of curiosity about and desire for what has been, what is, and what might be. We might locate such force of eros, Huffer’s yes to life, in the Whiteheadian God’s oblivion to morals and God’s tender care for all that was seemingly lost.

The following pages, then, take *care* for what might be *found* when we read these two thinkers together as erotically ethical aesthetes. In the beginning Foucault comes closer to the surface, allowing Whitehead to haunt in the background. As we move on the enfoldment shifts, Whitehead unfolding more clearly, and Foucault haunting the edge of

⁴⁰⁷ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 343.

Whitehead's thought. By the end it is the two together that open a theoethics—a theoethics in which a mad lament arises through the careful contestation of what has been *and* a grave attention to what might have been. But, for now, let us attend to the Foucauldian archives that have haunted Huffer.

In *Mad for Foucault*, Huffer suggests that in focusing somewhat myopically on the histories of sexuality, queer theorists have overlooked the crucial tie between *Madness* and *History of Sexuality I*, and in so doing have missed proposals that trouble a too-easy divide between a desubjectivating impulse and an ethical one. According to Huffer, “If returning to the Greeks was Foucault’s way of getting out from under Christian morality, turning to the moment of splitting in the Age of Reason was Foucault’s way of getting out from under philosophy’s despotic moralizing power.”⁴⁰⁸ With philosophy’s despotic moralizing as that which has caged and demands contestation, we are brought into contact with how the rise of rational man left victims in its wake. Ethics, for our purposes, differs from despotic moralizing in that to take ethical care is to attend to particular interactions between self, other, and world; and not to presuppose a universal way of becoming the good subject.

In the move to madness as mental illness unreason--“that bodily dimension of human experience: the cosmic, tragic presence of life and death—Eros and Thanatos—at the heart of all subjectivity,”⁴⁰⁹ was tamed so that modern man as subject, what earlier in this dissertation was named as ‘the good citizen,’ could come into being. In other words, it is through the making of subjects of the “mad” in their confinement and medicalization

⁴⁰⁸ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, xvi.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, xvi.

that is birthed rational man, the reasoned moral subject. As Huffer suggests, “Madness is the ‘ransom’ paid by the ‘other’ for the historical rise of the rational moral subject.”⁴¹⁰ In Foucault’s formulation: “Unreason becomes the reason of reason – to the exact extent that reason only recognizes it as a possession,”⁴¹¹ and, “In short, the critical consciousness of madness was increasingly brought out into the light, while its more tragic components retreated ever further into the shadows, soon to almost vanish entirely.”⁴¹² To possess unreason for reason’s own definition is to silence unreason and those parts of subjectivity—the tragic and cosmic—that might loose us from any sense of stable self, one closed off to our own transformation and to that part of life that might awaken our responsibility to the other.

For Huffer, “This is where eros becomes important, for in its etymology eros refers not only to a notion of passionate love but also to a life force, what Audre Lorde calls, like Nietzsche, ‘the yes within ourselves.’”⁴¹³ Hence she asks, “Might an ethics of eros be articulated as a possibility of life to transform the violence of biopower?”⁴¹⁴ In returning to that part of subjectivity that undoes subjectivity, to eros more than bios, we return ourselves to the scene of the other’s ransom, to the other’s effacement, and ultimately to unreason’s potential to transform the violence of biopower. In other words, we gravely attend to those that paid the price for our becomings and overcomings. It is in

⁴¹⁰ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 92.

⁴¹¹ Foucault, *Madness*, 345.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, 27.

⁴¹³ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 256.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*

this sense of ransom, coerced from the violence of biopower, that Huffer locates one tie to the history of the queer. In this history ‘homosexuality’ as a medical disorder is the ransom paid by the queer so that the reasonable heterosexual might be birthed. A return to the scene of effacement and to the powers of unreason, for Huffer, might be key for queer theory and a renewed sense that one can speak ethically without speaking morally, without capturing the subject in a system of moral principles which would demand another other’s ransom, or which would fall into the same logic of violent biopower.

Following in Huffer’s footprints, or archival hearings, we might better notice the ransom paid by the mad of this dissertation, like the bipolar woman who cannot let go and let be. In other words, as I have hoped to show, the tie between the queer and the mad, those who have paid the ransom for philosophy and psychology’s rational moral subject, is their relation to reason. In particular, besides its queerness, a return to *Madness* returns us to the inescapable bond between madness and unproductivity. As we saw with our exploration of queer time and crip affect in chapters 2 and 3, the queer and the crip have always already been a threat to the compulsory heterosexuality and compulsory ableism demanded by a neoliberal productivism. What *Madness* uncovers is how crucial productivity was to the establishment of reason over and against madness. Without such tie the need for the confinement and medicalization of madness might have lost its moralizing vigor.

In *Madness*, confinement not only names and subjectivizes the figure of the mad, but also serves as an effacement of actual lived lives—those that went classed by madness in attempts to silence the power of unreason. A key figuration of unreason during the Renaissance was the “ship of fools,” or in German the *Narrenschiff*.

According to Foucault, out of all of the ships depicted in art and literature by such artists of madness as Bosch, (whose painting *Das Narrenschiff* Foucault will continue to draw on throughout *Madness*), the narrenschiff actually existed.⁴¹⁵ The mad were sentenced to an itinerant existence left to roam from one port to another, each port desperately protecting itself from the madness aboard the ship. Foucault admits that it is difficult to be certain of the meaning of such expulsions. Indeed not all madmen were expelled; some were hospitalized (this might be understood as earlier confinements of the mad, a practice that will as Foucault shows us become more prominent). Foucault surmises that some may have taken sail in a kind of pilgrimage: the unreasoned in search of their reason.⁴¹⁶ In some instances it seems that the narrenschiff may have been a way of expelling unwanted foreigners.⁴¹⁷ But beyond these practical reasons Foucault offers the insight that the ship of fools also took on a ritualistic form of passage and exile. While some might see this as a similar form of confinement, which Foucault argues arose in the shift to the Classical Age, Foucault marks crucial differences between the ship and the asylum. The ship was confinement as passage; the mad were sent out to the other world and arrived from the other world. They were not contained or cured, but roamed the sea, representing the ever-present unreason at the border of reason, the borders of ports, cities, and towns.

Further, “water brought its own dark symbolic charge, carrying away, but purifying too ... This enforced navigation is both rigorous division and absolute Passage,

⁴¹⁵ Foucault, *Madness*, 9.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

serving to underline in real and imaginary terms the *liminal* situation of the mad in medieval society.”⁴¹⁸ According to Deleuze, for Foucault, perhaps the ship is also the sea such that the two are symbolically enfolded: “folds and foldings that together make up an inside: they are not something other than the outside, but precisely the inside *of* the outside.”⁴¹⁹ In other words, unreason was not that which could easily be objectified, contained, or cured because it was the underside of reason, a part of subjectivity that threatened, but could not be sublated into reason. It could not be possessed.

This uncontainability was to be suppressed in the epochs that followed such that: “The great cosmic conflict of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, of which the Insane told the narrative, was so displaced that by the end of the classical age it had become the unmediated dialectics of the heart.”⁴²⁰ Thought’s ability to think, or better feel-think, the unthought (to touch its limit) is lost when the ship of fools disappears into an unmediated dialectics. Huffer: “The ship of fools is thus ‘the unreason of the world’ (M 12/F 23; translation modified); its navigation is the creative but shattering movement of thinking itself toward its own limit as unreason.”⁴²¹ Hence, at the very moment that madness is freed from its itinerant journey through the watery shadows it is captured and drained of its transformative power. Exposure and enslavement fortify one another. Indeed, Huffer writes, “Foucault’s ‘archaeology of alienation’ (M 80) in *Madness* insists on the double gesture of negative exclusion and positive reorganization through which fools in a ship

⁴¹⁸ Foucault, *Madness*, 11.

⁴¹⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (London: Continuum, 1999), 97.

⁴²⁰ Foucault, *Madness*, 361.

⁴²¹ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 102.

become specimens of mental illness. Repression and productivity work in tandem: the repressive gesture of confinement produces madness.”⁴²² Naming as production is also the creation of a kind of captivity even/especially as it frees the mad from the chains of unreason. In other words being brought back into the fold of reason, being contained back on the shores, robbed unreason of its power to enfold back out--of madness to move at the limit of thought and not as the rationale for its stability. Exposure and erasure: working in tandem, an inseparable couple.

This coupling is what sets the stage for Huffer’s ethical reading of Foucault:

At stake in Foucault’s tracing of these figures in their historical appearance and disappearance are ethical questions about subjectivity and alterity within a modern rationalist moral order. Faced with an objectifying language of reason for the telling of history, *History of Madness* refigures those sexual subjects transformed by science into objects of intelligibility—as homosexuals, onanists, perverts, and so on—by allowing them to hover as ‘fantastical’ ghosts. They haunt our present, but we can’t quite grasp them.⁴²³

In their haunting those subjects transformed into objects demand an ethical hearing. It is one answered by Huffer in her reading of an erotic ethic from within the Foucauldian “archaeology of alienation,” or his archival attention, his curiosity as care.

It is my hope that this dissertation has begun to glimpse some other ghosts, not just sexual perverts, but theological and economic ones--those whom in their refusal to be productive and whole cannot be objectified into the machines of production. Indeed, it is in this play of captivity and freedom, in repression and production, that we get glimpses of those unreasonable prophets that have haunted these pages refusing to come fully enough into view to be studied as objects of knowledge, and yet of whom neoliberal

⁴²² Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 59.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 51.

capitalism has so desperately tried to capture, fix, and redeem. Here we might recall disability theorist, Henri-Jacques Stiker's assertion quoted in chapter three that:

The 'thing has been designated, defined, framed. Now it has to be scrutinized, pinpointed, dealt with. People with 'it' make up a marked group, a social entity... The disabled, henceforth of all kinds, are established as a category to be reintegrated and thus to be rehabilitated. Paradoxically, they are designated in order to be made to disappear, they are spoken in order to be silenced.⁴²⁴

We might recall Noëlle Vahanian's observations from chapter two that, "what is called reason is a form of blindness, a suspension of thought which produces sanity—the ability to desist from willing, a 'being caught up and carried along.'"⁴²⁵ Might this willing--one that a la Ahmed willfully wanders away from the norm and persists in its affect alienation--be an erotic life-force, one which gravely attends to that which has been, is, *and* might be? We can see the tie between the freedom of naming and the capture of being in Negri's acknowledgement that if we are not careful the monstrosity of the multitude will be reappropriated into a eugenic logic of Power that fortifies the Empire. Negri warns of the monster becoming a tool in the eugenic narratives of the Empire; we can think here of Lady Gaga's use of goth monstrosity to exhibit her ability to overcome damage. We might even glimpse our too-frequent theological capture of the biblical figures of Jonah and Martha into logics we believed would be liberative, but which I propose bypassed the darker sides of our reason. Perhaps it was the prophesy of unreason that bubbled in Jonah's anger and Martha's worry. In each of these formulations of alterity traced throughout these pages it is the violence of biopower over and against the

⁴²⁴ Henri-Jacques Stiker, *A History of Disability* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 134.

⁴²⁵ Noëlle Vahanian, *The Rebellious No: Variations on a Secular Theology of Language* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 71.

transformative force of eros that creates the affectual alienation these monsters of mine have endured. It is the ransom they paid for the rise of the eugenically approved model citizen, able worker, and good Christian. In other words, with the help of Foucault and Huffer, we might begin to see the historical and philosophical matrixes faced by those still holding tight to the capture of unreason. This hold is a desperate attempt to resist being freed into the slavery of madness. It is for this reason that this chapter looks to Huffer's reading of *Madness* as the opening of an ethical response to the unreasonable laments of those I have named elsewhere in this dissertation, affect alien prophets.

For Huffer, it is in Foucault's attention to the historical shifts from unreason to madness, and the archival accounts of the simultaneous subjectivization and erasure of the living mad, that we might find a discursive justification for a different practice of ethics, one that no longer bowed to the moralizing powers of modern philosophy: "This approach to Foucault will tease out, in *Madness*, his ethical alternative to the philosophical production of moral norms by a sovereign secular reason. That ethical alternative to rationalist morality—something we might imagine as sexual experience released from its moral frame—is what I call Foucault's ethics of eros."⁴²⁶ Recall that for Huffer eros is a form of life that remains uncaptured by bios. By "bios" Huffer does not mean life in general, but life as it has been contained and defined by Reason or biopower. Its transformative power lies in the promise and threat of becoming differently in relation to the other. It is a desire for the limit of thought. In other words, Huffer suggests that an ethical reorientation toward the unreasonable ghosts of the archive--without resurrecting

⁴²⁶ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, xvi.

a life up for redemption and so transformation into rational man—helps us to relocate the importance of eros (of a yes to life) from within and not in spite of madness.

According to Foucault in the loss of unreason madness also lost its voice; it cannot speak: “In itself, it was a silent thing: there was no place in the classical age for a literature of madness, in that there was no autonomous language for madness, and no possibility that it might express itself in a language that spoke its truth.”⁴²⁷ And that in an age of reason with its rise of scientific inquiry that, “The science of mental illness, such as it was to develop in the asylums, was only ever of the order of observation and classification. It was never to be a dialogue.”⁴²⁸ How can we be reoriented toward the lives of those who cannot speak? To those never supposed to be in dialogue? For Huffer, this is where Foucault’s attention to the archive becomes key. Huffer proposes such archival work as the opening to, “a pathway for a different hearing.”⁴²⁹ This hearing thirsts erotically not for the familiar figures of madness to rise from the dead and into productive life, but rather for the unraveling subjectivity of the listener, the one who has been birthed through the erasure of those our ears now seek to hear. For, the voices of the mad, of the unreasonable, can never fully speak. But in their “murmurings”⁴³⁰ they *do* haunt, and in haunting invite an erotic attention.

The theo-ethic embedded in erotic attention is amplified, I argue when we begin to listen to the cacophonous sounds produced in the intensity of thought and unthought

⁴²⁷ Foucault, *Madness*, 516-7.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, 487.

⁴²⁹ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 227.

⁴³⁰ Foucault *Madness*, Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*

achieved in bringing together Foucault with Whitehead. The tie between Foucault and Whitehead is by no means obvious. And yet, both understand an *unreasonable* desire to be at play in how we might be *and* might have come to be differently. For instance, thought as propositional for Whitehead is thought as a lure toward feeling, and therefore perhaps an erotics. Is there not, after all, an interesting resonance between the injunction to “become again what we never were,” and God’s conceptual feeling as, “the sense of what might be and of what might have been...the entertainment of an alternative”⁴³¹ According to Isabelle Stenger’s God’s conceptual feeling has the character of the ‘what if?’ such that “In the constitution of an actual entity:--whatever component is red, might have been green; and whatever component is loved, might have been coldly esteemed.”⁴³² To become again what we never were or that which might have been, in this sense, is a desire at the heart of both God and an erotic listening.

God’s conceptual feeling as characterized by the what-if cannot be divorced from what has been. Indeed, for Whitehead, novelty and actuality are inseparable because actuality is necessary data for novelty and novelty is necessary lure for actuality: “Freedom, givenness, potentiality, are notions which presuppose each other and limit each other.”⁴³³ In other words the what-if arises from both what has been (determinate ingressions of what has been positively prehended or felt by the actual entity) and what might have been (the indeterminate that did not make the cut into determination, but rather remains as a negative prehension in the state of potentiality and not actuality). A

⁴³¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: Free Press, 1968), 26.

⁴³² Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 149.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, 133.

freedom that arises from within the drama of actuality and potentiality is a grave freedom, one that is grounded in that which if buried over was never fully gone. This kind of grave freedom is reflective of Foucault's eros, which according to Huffer "articulates an ideal of freedom that hovers in the moment before its separation into pain and pleasure, dissolution and connection, the forces of undoing and merging."⁴³⁴

This freedom might hover in the middle spaces of God's dipolar nature reminding us that while things today are thus, they might have been otherwise.⁴³⁵ This otherwise for Whitehead, perhaps like Foucault, is opened by moments of madness, or what he calls folly: "It is true that advance is partly the gathering of details into assigned patterns. This is the safe advance of dogmatic spirits, fearful of folly."⁴³⁶ Whitehead rejects this fear, insisting instead on the, perhaps foolish or *mad*, possibility of novelty, "a new vision of the great Beyond."⁴³⁷

The crest and trough of reason and unreason, and those of actuality and potentiality, enfolding with one another like waves, cut to the primacy of becoming in Whitehead's cosmology. Like the erotic ethics that relies on a desire to hear the murmurs of the archive in Huffer's reading of Foucault, Whitehead's processual cosmology relies on the Eros of the World, or God's desire for novelty within actuality. God as Eros of the World is key for our understanding of how the primordial and consequent natures of God depend on one another, in that the Eros of the primordial pole keeps the thirst for novelty

⁴³⁴ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 43.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 57.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

alive within God's and our own actualized becoming. According to Roland Faber, "In the grand concluding vision of *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead interprets [the] wholeness of the process as the creative and receptive unity of self-transcendence (creativity/receptacle/self-transcendence) in which God appears threefold, namely as 'Eros,' as the 'Adventure of the Universe as One' (AI, 295), and as 'Harmony of Harmonies' (AI, 296)."⁴³⁸ God as Eros is God as appetite for the becoming, for the felt experience of the world, and the *best* possible materializations in each moment. God as Adventure of the Universe as One does not seek stable unity, one dictated by preformed ideals, but rather in feeling the world as it is, "in all its truthfulness,"⁴³⁹ and so in perceiving the momentary unity of the Universe as it has become One, also ensures that it, "arranges the [universe] as an adventure, placing it squarely into openness, accompanying it as open wholeness, and *keeping its wholeness open*."⁴⁴⁰ God as the Harmony of Harmonies, a concept to which we return below, does not mean that God represents a stable identification with a uniform whole, but rather that God ensures that actuality and potential continue to fortify one another in their coexistence. As Faber has it, "This harmony... does *not* represent any preordained idea, or any particular order or system to which the world must eventually correspond if it is to be saved; it is instead the power of God to bring everything that might happen into a 'harmonious wholeness' in

⁴³⁸ Roland Faber, *God as Poet of the World: Exploring Process Theologies* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 118.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

which the world in fact cannot perish.”⁴⁴¹ According to Faber, Whitehead calls this processual, nonformal unity creativity.⁴⁴² God’s role in such a creative process is that “particular power that preserves precisely *this* unity by *keeping it open* (Faber 2000e).”⁴⁴³ Keeping the whole open is both a way to preserve what has been and to ensure that what might have been will not be lost. God’s appetite in God’s primordial nature refuses the closure of the what has been, where as God’s consequent nature takes the “tender care” that nothing of what has been or what might have been be lost.⁴⁴⁴

Reading Whitehead’s erotic divinity, one that simultaneously limits and is unlimited, along with Foucault’s erotic ethic, reveals a crucial theoethical resonance between the Process God’s “tender care that nothing be lost,” and Foucault’s “care as curiosity.” From within a folding together of these two thinkers a theology response-able to the laments of my little monsters might (re)surface, even if it does so like a wave, only to wash over us momentarily, before being dragged back out to the watery unspeakable abyss of thought-at-its-limit, of unreason. Let us welcome the monstrous waters.

My Little Monsters

According to Foucault:

The fact that internees of the eighteenth century bear a resemblance to our modern vision of the asocial is undeniable, but it is above all a gesture of segregation itself ... in the mid-seventeenth century, [the mad man] suddenly became an outsider, expelled by a society to whose norms he could not be seen to conform: and for our own intellectual comfort, he then became a candidate for prisons, asylums and

⁴⁴¹ Faber, *Poet of the World*, 118.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 346.

punishment. In reality, this character is merely the result of superimposed grids of exclusion...It is the gesture of confinement, in short, which created alienation ... It follows from this that to rewrite the history of that banishment is to draw an archaeology of that alienation.⁴⁴⁵

What would it mean to rewrite the narratives of the affect alien and mad prophets that have peopled this dissertation as an archeology of their alienation, and in doing so look not to the nature of their madness, but rather to the situations of segregation that led to their being named as such? If essential to Huffer's return to *Madness* was the inextricable tie between the mad and the queer, then a tie between the mad and the unproductive fuel mine. I suggest this tie poses a theoethical question. If the unproductive have paid the ransom for the rise of biopolitically affirmed model citizen and model theology, then might an exploration of why that ransom was paid help us to hear differently those whom have been wounded by such violence? Might such an archaeology help us to rethink the givenness of our theo-logical orders?

According to Foucault, in the late eighteenth century madness no longer took the form of the bestial nature of man, but rather was the result of, or perhaps better, that which needed to be resisted in the construction of a milieu.⁴⁴⁶ Adherence to the milieu marked one's ability to resist madness. This adherence was an adherence not only to the social norms of the family (a point made by Huffer), but also to productive work. From within the archives Foucault notes at the end of the eighteenth century madness and one's distance from madness formed a milieu, "madness was lost nature, misplaced sensibility,

⁴⁴⁵ Foucault, *Madness*, 79-80.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 373.

the wanderings of desire, *time disposed of measure*.⁴⁴⁷ Madness could be abolished through a return to one's proper nature, "a happy return of existence to its closest truth."⁴⁴⁸ The truth of existence could be found in proper (natural) relations and proper use of time including work appropriate to one's status and gender. For instance:

'Come, you lovable, sensual women,' wrote Beachesne,
And flee the dangers of false pleasures, fleeting passions, luxury and
inaction; follow your young husbands to the countryside, and on journeys;
race them across grassy, flower-strewn prairies, then come back to Paris as
an example to your companions, showing them the *beneficial exercise and
work that befits your sex*. Love, and bring up your children above all, and
you will learn to what degree this pleasure is greater than any other, and
how *it has been reserved for you by nature*; you will grow old slowly, if
your life is pure.⁴⁴⁹

We might see a glimmer of the ship of fools, in that madness there too threatened societal order. And yet by the late eighteenth century the unreason inhabited by the ship of fools was no longer part of one's nature; rather it was one's fall away from the *natural social order* that marked one as mad. This shift meant that one could be trained, cured, and redeemed; in other words one could be brought back into order. No longer an essential part of our natural subjectivity (the limit of the subject and of thought that persisted in the shadows) madness was a danger you could flee. The marks of madness here, those false pleasures, readily support Huffer's thesis of the importance of madness to sexuality, but it is also striking that along with sensuality--which might draw sensuous women away from the pure life of the domesticity nature reserves for their sex--rests the pleasures of luxury and *inaction*. No longer an essential part of action, inaction becomes the marker of a

⁴⁴⁷ Foucault, *Madness*, 373. (Emphasis added).

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.* (Emphasis added).

fallen nature, an issue of morality. The refusal of work marks one as corrupted and unfaithful. Hence, listening to this piece of the archive differently hears not only Beachesne's moralizing voice, but also the ghosts of sensual women. If these ghosts had not been refusing their domestic labor, had not been falling into pleasurable inaction, there would be no need for Beachesne's instruction.

Additionally, my sense of bipolar temporality can be considered a call to rethink time out of its measure. In other words might mania and depression be contemporary embodiments of the "misplaced sensibility, the wanderings of desire, *time disposed of its measure*" which in the 18th century marked the milieu constituted by madness?

The history of confinement might be a history of the refusal of bipolar time; time in which one does *not* get up out of one's (lonely or full) bed in time to get the domestic labor done. For instance, as part of his discussion of the tie between madness, religion, and time Foucault notes that:

In 1781, a German author evoked the distant happy times when priests were granted absolute power, and idleness was unknown; each instant was marked by 'ceremonies, religious practices, pilgrimages, visits to the poor and the sick, and feast days on the calendar'. *Time was thus fully dedicated to organised happiness, leaving no leisure for empty passions, boredom or disgust with life.*⁴⁵⁰

Time out of joint was to be organized, no day left idle, all passions directed toward order. Imagine what affect aliens lurk in the tale of these distant "happy" times. We hear what might have been the feminist killjoy giving up domestic "bliss" in order to live. We feel the gravity backlit with hope when the disgustingly crooked, who being disgusted by the straightening rod, remained bent, even in the end. Our little monsters are haunting Foucault's archive.

⁴⁵⁰ Foucault, *Madness*, 368. (Emphasis added).

The moralizing of ordered affect and dutiful action, as well as their familial and economic implications, populate Foucault's analysis of confinement: "Confinement was an institutional creation peculiar to the seventeenth century ... But in the history of unreason, it signals a decisive event: the moment when madness is seen against the social horizon of poverty, the inability to work and the impossibility of integrating into a social group. It was the moment when it started to be classified as one of the problems of the city."⁴⁵¹ It is in the madperson's inability to work that she becomes a threat to the city, and as threat a problem to be solved. Indeed we find in the pages of *Madness* a litany of condemnations against idleness:

But all seventeenth-century texts by contrast agree on the infernal triumph of idleness, and it was idleness that now led the great round of the vices and encouraged all the others. It should be remembered that the edict founding the Hôpital Général stated clearly that one of its aims was to prevent 'begging and idleness, the source of all unrest'. Bourdaloue echoed that condemnation of idleness, the miserable pride of fallen man: 'What then is the disorder of an idle life? Saint Ambrose replies quite unambiguously that it is a second revolt against God.' In the houses of confinement, work therefore took on an ethical significance: as idleness had become the supreme form of revolt, the idle were forced into work, into the endless leisure of labour without utility or profit.⁴⁵²

As further illuminated below, those that could not work, within or beyond the walls of confinement, were irrevocably fallen. There was no chance of resilience, no overcoming idleness, and so no redemption from condemnation.

Further, if the importance of use-value of the madperson took on a striking significance as a rationale for confinement, it is one that has by no means abated today. Consider the threat to our economy made by the bipolar woman who falls back into the bed; and the cripple who says, "Fuck employability, I'm too sick to work." What would it

⁴⁵¹ Foucault, *Madness*, 77.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 71.

mean to be unable to work? Of what use could we possibly be if we remained idle? The salvation of the neoliberal city, like that of the 18th century Protestant one, depends on functioning labor; it depends, as Robin James makes clear, on being resiliently flexible and so malleable as the tools the neoliberal economy needs us to be. Even so, why confine the idle, unless the very presence of, the voices of, the bodies of those who cannot or will not labor threatens the laboring of those whom have not *yet* been alienated from the narrative of work as redemptive?

Eventually, confinement was not enough to prevent the creep of alienation. Even those in such houses needed to be redeemed back into the moralizing system of work:

Madness was now only disorder, irregularity and obscure faults – a disturbance in men that troubled the State and contradicted morality. Just as bourgeois society was beginning to understand the futility of confinement, and lose the unity of evidence that made unreason perceptible to the classical age, it found itself dreaming of a pure form of work – which was pure profit for this society, and death and moral submission for its outsiders –where all that was foreign in man would be snuffed out and reduced to silence.⁴⁵³

This pure form of work, couched in the moralizing vocation of the changing houses of confinement, took the form of unpaid labor. If to work was to be redeemed then within the houses of confinement “cure” came through productive contribution to society. Here a split in the forms of madness once again took shape. Those, whom from within a state of confinement could learn to labor productively (if uncompensated) and to attend worship services (often on the importance of work) without disturbance could be redeemed into good moral standing. Those whose madness was beyond reach were condemned to alienation: “Like the poor, [the mad] were subject to the rule of compulsory labour, indeed in many cases the singularity of their condition became

⁴⁵³ Foucault, *Madness*, 430.

perceptible against the uniformity of this constraint. In the workshops where they were expected to blend in with others, they often signaled themselves through their inability to work and to follow the rhythms of collective life.”⁴⁵⁴ Unproductivity was in this sense a sign of an irredeemable madness.

Hence, the mad who could not work were now left with the imperative to be cured. No longer necessarily controlled by a house of confinement, they were left not to the powers of the state, but to those of shame: “But when morality formed the substance of the State, and public opinion was the most solid link in the chain that held society together, then scandal became the most redoubtable form of alienation.”⁴⁵⁵ Work was worth, and labor salvation. And thus the importance of a theology that resists this moralizing tie bubbles to the service once again. If labor is redemptive, a source of salvation, then for those who suffer from their own inaction, pay matters less than one’s salvific election. Flourishing on one’s own terms is unimportant. Either one wants to be saved or not, and if not they must be mad, and so scandalous.

The theological implications of madness and poverty were clear even before a shift in confinement that saw the rise of labor as cure. According to Foucault, by the seventeenth century, “Poverty is no longer part of a dialectic of humiliation and glorification but rather of the relationship of disorder to order and is now locked in guilt,”⁴⁵⁶ and, “the effectiveness of labor was perceived as deriving from its ethical

⁴⁵⁴ Foucault, *Madness*, 71.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 448.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

transcendence...the punishment of work...was a means of redemption.”⁴⁵⁷ Foucault finds this shift within the archive in Bénédict Augustin Morel’s *Traité de la Dégénérescence*, in which Morel claimed that madness was a particular characteristic of the poor. Reading Morel, Foucault shows how the issue of class and work were tied to salvation:

Madness ... took on meaning in social morality. It became the stigma of a class that had abandoned the forms of bourgeois ethics, and just as the philosophical concept of alienation was taking on a historical meaning thanks to the economic analysis of work, the medical and psychological concept of insanity was severed from history to become instead a moral criticism in the name of the compromised salvation for the species.⁴⁵⁸

The bourgeois ethics of family and production made the poor a threat to the salvation of the species. To fall away from such an ethic, or in other words to be insane, was a risk to labor’s redemptive powers. It is from this tension that we must assert once again the problem with narratives of redemption, particularly those that go de-historicized, ignoring *how* and *whom* we have marked as a threat, and as irredeemable.

This problem does not disappear with the rise of mental illness as a diagnosable “natural” state, which now might be cured, and so arguably redeemed. According to Foucault, once mental illness was an object of knowledge the actual lives of the mad, rather than resurrected or redeemed, were in their salvation out of illness silenced further. “The nineteenth century constituted mental alienation as one of the immemorial truths of its positivism.”⁴⁵⁹ In other words, the progress of rational man could be built on the recognition and so rehabilitation of mental alienation. Unreason, during the renaissance always close at hand and undoing the order of the world from within the tragic cosmic

⁴⁵⁷ Foucault, *Madness*, 69.

⁴⁵⁸ Foucault, *Madness*, 378.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

rhythm of unreason's enfoldment in reason, was now able to be objectified, parsed, and so distanced from the world. One therefore could escape one's madness, because madness could be fixed (contained, stabilized, and cured). Unreason was a cosmic part of reason, while madness became a defect which we might get distance from. If one could not get distance, one could not be rehabilitated and so redeemed.

Further, "Posited at a distance, and disarmed of its sacred overtones, madness reaches an appearance of neutrality which is compromised from the outset since it depends on an initial statement of condemnation."⁴⁶⁰ In other words, that madness could be medicalized, and so neutralized, implied that those who did not or could not overcome their unreason were condemned. Once madness takes its distance from reason, and so overcomes unreason, those that stick to their madness become the exceptions to resilience outlined in chapter 2. Might we therefore cling anew to the mad? How can we hear those that did not take leave of their unreason, those that could not get proper distance?

Indeed, what is to be done? If we cannot/should not redeem the mad back into a society are we left to nihilistically watch as our little monsters fade even farther from view? If to name them and bring them to light risks a redemption that is actually their objectification and condemnation, is there any point in looking/listening/feeling for their ghosts? Perhaps it is the refusal to stop looking, or in Huffer's formulation to stop hearing, or reading for affect—refusing to stop touching and feeling for our monsters-- that such impossibility of ever fully present-ing them calls us to enact. Just because we cannot make them speak does not mean we cannot reorient ourselves ever more toward the fading background. According to Foucault, "What classicism had locked up was not

⁴⁶⁰ Foucault, *Madness*, 106.

simply unreason in the abstract where the mad, the libertine, the criminal and the sick all intermingled, but also a prodigious reserve of fantasy a sleepy world of monsters, which were believed to have sunk back into the Bosch night from which they had first emerged.”⁴⁶¹ It may be time to wake the monsters, or if not fully wake them, to listen for sleepy murmurings, for the sounds of their dreams.

Erotic Listening

*“After defusing its violence, the Renaissance had liberated the voice of Madness. The age of reason, in a strange takeover, was then reduced to silence.”*⁴⁶²

To hear the sleeping monsters would be to listen again for that which has been reduced to silence. Huffer notes that even in the first pages of *Madness* we are already haunted: “throughout the pages of *Madness* [lepers] will silently and invisibly haunt the arid landscape of a world that repeatedly rejects them ... the leper is the ‘ghost’ (M 3) who hovers at the margins of the inhabitable social world that rejects him, a figure of the ‘inhuman’ (M 3) who will continue to haunt the sun-filled spaces of a Western humanism Foucault spent his life critiquing.”⁴⁶³ Like the “*it*” of disability that follows us home, the leper, as the figure of the inhuman haunts even/especially as Western humanism silences him by marking him as ‘inhuman.’ Indeed, like in the horror movie of our own making in which we flee from the creep of unproductivity and so unmeaning, “The fear of the other—of unreason itself—becomes the fear within, marked by ‘the imaginary mark of an illness’ (M 358/F 377; translation modified) to which everyone is susceptible ... the

⁴⁶¹ Foucault, *Madness*, 361.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴⁶³ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 52.

dangers of unreason's contagious effects on positive reason."⁴⁶⁴ It is this fear of becoming leper, of becoming mad that shores up our drive to be ever-more reasonable—that which I have named here and elsewhere as the drive to be ever more productive and efficient—the drive to *mean* something, to *matter* to a society that measures such worth as what we can *do* for the machine rather than *who* we are singularly and in our singularity also for one another.

The silence of the mad is ironically never more potent than when one is speaking of madness (a speaking that is never done in the voice of the mad): “it is the mute negativity of madness that gives birth, ‘in the *silent* labor of the *positive*’ (M 180/F 198; emphasis added), to a scientific view of madness.”⁴⁶⁵ Again what is to be done? If we have shelved the actually mad, the unreasonable selves as objects in the classification madness, if at the moment of making them speak, we have ventriloquized their voices, how can we ever know what they might have said? In other words, how do we hear silence? This, according to Huffer, is Foucault's ethical question. It is a paradox, one to which Huffer admits she nor she assumes Foucault, have an ultimate answer.⁴⁶⁶

Yet, the unspeakability of unreason, does not mean that the leper and the mad who haunt have no affect on the future, quite the opposite. That they *still* haunt creates the possibility of transformation. Here, I quote Huffer at length as this passage is crucial for the understanding of the Foucauldian ethics she hopes to unearth:

The conception of an open future traces the outline of an erotic alterity whose presence is crucial in Foucault. The glimmers of eros that episodically burst

⁴⁶⁴ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 53.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 273.

through the pages of *History of Madness*, and Foucault's writings as a whole, point to what I will call an erotic other as the figure for an ethical love conceived as freedom. She corresponds to what Caputo calls, in the later Foucault, 'the murmurings of a capacity to be otherwise.' I argue there that is/ murmurings of otherness is there from the start, as a consistent presence in all of Foucault's writing, as 'scintillations of the visible' and a 'style of life.' For, if that otherness is silenced in the great confinement that closeting is never total.⁴⁶⁷

If the closeting is never total, then it begs for our peeking in, for our straining to hear the monsters that bump in the night; it requires us to be spooked by its openings. Glimpses of this spooking can be found in Foucault's straining to hear those whom at the limit of their thought murmured to Foucault (and to us) in the language of unreason: Sade, Nietzsche, Artaud. For instance, it is in the moment of Nietzsche's breakdown, that of his bodymind and that of his thought, that Foucault sees him finally able to speak of the madness of which he has been philosophizing. Indeed, Foucault notes that:

This madness, which knots and divides time, which curves the world in the loop of night, this madness so foreign to the experience contemporaneous with it, does it not utter to those who can hear them, like Nietzsche and Artaud, the scarcely audible words of classical unreason, where all was nothingness and night, but now amplified into screams and fury? Giving them for the first time expression, *a droit de cité* ['right of abode'], and grasp on Western culture, a point from which all contestation becomes possible, as well as the contestation for all things? By restoring them to their primitive savagery?⁴⁶⁸

In tying the scarcely audible words of classical unreason to the contestation of all things—a whisper to a roar—the Foucauldian ethic curves and knots with my own time, dividing and undoing neoliberal time through embodiments of contestation. For might we see Nietzsche and Artaud, at their very moments of maddening breaks with modern secular reason, as affect alien prophets? And if their lament (their contestation of all things) is heard in barely audible words, then perhaps they beg from us a straining of the

⁴⁶⁷ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 80.

⁴⁶⁸ Foucault, *Madness*, 532.

ear. Perhaps they lure us to gravely attend to today's breaking down and whispering mad—those whose laments come in barely audible words, but also as I have been arguing here, in affect, in the emotional expressions of the breaks.

This willingness to be spooked might be another name for the 'style of life' suggested by Foucault in his exploration of Stoic and Cynic self-cultivation in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*. This cultivation, Huffer argues, is undertaken through practices of the care of the self, as explored by Foucault in the 1981-82 lectures at the Collège de France collected in *Hermeneutics*. It is cultivation reflected in Foucault's attention to the archive and his twenty-years of worrying about his little mad ones. The tie between the care of the self and the archive denotes an erotic attention to the other. The care of the self, from which one might "become again what we never were," is an ars erotica, in that it is a practice of what Huffer names as "an invitation to curiosity-as-care."⁴⁶⁹ Curiosity-as-care might be Foucault's insistence on "the care one takes for what exist and what *might* exist."⁴⁷⁰ But also, curiosity as care:

signals a willingness to be undone by another—even, and especially, by the other 'beside him' who cannot be heard in the terms we know ... Foucault's archive desubjectivates the knower. It is an archive that undoes, nondialectically, the researcher or the thinker as the bearer of truth: an archive that demands to be lent an ear, however impossible that hearing might be.⁴⁷¹

Curiosity-as-care enacts a becoming that is at once a desubjectivization of the curious listener, and a becoming-plural of both the ghost whom we try to hear and the we that are haunted by such ghosts. We might, even if it represents a rupture with Foucault's

⁴⁶⁹ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 275.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 118. (Emphasis added).

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*

resistance to subjectivity, rewrite such desubjectivization as a re-singularization in the Deleuzian and Berardian sense. To desubjectify the knower might be to ask into what type of subject the knower has been coercively constructed and on whose effacement has she been birthed. To re-singularize the knower is then to re-singularize the ghosts she (im)possibly strives to know, touch, feel, and hear.

The importance of the ‘we’ arises in Foucault’s exploration of the care of the self in *Hermeneutics*. Reading Seneca’s letters, Foucault notes that for Seneca, “Even if we are hardened, there are means by which we can recover, correct ourselves, and *become again what we should have been but never were*. To become again what we never were is, I think, one of the most fundamental elements, one of the most fundamental themes of this practice of the self.”⁴⁷² According to Foucault, for Seneca, and aligning with the cynics, “the practice of the self will become increasingly a critical activity with regard to oneself, one’s cultural world, and the lives led by others.”⁴⁷³ The care of the self in this way is a readying of the self for desubjectivation, for a transformation that would open us to a different kind of hearing. To become again what *we* never were is both that care for what might have been, but also an erotic opening to the archive in that the becoming will happen in the plural form: we.

We could assume that the care of the self does not in fact necessitate a “we”; or that such a “we” in terms of Seneca’s letter and Foucault’s formulation is a “we” in reference to how *each* of us within the we might become what *each* of us never was. However, reading with Huffer and Mark Jordan’s explication of *Hermeneutics* and *The*

⁴⁷² Foucault, *Hermeneutics*, 95. (Emphasis added).

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 93.

Courage of Truth, the *we-ness* of such a style of self-care becomes more evident or possible as an interpretation. In *Courage* Foucault suggests that there are two ways of reading the Greek conception of philosophical training in the care of the self, that which follows Alcibiades and that which begins with Laches. If we take Laches as our starting-point:

The care of the self does not lead to the question of what this being I must care for is in its reality and truth, but to the question of what this care must be and what a life must be which claims to care about self. And what this sets off is not the movement towards the other world, but the questioning of what, *in relation to all other forms of life*, precisely that form of life which takes care of the self must and can be in truth.⁴⁷⁴

From Laches Foucault follows to the care of the self in Cynic formation in which the care of the self shapes a style of existence. Such a style of existence, while beginning through one singular life of the Cynic, is directed toward the embodiment of truth, the style of living that tells the truth, *in relation to all other forms of life*.

Cynics, Foucault argues in *Courage*, served as “scouts” going ahead to encounter the truth and report it back. They were those that went beyond themselves into the world, but in doing so retained a style of life that would confront the world and its given orders with a truth beyond such orders. This style of life is a bodily comportment, one that in its care of the self opens itself to desubjectivization such that the “body [becomes] a reservoir of alternate lives.”⁴⁷⁵ Such alternate lives are not only the alternate lives that for each individual never were, but might become again; but also as lives in relation to the

⁴⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others II; Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 246. (Emphasis added).

⁴⁷⁵ Mark Jordan, *Convulsing Bodies: Religion and Resistance in Foucault* (Stanford: University of Stanford Press, 2015), 174.

truths of the world that resist given orders, are also lives on offer through an erotic encounter with our own others and with other selves' others. As Foucault argued, "By basing the analysis of Cynicism on [the] theme of individualism ... we are in danger of missing ... the problem, which is at the core of Cynicism, of establishing a relationship between forms of existence and manifestations of the truth."⁴⁷⁶ Such framing is ethical. The problem of establishing a relationship between the style of *a* life and the myriad manifestations of the truth is a problem that might clear a pathway to a different hearing for such manifestations. It is a problem that demands grave attending to the ghosts of the archive.

Therefore, the care of self that allows the self to be transformed by a meeting with alterity is both a practice of eros and an ethic. Care of the self is a critical practice because it is one that begins with a stripping away of one's current subjectivity as an act of desire to be transformed through an encounter with alterity. Care that has such a desirous, or erotic, character in its preparation of the self to be undone may be thought of as an ethical practice. The practice of the self must be, "a stripping away of previous education, established habits, and the environment."⁴⁷⁷ If we apply this sense of stripping away to the curiosity-as-care Huffer finds in Foucault we see how the concept of the care of the self in Foucault cannot be divorced from a care for the other, and hence forms a style of life that might be embodied by a "we." Such self-care is not a coming of the subject, but a stripping away of the habits of subjectivization that had prevented us from "becoming what *we* might have been."

⁴⁷⁶ Foucault, *Courage*, 180.

⁴⁷⁷ Foucault, *Hermeneutics*, 95.

Like Foucault's earlier return to unreason, this call to return to a becoming that never was is seemingly impossible; it is an unattainable imperative to re-inhabit the ghosts of selves and possibilities gone unrealized, that never existed, what "we *never* were." And yet it is here that Huffer finds the ethical key to madness:

But the 'we' of becoming—brought into the present as a plurality of first-person subjects connected, by the 'again,' to the persistence of the past—articulates the possibility of our own transformation, the possibility of our own becoming-other. In the terms of Madness, that self-transformation is the possibility of becoming mad. But, articulated as a 'we,' the alterity of madness is transformed, in a time we cannot know, to become something other than the object pinned down, the straitjacketed psychotic or the convulsing hysteric on the scientific stage.⁴⁷⁸

Perhaps this is the becoming mad depicted by Bosch, through Mad Meg whom Foucault notes is the only one in the eponymous painting who can carry the crystal ball; all others in an attempt at total knowledge either see nothing or are ridiculed for their attempts.⁴⁷⁹ Madness carries the hope for the future, even as she is carrying it away from those who seek knowledge of it. Becoming mad we might become knowers of our unknowing, we might be open to rupture and not certainty.

We might find such mad rupture in Foucault's reading of Cynicism, as "the idea of a mode of life as the irruptive, violent, scandalous manifestations of the truth."⁴⁸⁰ This is a living truth, which as Jordan understands it is "not a plot of progress or of managed expenditure for the sake of a greater profit,"⁴⁸¹ but rather as Foucault makes clear, a revolutionary militancy that is a "bearing witness by one's life in the form of a style of

⁴⁷⁸ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 243.

⁴⁷⁹ Foucault, *Madness*, 20.

⁴⁸⁰ Foucault, *Courage*, 183.

⁴⁸¹ Jordan, *Convulsing Bodies*, 175.

existence...ensuring that one's life bears witness, breaks, and has to break with the conventions, habits, and values of a society ... [One's life] must manifest directly, by its visible form, its constant practice, and its immediate existence, the concrete possibility and the evident value of an other life, which is the true life."⁴⁸² This style of life takes form in a care-of-the-self that, in relation to all other lives, might through bodily practice insist on the concrete possibility of an other life. This is a truth in rupture not a plotted certainty. It is an *ars erotica* (in Huffer's terms) because it is practiced through the style of bodily existence inhabited by the Cynics. The desire for truth in this way is performed as much as spoken, and is not a desire for knowledge as much as for existence.

Foucault's application of such a care as a critical stance toward the habits of modern subjectivization become ever-more clear if we return to the first lecture in *Hermeneutics of the Subject* in which he writes:

The modern age of history of truth begins when knowledge itself and knowledge alone give access to the truth. That is to say, it is when the philosopher (or the scientist, or simply someone who seeks the truth) can recognize the truth and have access to it in himself and solely through this activity of knowing, without anything else being demanded of him and without him having to change or alter his being as subject.⁴⁸³

For Bosch this might have been marked by the sickness in believing that one can fully know, and so one can capture the thought of the future. And yet in a knowledge that demands nothing of the knower, of the archivist, remains in a problematic historical knowing that unlike Foucault's archaeology of the archive, is unwilling to be undone by the subjects of its curiosity—indeed refuses to see singularities, preferring instead objects that cannot challenge his own subjectivity. Foucault's work is representative of a

⁴⁸² Foucault, *Courage*, 184.

⁴⁸³ Foucault, *Hermeneutics*, 17.

poststructuralist turn toward such deconstruction of certain knowledge and the stable subject; perhaps more surprising is the similar move made by Whitehead writing decades prior to Foucault.

We see a similar diagnosis of problematic historical knowing in Whitehead: “the moderns had lost the sense of vast alternatives, magnificent or hateful, lurking in the background, and awaiting to overwhelm our safe little traditions. If civilization is to survive, the expansion of understanding is a prime necessity.”⁴⁸⁴ Whitehead’s processual scheme, including his critique of “the fallacy of misplaced concreteness” (the willful elision of aspects of actual entities that do not fit into stagnant conceptual frameworks), is a critique of the modern substantialist subject and its objects of certainty.⁴⁸⁵ Indeed, we can read turning away from our safe little traditions in order for understanding to be expanded, as an erotic practice in that in turning we are moved toward the lurking background.

Whitehead’s thirst for an expansive understanding can be read as a thirst for that alterity which may be barely visible and yet in which there is both promise and threat (magnificence and hate). According to Faber, “the contrastive process is an *aesthetic* process of differentiation and integration of differences, even if such include ‘discord.’ Whitehead speaks of an ‘inhibition’ of contrastive development when such discord is tolerated only by excluding some of the discordant parts for the sake of attaining the ‘aesthetic unity’ of an event’s subjective aim (AI, 252, 356f., 260ff).”⁴⁸⁶ In other words,

⁴⁸⁴ Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 45.

⁴⁸⁵ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 7-8.

⁴⁸⁶ Faber, *Poet of the World*, 100.

aesthetic intensity, and so satisfaction of God's primordial aim, necessitates that we clear pathways for the hearing of alterity, of novelty, that which being thus, might have been otherwise. Such alterity and novelty, the otherwise, might lead to disaster, but the promise of intensity trumps the triviality of remaining within our safe little traditions.

In short, in the middle ground between promise and threat, what I have named in chapter 2 as a bipolar sensibility, there lies a chance for the transformation of the self and the expansion of understanding. In other words, knowledge arising through a care of the self that is also critical would demand the altering of the knower's being. *We* can only become *again* that which *we never* were, if care for the self is desubjectivating. This care for the self might begin with an erotic listening for those lurking in the background and result in a challenge to the subjectivities we have built for ourselves through the effacement of such alterity. This is where Huffer finds Foucault's archival work so key to his ethics. Read in the wake of our analysis of Whitehead above, this erotic lure to become again what we never were, a call to attend to the past and the present so as to rethink the future, takes on a cosmological and not only ethical weight. The cosmological scheme in Whitehead brings to the fore the weight of worldly becomings that feel utterly real in their actuality without losing what might feel utterly unreal in its potentiality and yet which still has affective force on our becomings.

While the question of "the real," might be anathema to Foucault, we can encounter a sense of the Whiteheadian drama between the actual and the potential in Huffer's reading of how the archive functions within Foucault's ethics. Huffer names the archive another heterotopia because it is both 'utterly real' in that it is the space in which we might note the wounds inflicted by rationalism in its effacement of the unreasonable,

and ‘utterly unreal’ in that it is the site of the potential of a different type of hearing, one which unlike from within our ‘safe little traditions’ this archival listener, would “‘agree to receive, as true, the wounding truth he hears.’”⁴⁸⁷ Agreeing to be wounded by the truth murmured in the archive is the agreement to be altered by the other in an erotic encounter. For Huffer it is in this erotic encounter that the possibility of “beginning again” or “transformation” might take place.⁴⁸⁸

However, this transformation cannot be read here as a kind of redemptive resurrection, or as a programmatic ethical call. It is rather an invitation to embody the self differently, in a way that Huffer names as “a ‘poetic attitude’ and practice, recalling the etymology of *poesis* as making: a making or fashioning attitude.”⁴⁸⁹ In this fashioning attitude or ‘style of life’ (a la Cynicism) we are engaged in the type of spirituality Foucault saw eclipsed in the Age of Reason. As touched on earlier, for Foucault, Cynicism was a “form of philosophy in which mode of life and truth-telling are directly and immediately linked to each other.”⁴⁹⁰ The direct tie between philosophy and body was, according to Jordan, for Foucault a spirituality in that philosophical truths were not available without a bodily practice of readying the subject for desubjectivization: “An act of knowing can never give access to the truth unless it is ‘prepared, accompanied, doubled, achieved’ by a ‘transformation of the subject, not the individual but the subject

⁴⁸⁷ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 249.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁰ Foucault, *Courage*, 166.

itself in its being as subject”⁴⁹¹ The style of existence that arose through the care-of-the-self practiced by the Cynics was one that did not redeem philosophical knowledge as reasoned truth-claim, but rather served as a “the grimace of philosophy staring back at itself in a curved mirror. Cynicism presents a series of breaking points at which philosophy must confront its own inconsistencies. It is a carnival but also a race to the limit.”⁴⁹² The cynic style of life was not one in search of rehabilitation into civil order, but rather, one embracing of, “nakedness... public ingestion, copulation, secretion, excretion...refusing tasteful privacy.”⁴⁹³ To bare the body of truth was to declare, “fierce allegiance to truth,” and to perform a transvaluation of philosophical values.⁴⁹⁴ The transvaluation of value and the grimaced smile staring back at philosophy are not new regimes of philosophy being resurrected out of the grave, but the haunting of order by those that would live more nakedly. To be naked in public in this way might be to declare allegiance to the truth, even as what that truth might mean remaining open to being undone in further transvaluations. The care of the self is the preparation for such undoing. We engage in an openness to be transformed, and yet this open possibility is not a promise of certain truth, as much as a risk—to risk that things might become again what they never were is to risk that this becoming will end in tragedy.

This is true both for Foucault and for Whitehead: what lurks in the background might be magnificent or hateful. And yet this threat is precisely where the ethical attitude

⁴⁹¹ Jordan, *Convulsing Bodies*, 173.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

comes in, for the threatening of order, even the novel orders established in each moment of transformation might just be how we ensure that our resistance to effacement does not become its own effacement of new others. In other words, to acknowledge that new becomings might result in new violence is to gravely attend to those ransomed (acknowledged or not) as the price of our selving. In this way an ethics of eros is reflective of Robin James's call for a more evenly distributed care work, in which the care for the exclusions to rehabilitation is done without profit sought in return. To gravely attend in this way is erotic in that we are brought down by our desire to hear again that which never was. To hear again might be to imagine big big rooms of becoming. Hence, crucially, "Foucault's eros is not a redemptive cure for that which ails us; it does not provide us with an essential plenitude to which we can cling for solace in these modern, science-dominated, seemingly loveless times. . . . If erotic generosity makes us want to cling to its promise of transformative connection, the violent force of erotic irony reminds us that the thing we're clinging to is a stick of dynamite."⁴⁹⁵ The grimace of our own philosophies smile back at us, through cracked mirrors, ready to explode.

We can see the threat/promise nature of unreason in Foucault's deployment of Nietzsche as part of the archive of unreason. The mad philosopher's laugh is the promise of hearing unreason, and so of becoming again what we never were, right at the moment when reason caged unreason. But, it is also the tragic sign of Nietzsche's end. It is in the unspeakable end of Nietzsche's thought that unreason begins ever so slightly to slip out of the closet. This slip out of the closet will not be easy to hear or identify. Indeed we may need to be less sure of what it is we are hearing as much as we are attentive to how

⁴⁹⁵ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, xvii.

we are listening: “In ethical terms, it is not a silencing of reason so that unreason might speak, as so many of Foucault’s interpreters have claimed. It is, rather, the opening of a passage, within reason, less for speaking than for an archival listening: the creation of a pathway for a different hearing.”⁴⁹⁶ An erotic ethics is an undialectical demand for perpetual hearing. In other words that the unreasonable can never be fully spoken means that a desubjectivating self care as erotic curiosity never ceases. If we were to fully resurrect or redeem the wounds inflicted by rationalism, we would no longer be listening for the wounds of our new rationalisms, the new orders that arise in the vacuum created when we rupture old ones. The limit to our knowing allows for the unlimited.

The waxing and waning of limitation is necessary for both actualization and potentiality. As Whitehead notes, “The history of thought is a tragic mixture of vibrant disclosure and of deadening closure. The sense of penetration is lost in the certainty of completed knowledge. This dogmatism is the antichrist.”⁴⁹⁷ For Whitehead penetration is never complete, and yet thought’s task is to penetrate the unthought ever more deeply. While perpetual penetration may risk its own teleological force, a moving closer to some ideal sense of knowledge, this does not seem to me to be Whitehead’s intention. For indeed he continues, “When fundamental change arrives, sometimes heaven dawns, sometimes hell yawns open.”⁴⁹⁸ That our penetration may lead equally to hell as it does to heaven is precisely why the penetration is perpetual. That unreason can never fully be spoken is precisely why an ethics of listening is erotic—it is desirous to know more

⁴⁹⁶ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 227.

⁴⁹⁷ Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 58.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 95.

without capturing and objectifying that which we come to know—it is to a different kind of listening not a stable heard.

The yearning of eros is also apparent in Whitehead, as Stengers notes: ““The justification of life does not require a ‘higher freedom’ that would see farther and wider than we. It requires ‘yearning’ as such, a yearning directed both to what is done and to what is undone, in the ‘here and now’ of decision: thus and not otherwise.”⁴⁹⁹

Whitehead’s yearning and Foucault’s listening begin to surface, if momentarily, the murmurs of the lurking background; or in Stengers’ words reveal the undone from within the done. But in these moments of surfacing both Foucault and Whitehead remind us that what might have been otherwise, might have been hell; eros is never absent of thanatos. This dual movement of promise and threat within Whitehead’s cosmology opens theological possibilities for an erotic ethics. One such promised possibility is a theology of grave attention and its refusal to fully sublimate promise into threat or threat into promise. Through such a refusal we are brought down to the ways in which the grave is backlit with hope, and hope infused with gravity.

The (Un)Limiting Divine

Unlike Foucault, Whitehead does think in propositions, but propositions that are felt as malleable moments of truth. Propositions, for Whitehead, are lures for feeling, and such resonate with Sedgwick’s desire (touched on briefly in the introduction) to think both propositionally and affectually. Indeed, for Whitehead it is more important that a proposition be interesting than that it be true. In her consideration of the issue of truthfulness and Truthiness both in terms of Whiteheadian thought and that of

⁴⁹⁹ Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead*, 315.

poststructuralism, Catherine Keller notes, “We feel our propositions are truthful to the extent they dis/close the fullness itself: as articulated in the subject’s interdependence with its others, its neighbors, strangers, enemies, its world.” She continues, “We need trusty propositions, faithfully narrating what has been in order to keep open the democratic space in which the shared future is negotiated.”⁵⁰⁰ The quest for trusty propositions, for dis/closive truths is not necessarily, Keller and I argue antithetical to poststructuralist ponderings. For instance, “Foucault ... does not (contrary to rumor) merely debunk truth as power... On the contrary, he insists, ‘My problem never ceased to be always the truth, speaking truth, *wahr-sagen*—that is, the speaking of truth—and the relationship [*le rapport*] between speaking truth and the forms of reflexivity, the reflexivity of self on self.’”⁵⁰¹ We can see this reflexivity in Foucault’s attraction to the Greek care-of-the-self, and in particular the truth-telling frankness in the Cynic style of life. Therefore, propositional thinking a la Whitehead might remain for us in an erotic and ethical register, resisting any moralizing dogmatism. Such eroticism, according to Keller’s reading of Whiteheadian propositions might be trusty in how it “faithfully [narrates] what has been in order to keep open the democratic space in which the shared future is negotiated.”⁵⁰² This is an allegiance to the body, to the muck, to the archive, and to all that is given, but might be—might have been or yet become-- otherwise.

The Cynic might embodied these trusty proposition when as, “the man of *parrehsia*, [he] cannot promise to remain silent ... cannot promise not to say

⁵⁰⁰ Keller, “Uninteresting Truth?” 211.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 211.

anything...the Cynic does appear in fact as the prophets parrehsias (the prophet of free-spokenness).”⁵⁰³ To be a prophet of free-spokenness is not to be held captive to a straw reading of Foucault or poststructuralism in which to speak any form of truth might be to assert despotic moralism. Rather the style of existence lauded by Foucault is an art of truth telling (and truth embodying) that prepares us to become again that which we never were. As Keller notes we might need, “to get our hearts and heads together, in truth, for the sake of that ‘more’ that we so becomingly, and never quite, are.”⁵⁰⁴ This is truth as a pathway toward a different type of hearing, an erotic ethics of attention, and not the establishment of a rational moral order.

In Whitehead’s cosmology there exists a similar resistance to rational moral order as in Foucault’s poetic style. According to Steven Shaviro:

Whitehead posits God on the basis of ‘aesthetic experience,’ rather than morality. To the extent that we make ‘decisions’—and, for Whitehead, decision ‘constitutes the very meaning of actuality’ (1929/1978, 43)—we are engaged in a process of selection. We ‘feel’ (or positivelyprehend) certain data, and ‘eliminate from feeling’ (or negativelyprehend) certain others (23). But this process of selection is an aesthetic one. It is felt, rather than thought (or felt before it is thought); and it is freely chosen, rather than being obligatory.⁵⁰⁵

While Shaviro takes Whitehead’s aesthetic as precluding an ethical style, I take it as exactly that which nurtures a Whiteheadian ethic, one this chapter hopes to reveal as being in concert with a Foucauldian one of eros.

For instance, Faber reminds us that while the image of Love or Eros in Whitehead’s cosmology is essential for God’s “tender care that nothing be lost,” the

⁵⁰³ Foucault, *Courage*, 169.

⁵⁰⁴ Keller, “Uninteresting Truth?” 213.

⁵⁰⁵ Steven Shaviro, *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA; Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2009), 139.

terms of love and tenderness are often too narrow, aligning with a kind of favoritism (the love of a particular actual entity over and against others). Hence he suggests that we, “[negotiate] ‘love’ *only as polyphilia*, that is love *only of multiplicity*, and for understanding polyphilia.”⁵⁰⁶ The Eros of the world and the tender care that nothing be lost are love and tenderness for multiplicity, by which Faber means for an open whole that resists favoring one entity over another. Such polyphilia desires the multiplicity, the open wholeness, of becoming on offer in the play between actuality and novelty. Such love might be that found in the erotic ethics in which Foucault thirsts for the singularities of the archive that have been closed off; or by the Cynic attitude in which, according to Foucault, the Cynic “cannot have a family because, ultimately, humankind is his family.”⁵⁰⁷ To be a truth teller is polyphilic, it is to be in relation with the world’s other lives. The care-for-the-self in this way may be the aesthetic and ethical practice, an *ars erotica* or spirituality, of polyphilic attention to the truths that rupture order. It is to feel and listen for what was thus and what might have been otherwise.

Indeed, that each actual occasion finds actuality through freely chosen feeling implies that those feelings felt positively and those negatively might have been otherwise; the negative might have been positive and vice versa. Or in other words, it is the freedom of decision, one heavily influenced by the past, but which still through divine appetite insists on the possibility of novelty, that demands an ethical response, or “a different kind of hearing.”

⁵⁰⁶ Roland Faber, *Divine Manifold* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014), 365.

⁵⁰⁷ Foucault, *Courage*, 170.

Indeed, that Whitehead's aesthetic cosmology recalls the opening made by the care of the self reminds us that we might become again that which we never were. The "again" here is of particular import for the mixing of tenses in both Whitehead's and Foucault's formulations of the play between finitude and infinity. Such a temporal mixing is key for the resonance I find between them and the theoethic I embrace in bringing the two together. The possibilities unrealized in the past imply the chance for novelty in the future; *again* and *never* stand in rational opposition, demanding instead an aesthetic style of being rather than a logical one. The tension between again and never reflects what Isabelle Stenger's reads as the Process God's appetite as having the character of the "what if?"⁵⁰⁸ This allows Whitehead to posit that, "There must be value beyond ourselves. Otherwise every thing experienced would be merely a barren detail in our own solipsist mode of existence."⁵⁰⁹ The value beyond ourselves is what lures us toward ever more penetration, and so the expansion of understanding. It is our thirst for higher values of intensity. As Faber puts it, "Whitehead understand the measure of intensity as deriving from the power to develop 'contrasts' (PR, 83) Wiehl 1984). *Contrasts* are *integrated differences* between reality and possibility, between past and future, between physical and mental acts of feeling (Lango 1972)."⁵¹⁰ The development of contrasts resists the fallacy of misplaced concreteness that coerces us to eclipse that which is in discordance with a given order. In contrast, Whitehead argues that "if there is to be progress beyond limited ideals, the course of history by way of escape must venture

⁵⁰⁸ Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead*, 476.

⁵⁰⁹ Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 102.

⁵¹⁰ Faber, *Poet of the World*, 100.

along the borders of chaos in its substitution of higher for lower types of order.”⁵¹¹ Thus, as touched on above, the thirst for higher orders of contrast represents God’s three-fold character as Eros, Adventure of the Universe as One, and the Harmony of Harmonies, which together represent a tender care for what has been, what might have been, what might be, and the intensity birthed from the integrated differences between the actuality and potentiality these three states represent.

The thirst for higher order intensity (one perhaps not unrelated to the manic side of bipolarity) is fundamental in Whitehead’s aesthetics. Shaviro describes this aesthetic impulse: “The goal of every decision is therefore Beauty, defined by Whitehead as ‘the mutual adaptation of the several factors in an occasion of experience’ (1933/1967, 252).”⁵¹² This Beauty is no guarantee that in each becoming anything of the past will be cured, rather it is in the entertainment of multiple factors in each experience, while always limited, takes an ethical stance that while in actuality things had to be for this moment thus, in potentiality they might have been otherwise. For instance, looking again to Nietzsche, that prophet of madness, affect theorist Eugenie Brinkema discusses the ethical attitude of Nietzsche in terms of joy. According to Brinkema:

Nietzschean joy is also an ethic, for he is explicit on this point: the eternal recurrence is not a strict return of what has taken place only, but also a beam cast out on the future...in the joyful ethic of the ‘what-might-take-place of any situation ... Joy, then, after Nietzsche, does not recuse itself from the messy facticity of being a Being-in-time, nor bracket the actual or active, either suffering or becoming. Rather, it places the infinity of chance and possibility into an existence marked by finitude.⁵¹³

⁵¹¹ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 110-111.

⁵¹² Steven Shaviro, *Without Criteria*, 139.

⁵¹³ Eugenie Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 244-5.

Finitude here is the affirmation of infinity. Nietzschean joy spurring from the entertainment of all possibilities for what-might-take-place of any situation is willed through the finitude of situations actually taking place. Indeed, this Nietzschean joy may be the joy available to the feminist killjoy when she gives up the happiness on offer (a happiness unreflective of pains inflicted on her life) in order to *live*. The Nietzschean joy may be the impulse behind the Postwork Manifesto command to get *a* life.

The ethical entertainment of possibilities Brinkema finds in Nietzsche can similarly be found both in the Process God's character of the what-if, and in what Whitehead marks as His (sic), 'tender care that nothing be lost.' Both the what-if and God's tender-care arise from God's dipolar nature. God's dipolarity, when read beside Foucault and Huffer can imply an ethical style, a different kind of hearing. This tender care that nothing be lost, might just be a glimpse into a theology attendant to the murmurs of our little monsters, to the laments of affect aliens. For to gravely attend to what we thought was buried and gone might be to clear the pathway for a different hearing, one that in what might have been we find what might be. The coexistence and inseparability of caring for what we have lost, a looking back that opens the possibility of the what-if, cosmically inhabits the Process God's dipolar nature.

God's dipolar nature consists of the mental and physical poles, or what Whitehead names as God's primordial and consequent nature. While some emphasize the distinction between the two poles, Stengers proposes that, "Whitehead 'thinks by the middle.' He will not try to conceive of God 'in himself,' but to affirm, by means of the correlated twofold definition of God and the actual occasions, the equal dignity of both poles, the physical pole that affirms that what has occurred has occurred, and the conceptual pole,

by which nothing of what has occurred constitutes the last word.”⁵¹⁴ The affirmation that what has occurred has occurred is the affirmation that actuality is the result of a limiting force. Unless we apprehend certain possibilities positively, eliminating the actualization of those possibilities we apprehend negatively, we will remain in the world of the virtual or potential. We must feel our way to concrete decisions. This is true for God’s own becoming. As God is also an actual entity, it is in our ability to make God feel that God’s consequent nature becomes actual in the world. If God were not actual God would not be able to feel our joys and sorrows, all the tragic and comic becomings of the world. As Stengers puts it, “We must name what is demanded by creativity that is ultimate when it comes to the twofold ‘making-feel,’ that is, to what is required both by the hybrid physical feeling of God (which requires a subject to feel it), and by the divine feeling ‘about’ the actual occasion as an impasse (which requires that the occasion make God feel).”⁵¹⁵ In other words, all actual entities, including God, require others to make them feel and to feel them in order to have actuality in the world.

Without such a feeling (what we might also call a hearing, a touching, or tasting) existence is impossible. And yet, because of God’s primordial nature, that which apprehends all possibilities for each occasion, the limiting decision necessary for actualization does not have the last word. From this point of view Stengers troubles an emphasis on this primordial nature, or any attempt to separate out the two poles (a risk she finds in Whiteheadian philosophers whom she worries do not avoid the powerful attraction of the notion of ‘Unmoved Prime Mover’), and instead “thinks with”

⁵¹⁴ Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead*, 458.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 461.

Whitehead in a manner that she considers the ‘reverse’ of such a stance: “the point is to accentuate the inseparable character of the two ‘poles’ of divine experience, the pole called mental and the pole called physical, and therefore to go right to the end of what Whitehead proposed when he made God an actual entity (almost) like the others.”⁵¹⁶ It is the inseparability of the two poles that keeps the inseparable aesthetic and ethical open.

If we too easily separate the two poles, we too easily slip into the kind of divine idealization that Whitehead critiques in Leibniz: “Whitehead dismisses ‘the Leibnizian theory of the ‘best of possible worlds’” as ‘an audacious fudge produced in order to save the face of a Creator constructed by contemporary, and antecedent, theologians’ (1929/1978, 47).”⁵¹⁷ For Leibniz since God must know what perfection is God is able to select the best of worlds from an infinite number of possible universes. Leibniz explains, “each possible world’ [had] the right to claim existence in proportion to the perfection which it involves.”⁵¹⁸ We can therefore, in Stengers reading of Whitehead from the middle, find what Shaviro names as God’s indifference. Shaviro may be drawing on Faber’s in/difference here and yet he seems less certain than Faber of God’s *care* from within such divine indifference. Shaviro finds in indifference insurance that God does not play favorites nor have a teleological ideal, and yet in eclipsing the sense of tender care developed from within such indifference he elides the ethical force within Whitehead’s aesthetic.

⁵¹⁶ Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead*, 456.

⁵¹⁷ Shaviro, *Without Criteria*, 99.

⁵¹⁸ GW Leibniz, *Philosophical Writings* (London: Everyman’s Library, 1973), 187.

Such an ethical force can be seen in Faber's continued development of in/difference in the recent *Divine Manifold*: "In its movement of undoing any unifications or identifications, this 'indifference' is not carelessness, but translates the Buddhist 'detachment' (*viraga*), which is universal compassion (*karuna*)."⁵¹⁹ Here we are reminded of the Cynic who is in love with all of humanity. Universal compassion is the polyphilia or love for multiplicity that Faber hopes to illuminate. This is an ethics of care for all, including/especially those made exceptions by lower order orders that seek to elide intensity in favor of concreteness. This polyphilia may be the redistribution of care work sought by Robin James's melancholy, Huffer's erotic ethics, and my grave attending. This care is unreasoned care for *what is* in such a way that opens us to what *might have been* and *what might be*.

In other words, even if in God's mental pole there exists a sense of the infinity of possibilities, since the mental pole is inseparable from the physical pole these possibilities are dependent on yet-to-be-felt actualities. As such, while God is a source for novelty, God cannot be considered a pure or efficient cause of what is to come. If God were to have chosen the one possible universe that was best, a la Leibniz's divinity, God would not be *moved* by our feelings. In contrast to the orthodox reading of God as the Unmoved Prime Mover, who could from the start choose and ensure the best possible universe, Whitehead's God is dependent on being affected and affecting, being moved and moving in co-creation with all other actual entities in the world. If God is to be actual God must be *moved*. Hence, Whitehead's cosmology needs a divinity in whom the future remains both promise and threat, and with whom all actualities in the world once they

⁵¹⁹ Faber, *Divine Manifold*, 24.

have become actual hold an equal claim to existence no matter what their relation to any sense of perfection might be.

According to Stengers and Shavero, it is God's actuality that leaves open the world's potentiality. Stengers explicates this:

The initially abstract physical feeling, 'this' limitation, or 'this impasse,' becomes the feeling of what the entity has done with itself, 'its sufferings, its sorrows, its failures, its triumphs, its immediacies of joy'; but the process motivated by this physical experience is not that of a partial actuality, closed to its incompatibilities and its refusals, an obstinate appeal to the future that will verify it, whatever the cost may be. The process is feeling 'with a rightness that weaves' physical experience 'into a harmony,' for the negative prehensions that were the price of the decision are also felt positively.⁵²⁰

We might, albeit from the vantage point of another century, be weary of harmony here, afraid of a too rosy picture, a kind of dialectical sublation of the multiplicity of possibilities, or an overcoming of wounds of effacement so well elucidated by Huffer reading Foucault. And yet in his rejection of an obligatory divine idea Whitehead's harmony must be understood as more complex. Harmony in this case is better thought as the formation of unity of contrasts, in that contrasts become compatible in their ingression into an actual entity's moment of becoming. Whitehead proposes that, "intensity for feeling due to any realized ingression of an eternal object is heightened when the that eternal object is one element in a realized contrast between eternal objects, and (ii) that two or more contrasts may be incompatible for joint ingression, *or* may jointly enter into a higher contrast."⁵²¹ In other words, Harmony does not eliminate tension, or ever fully sublimate one contrast into complete concert with another. Rather, Harmony is the momentary overcoming of incompatibility in a search for even greater

⁵²⁰ Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead*, 475.

⁵²¹ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 278.

contrast. As we saw above, contrast and intensity are inseparable. Higher contrast nurtures intensity, which for Whitehead is that toward which we are lured. The entanglement of harmony with intensity allows the sustaining of the tension of difference rather than the shattering into mere simplicity or opposition.

Whitehead's harmony is no common battle hymn, but the intense noise of the beauty of singularities becoming again what we never were. Indeed it is in feeling multiple contrasts that novelty arises: "That whatever is a datum for a feeling has a unity as *felt*. Thus the many components of a complex datum have a unity: this unity is a 'contrast' of entities ... In a sense this means that there are an endless number of categories of existence, since the synthesis of entities into a contrast in general produces a new existential type."⁵²² The lower the contrast the more trivial the becoming. If the beauty of Harmony is its ability to explode into ever-greater levels of contrast, then we must resist the impulse to read Whitehead's sense of Beauty or Harmony as the result of a dialectical sublation of contrasting aesthetic experiences.

We 21st century theologians might be similarly weary of Whitehead's valorization of order when he writes, "What is inexorable in God, is valuation as an aim towards 'order'; and 'order' means 'society of permissive of actualities with patterned intensity of feeling arising from adjusted con- [374] trasts."⁵²³ Yet, a society permissive of actualities with high degrees of intensity is usually considered disorder. And again contrasts here actually lead to higher contrast, which leads to new existential categories. Hence, novelty needs actuality: "Thus the transition of the creativity from an actual world to the correlate

⁵²² Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 24.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, 244.

novel concrescence is conditioned by the relevance of God's all embracing conceptual valuations to the particular possibilities of transmission from the actual world ... In this way there is constituted the concrescent subject in its primary phase with its dipolar constitution, physical and mental, indissoluble."⁵²⁴ Through the indissolubility of the mental and physical pole the otherwise is not lost. Negative prehensions, perhaps like the ransom of the leper, are the price paid for decisions, but they are also felt positively. The positive feeling of the negative prehensions might be the haunting of the mad we find in the very fact that the closet door is never fully shut. And yet the possibility of being otherwise can only happen if the thus becomes actual. Without feeling other actualities God cannot become actual, and without God's actuality we cannot feel ourselves toward the what-if, toward becoming again what we never were.

The sense that we cannot become again in novel ways without the actuality of God does not arise out of an obligatory belief in God. Rather, as Shaviro suggests, Whitehead's God arises because Whitehead's understanding of the cosmos implies a force of both limitation, but also of novel possibility.⁵²⁵ Whitehead could not locate such possibilities within the actualities that already occurred without some addressee that might be made to feel both what had become, but also the negative prehensions that had not actualized, but which could still be felt by God in a positive way. The chance for transformation, therefore, only comes through the limiting nature of actualization as it makes of God actual and provides God datum for potential.

⁵²⁴ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 244.

⁵²⁵ Steven Shaviro, *Without Criteria*, 133.

The necessity of the limit for the unlimited in Whitehead's cosmology is what Shaviro names, drawing on Deleuze's *The Fold*, as Whitehead's disjunctive synthesis: "For Whitehead (and for many modern philosophers) ... bifurcations, divergences, impossibilities, and discord belong to the same motley world' (1993, 81) ... 'impossible worlds, despite their impossibility, have something in common,' for 'they appear as instances of solution for one and the same problem' (Deleuze 1990, 114)."⁵²⁶ In other words, while in actuality a problem is solved thusly, in potentiality it might have been solved otherwise—we might be *again* what we *never* were. Shaviro offers us Warren Ellis's *Night on Earth* (2003) as an example. In Ellis's novel superheroes move through the multiverse inhabiting different actualizations of Gotham City at different moments in time. In each Gotham City they meet a different Batman (Bob Kane's avenger, Adam West's campy hero, Frank Miller's dark 'almost psychopath'). While only one Batman can be encountered at each moment of time, "no Gotham City and Batman can be privileged above the rest."⁵²⁷ This is the disjunctive synthesis: "Each Batman is a particular 'solution for one and the same problem,' which is to say a particular actualization of the same constellation of potentialities, the same virtual configuration."⁵²⁸ Each moment of Batman in time, while being thus might have been otherwise.

A resistance to the privileging of one Batman over the other, is what we might call the difference between God's envisagement and God's 'vision': "If we say that

⁵²⁶ Shaviro, *Without Criteria*, 25.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, 116-7.

God's primordial nature is 'vision,' we suggest a maimed view of the subjective form, divesting it of yearning after concrete fact—no particular facts, but after some actuality. There is deficiency in God's primordial nature which the term 'vision' obscures" (PR 33-34). God's primordial nature is deficient, hence its need for ever more actualization, for God's consequent nature. If God's primordial nature was sufficient then Whitehead's God would be like that of Leibniz's with a "perfect" vision upon which to judge all possible worlds. But, because God becomes actual in the world, Whitehead must affirm the deficiency in God's primordial nature and so its dependency on finite becomings for its infinite envisagement. Further, God's envisagement is necessary if finite actualization is to avoid becoming barren⁵²⁹ so that each actual entity can fulfill its thirst for novelty: "God's envisagement of all eternal objects—including the ones that a given occasion would not otherwise encounter in its environment—is itself an objective datum for every new concrescence."⁵³⁰ Put more directly, that God's primordial nature is deficient means that God's appetite cannot seek out any particular fact, because it is only through the concrete actualization of particular facts that an otherwise (Miller's Batman and not West's) becomes possible. Hence, and perhaps ironically, it is the disjunctive synthesis, which leaves God indifferent, that lures us toward a Foucauldian erotic ethic, in which the care-of-the-self might become a polyphilic love. In other words, the very fact that in this moment we might induce a heroic if campy George Clooney Batman, does not eliminate the chance of a darker more depressed Christian Bale Batman. Bale murmurs to us from a Batmanian archive, which we can try ever more sensitively to hear.

⁵²⁹ Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 102.

⁵³⁰ Shaviro, *Without Criteria*, 133.

That we can hear the murmuring other Batmans, does not mean that we might resurrect them as though the cut, the decision to feel one Batman at a particular time was reversible. The past is not repaired: “But if God enforces the irreparability of the past, he also guarantees the openness of the future, and invites the transmutation in the present of the effect of the past. And in this role, he stands for an inclusive and nonrestrictive use of the disjunctive synthesis. God ‘embod[ies] a basic completeness of appetition’ (Whitehead 1929/1978, 316).”⁵³¹ The irreparable past might be like the impossibility of hearing the mad that were not given voice. It is the irreparability and impossibility that perpetuate an erotic ethic. That what has been thus might be otherwise fuels a desire to lend an ear, to be willing to be subjectively undone by a different hearing of that which cannot be fully resurrected, but which can haunt.

Novel but not Saved

According to Whitehead, God’s initial aim can be thought of as that which is “best for the impasse.”⁵³² Is this not a moment of vision and not envisagement? Is the harmonizing of contrasts even as it is an intensification of those same contrasts, a kind of saving, a redemption of that which never was, but might have been? Is this not what this dissertation has been trying to contest? Stengers refutes or complicates our worry: “what emerges from this weaving, the feeling of what would be best ‘for the impasse,’ does not correspond either to a transcendent knowledge or to a determinate anticipation. Instead,

⁵³¹ Shaviro, *Without Criteria*, 123.

⁵³² Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 244.

this feeling has the features of a question of the ‘what if?’ type.’⁵³³ To ask what might have been is not to guarantee that we will indeed become again what we never were, nor that that never were would not be tragic. The what-if does not save the past as much as it insists that transformation is possible: possible, but not promised. This is a saving that is a salvaging of possibilities for becoming from what might have been and not the redemption (the making okay) of what was. This salvaging more than saving is perhaps what Whitehead means when he writes of the ever-lasting life of what perishes.

According to Whitehead:

Throughout the perishing occasions in the life of each temporal Creature, the inward source of distaste or of refreshment, the judge arising out of the very nature of things, redeemer or goddess of mischief, is the transformation of Itself, everlasting in the Being of God. In this way, the insistent craving is justified—the insistent craving that zest for existence be refreshed by the ever-present, unfading importance of our immediate actions, which perish and yet live for evermore.⁵³⁴

Sensitively attend to the temporality in such formulations and to Whitehead’s attention to the differential intensity that arises from such opposites as distaste and refreshment complicates any sense of a transcendent salvation or complete redemption.

Perhaps, actions that perish live for evermore because of God’s tender care that nothing be lost, including the pain of what has been. This pain may be irredeemable in the sense of its unfading importance in our immediate actions, but yet live for evermore in its ability to haunt us as what was and what might have been. That which is both immediate in its importance, and which simultaneously perishes and lives, seems to me to be more reflective of the day of Saturday, a day in which we have become from our past crucifixions, feel their immediacy of import, and yet are open to what might be in the

⁵³³ Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead*, 476.

⁵³⁴ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 351.

face of the promise and threat of what will be. The zest *for* existence or an erotic yes *to* life, it seems to me, comes from within the pain of perishing, of death, and *before* the certainty of life. In a discussion on love and power Faber draws on the following sense of aesthetic harmony in Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World*: "The aesthetic harmony stands before' multiplicity with the polyphilic divine 'as a living ideal molding the general flux in its broken progress toward finer, subtler issues' (*Science*, 18)."⁵³⁵ Whitehead ties such progress to attention to the things of the world, what we might call a grave attending to the muck of the world. Faber ties such progress to a polyphilic resistance to violent power in that as Whitehead notes in *Adventures of Ideas*, "enjoyment of power is fatal to the subtleties of life' (84)."⁵³⁶ In other words, if there is something salvific in God's tender care that nothing be lost or in the lure towards differential intensity it might be an attentive salvaging of the subtlety of issues of the world. This attending is not a redemption out of the muck and into glory, but a being drawn back to the graves of that which God prevents from ever being fully lost. This gravity is backlit, perhaps, in God's character as the what-if and each actual entities insistence on the "Yes, but."

That God's character in this sense has the character of a question means that any weaving that might be found in the play between God's primordial and consequent natures should not be read as a guarantor that our transformation won't also be our destruction. For instance, Whitehead describes the initial aim in *Modes of Thought*:

[God's] actuality is founded on the infinitude of its conceptual appetite, and its form of process is derived from the fusion of this appetite with the data received

⁵³⁵ Faber, *Divine Manifold*, 383.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*

from the world-process. Its function in the world is to sustain the aim at vivid experience. It is the reservoir of potentiality and the coordination of achievement. The form of its process is relevant to the data from which the process is initiated. The issue is the unified composition which assumes its function as a datum operative in the *future historic* world.⁵³⁷

The process of composition is never closed. Each next moment of infinite appetite arises from the concrete limiting nature of the data experienced and so received by God in the world's processual becoming. A unified composition here, therefore, like what is "best for the impasse" is not necessarily meant as an ideal or a stable whole, but rather the necessary satisfaction of an actual entity in the process of becoming. The "best" for the impasse suggests not a goal, but the most satisfying materialization of the possible into the actual at each present moment.

Further it is only in this momentary satisfaction from which feeling can be intensified. This is how that which has already come to be, the past, which cannot be repaired, functions as the datum operative in the *future historic*. In this sense of the future historic we see yet again a play on tenses: become again that which we never were and what has been and might have been. This mixing of grammatical tenses, the muddling of the again and never was and the tying together of the future and the historic, is the middle way of the inseparable poles of God and the disjunctive synthesis this inseparability necessitates. Whitehead continues in *Modes of Thought*:

The decisive consciousness that *this* is red, and *that* is loud, and *this other* is square, results from an effort of concentration and elimination. Also it is never sustained. There is always a flickering variation varied by large scale transference of attention. Consciousness is an ever-shifting process of abstracting shifting quality from a massive process of essential existence. It emphasizes. And yet, if we forget the background, the result is triviality.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁷ Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 94. (Emphasis added).

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

Might we think of this flickering variation that lies in the background as a haunting? It is the background we are warned not to forget; it is that which keeps us out of solipsistic dogmatism. And so it is that which is not so much a resurrection or redemption, but rather a refusal of the closing of the closet. To welcome the flicker is to welcome the truth of the wounds inflicted on those effaced through biopolitical violence.

Let me surmise that this attention to the wound can be found in God's "tender care that nothing be lost." According to Stengers:

In fact, if 'thanks to God' nothing is lost, nothing, even so, will 'survive' as such. What 'is not lost' will not be 'saved' as such, but in the mode of the unimaginable divine experience. Moreover ... the question of ultimate evil may be understood as a supplication, which it raises to its cosmic power: 'May what I have gone through not sink, purely and simply, into insignificance, under the banner of an abstraction that is ever poorer as it is taken into account successively and in divergent ways!' But what I experienced one day ago, one hour, or one minute has already undergone this fate. This is why the question of ultimate evil is not the religious one of the survival after death of a 'living person,' but it arises for each occasion, whose determination also means 'perishing.'⁵³⁹

In other words, my pain is not redeemed, the leper is not resurrected, they have already undergone their fates, and yet, still, God's tender care just might mean that these wounds inflicted on our/we little monsters will never be insignificant. The background cannot be forgotten or we slip into triviality. Once again we see that actuality is necessary for transformation. For, "whatever 'making feel' may mean, it is a vector. And in fact, the argument according to which the vectorial dimension of feelings disappears with satisfaction may be repeated with this new question: what if its disappearance were not its death?"⁵⁴⁰ In other words, negative prehensions (meaning those not ingressed and made

⁵³⁹ Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead*, 469.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 469-70.

actual as opposed to those that we would deem as negative experiences) retain their positive potential. This is the potential, that might set the stage for a care for the self that would seek ever more contrasts, and so ever more possibilities for its own undoing, a breaking free of our safe little traditions, such that we might become again what we never were. In other words God's tender care that nothing be lost and our care of the self might work in conjunction for an erotic practice, a frank style of existence, that is willing to become-- mad.

Can this becoming-mad, a becoming which is not the cause of a resurrection but of the insistence of unreason's significance to God, be a call to God that God take tender care that its historic wounds and the potential for the future positivity of its negative prehensions not be lost? But also, can becoming-mad be model we other actual entities follow such that we more consciously feel the significance of madness? In other words in the moments when feeling moves to thought (not mere reason, but also thought in unreason's power to think the unthought) might we better raise the question of the what-if even/especially with God? Reading with Foucault, I believe perhaps we could.

Curiosity as our Tender Care that Nothing be Lost

Let us recall Huffer's description of Foucault's curiosity as care: "a habit of thinking Foucault describes as 'the care one takes of what exists and what might exist.'"⁵⁴¹ This habit of thinking necessitates its own kind of disjunctive synthesis. If there is no one ideal perfect world demanded either by God or by History, then we have two choices. One is a nihilistic rejection of any play with ideals; a fear not just of Truth proposals, but also trusty propositions. The other is a perpetual listening, a different kind of hearing for

⁵⁴¹ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 118.

those (for we) that *for now* have not become again what they/we might have been. The space cleared by a belief that we actually could become again grants permission to *feel* for the cracks in the archive, to touch what might happen when the story of order is blasted open such that unspeakable languages of alterity and unreason bubble, if only momentarily, to the surface. In this sort of care for the self and its ghosts we can find from within our limits: murmurs, glimpses, tingles, and tastes of the what-if.

Touchy encounters with the what-if may come less from reasoning our way towards these cracks, and more from an aesthetics of feeling our way there: “If Foucault is a thinker of the limit, that limit is not defined by thought alone, but includes an affective dimension. Foucault is not only interested in desubjectivation as a function of thinking but also as a function of feeling. As Nietzsche puts it ‘we have to learn ... to feel differently.’”⁵⁴² Might learning to feel differently in terms of philosophy be to remember with Foucault, via Jordan, “how close the Cynic’s truth telling stands to the edge of the tolerable, of the audibly human?”⁵⁴³ Returning us to Foucault’s deployment of the raped Creusa’s hymn of lament in *Ion*, Jordan suggests:

If Creusa’s agonized transit from cry to confession was required for the founding of philosophy, the continuance of philosophy requires a series of performances at the edge of sight or of hearing. Truth telling will always demand that someone cry out—and that someone register the cry. What if philosophic writing—or philosophic writing so far as it is resistance—is more like a convulsed cry than voluntary speech?⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴² Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 202.

⁵⁴³ Jordan, *Convulsing Bodies*, 191.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

What does it mean to register these cries? The cries of today's lamenters, and of those like Creusa, long gone, yet, perhaps, from tender care never lost? Is the registering of the cry God's prehension of our joys and sorrows, and so that which makes God actual?

Yet, even as God becomes actual through these feelings, and even if these feelings illicit God's tender care, it is still a care that as the marker of God's Consequent Nature is indifferent; it is in/different to *nothing*; it feels *all*. Hence, this ethic of care, this grave attending, permits infinite possibilities, which take shape through the disjunctive synthesis. We can embody this disjunction with a critical difference. If God helps to set the limiting and unlimited terms of our decisions, it is still we who decide. And this is where curiosity as care and self care must come rushing to the fore. We can do the work, work that Foucault aligns with the work of spirituality and what Huffer aligns with art of *feeling* differently. We can register the cry. We can feel our way towards an undoing that is ethical.

In addition, if we are to follow a Foucauldian ethic as part of our response to God's disjunctive synthesis, and to our own aim at novelty, we will have to acknowledge the systems of power that have made of some of us mad, cripp, impoverished, hysteric, rageful, and ghostly. Ironically, we will need to respond to God's *in/difference* with a persisting penetration of the workings of biopower that have made all the *difference* for those whom have been silenced. For Whitehead's cosmological order recognizes that the situations of those that murmur from within the archives (archives of history that never wanted to preserve us in the first place) might have been otherwise. Clooney might have been Bale; Jonah might have been right; the depressive might have been appreciated for the strength of her will; and the cripp might have been slowly stroked open.

Hence if philosophy as resistance needs both to cry out and to register the cry, perhaps we philosophical theologians might respond to divine indifference with just this erotic attention to alterity. For as the purpose of *Modes of Thought* reminds us “The use of philosophy is to maintain an active novelty of fundamental ideas illuminating the social system. It reverses the slow descent of accepted thought toward the inactive commonplace. If you like to phrase it so, philosophy is mystical. For mysticism is direct insight into depths as yet unspoken.”⁵⁴⁵ While Foucault may have taken issue with the possibility of “direct” insight (except perhaps for the likes of Nietzsche and Artaud, mystics of a sort) into the unspoken, we cannot deny the reversal of moralizing secular reason Whitehead’s concept of philosophy here, in direct disregard of the canons of reason, instantiates. What might it mean for philosophical theologians and philosophers of religion, we serious academics, to listen to the unspoken mysticism within the overly articulated thought? What might it mean to register-- or in other words *feel* --the cry?

Contestation as Care

“[Each occasion] has to decide how it will have been obliged by what it, *de facto*, it inherits. “Yes, but.””⁵⁴⁶ How might we embodied this, “Yes, but”? In other words how might we persist even as we have had to say yes to certain actualizations that have been harmful, that have wounded? Is there a yes to life in the cry of Creusa?

In a 2012 roundtable discussion published in *The Drama Review*, initiated and edited by Jasbir Puar in response to the austerity measures being implemented in Europe, Judith Butler ponders the political significance of “assembling as bodies, stopping traffic,

⁵⁴⁵ Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 174.

⁵⁴⁶ Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead*, 244.

or claiming attention.”⁵⁴⁷ She asks whether instead of saying “we are here,” might these actions actually be saying, “we are *still* here,” meaning, “we have not yet been disposed of.”⁵⁴⁸ She writes, “Bodies on the street are precarious---they are exposed to police force, and sometimes endure physical suffering as a result. But those bodies are also obdurate and persisting, insisting on their continuing and collective ‘thereness.’”⁵⁴⁹ It is this tie between precarity and persistence from where I propose we can find the thanatos/eros promise/threat nature of both the disjunctive synthesis and the function of unreason for a Foucauldian erotic ethic.

The “we are still here” of the bodies assembled might also be an injunction to “become again what we never were,” or an insistence that things having been thus, might be otherwise. To theoethically, with Whitehead and Foucault, re-read “we are still here,” is not only to understand the persistence of prophetic affect aliens, it is also to both read God as having a correlating affective orientation and to insist on a more erotic and ethical way of encountering such prophets. For instance, as Stengers notes, the limit created from an entity ingressing certain characteristics and not others, ensures that God’s feeling of “what the entity has done with itself, ‘its sufferings, its sorrows, its failures, its triumphs, its immediacies of joy,” matters to how novel possibilities come to be. Stengers continues, “From this viewpoint of his consequent nature, God may thus be said to be conscious because of his experience of contrast between the ‘impasse’ that is and a

⁵⁴⁷ Jasbir Puar ed., “Precarity Talk: A Virtual Roundtable with Lauren Berlant, Judith Butler, Bojana Cvejic, Isabell Lorey, Jasbir Puar, and Ana Vujanovic,” *The Drama Review* 56:4 (T216) (Winter 2012), 168.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

possibility that turns this impasse into a ‘means’ for new realizations.”⁵⁵⁰ The impasse, a contestation to the flow, is the datum needed for the transformation of the flow. The impasse as a means for new realizations is a cosmological fact for Whitehead, but it might be for us, a lure towards those strategic contestatory practices, Huffer finds in Foucault, which open pathways to the transformation of the self with interventions into larger structures of power.⁵⁵¹ In other words, perhaps the divine recognition that the impasse is also the datum for the what-if is a holy affirmation of the practices of lament that *in* despairing of the world create a manic hope *for* the world.

The laments whispered and wailed by affect aliens *persist* in claiming that, “we are still here.” They resonate with a God who through tender care *insists* that in the face of our depression, rage, and anxiety the possibility of joy, ecstasy, and peace not be lost. Indeed, along with selves willing to be undone in an erotic exchange with the other, it is God as Eros for the world that similarly ensures that the closet created by the capture of madness in the 18th century remain open enough for murmurs of unreason to slip out. I argue that this is a slipping out that comes not through chance, as much as through contestation. Reading with the precarity roundtable we might take this even further, and surmise that the choice to expose oneself to precarity, to make of oneself vulnerable to feel the truth of the wounds created by the rise of rational man, is that which creates the obdurate persistence of the what-if. All philosophy as resistance starts out with a cry. And why shouldn’t that cry be contained both in a convulsing body and in the stubborn query “Yes, but”?

⁵⁵⁰ Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead*, 476.

⁵⁵¹ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 33.

The feeling of our wounds makes God feel them too. As such, might the God that asks, “what if?” and the actual entity in its becoming that satisfactorily says yes, while simultaneously desires more (but), be affect aliens, feminist killjoys, and crips that refuse the closure of narratives and normativizing script? Impeding the script, impeding history, in this way is a way of affirming that we are indeed still here.

Hence, acts of impeding—ones embodied through the affects traced in this dissertation—come to add another layer to the ars erotica proposed by Huffer and the style of life proposed by Foucault. Might even the impeding of joy performed through its killing be the kind of thirst for life that an erotic ethic and a divine Eros propose? Perhaps the giving up of happiness, as the refusal to limit the manifold hopes of a big big room joy, is the excitement of life named by Whitehead when he writes, “Order is never complete; frustration is never complete. There is transition within the dominant order; and there is transition to new forms of dominant order. Such transition is a frustration of the prevalent dominance. And yet it is the realization of that vibrant novelty which elicits excitement for life.”⁵⁵² If one gives up the orders of happiness in order to live, it is in the frustrating of order where excitement might be found.

Further, what if we were to look beyond happiness to a kind of Nietzschean joy? As Brinkema suggests reading Nietzsche in her examination of the forms of joy: “[while] happiness tethers itself to the ill or good fortune of what happens to some someone (*hap*—being their common root, so that happiness, happenstance, and what happens to a self ultimately are all the same), joy’s merriment hovers in the pleasure of gladness in the

⁵⁵² Whitehead, *Modes of Thought*, 87.

glittering surface of *things*.”⁵⁵³ This material joy, an immanent joy, is a grave one, one which is, “brought down to the surface of the world—the *there is*, the *once more* to life, the thinginess of the gaud?—Nietzsche’s contribution to the history of joy adds one more crucial dimension: an affirmation that takes the form of a repetition of that immanence.”⁵⁵⁴ The registering of the repetition of immanence that is attentive to the thinginess of the gaud might need the *ars erotica* of the Cynic. It might require a spiritual practice that through care-of-the-self *and* God’s tender care the past retains its present immediacy, while casting a beam out on the future. In other words in this grave joy we might be haunted by a future historic.

If novelty can be elicited from the play between order and the frustration of order, and if joy might come in immanent thingy repetitions from within which we might become again that which we never were, then we who are despairing of today’s orders are tasked with its frustration, but also with attending to that which might be repeated. For as Whitehead rightly notes, the frustration of order is never complete, it also will turn itself into new orders. This is where we might return to Foucault’s care of the self that undoes the self. We are at risk of turning our refusal of morality into a new morality. A novel order is also an order, one that in its time will become old. But if we can remind ourselves that frustration is never complete, then perhaps we can hold on to a perpetual contestation that would mean our undoing, but also our care: “It is a long road from that contestation of limits to the freedom Foucault associates with self-undoing in *Sexuality Two* and *Three*. But, however long the road may be, contestation is a place to start.

⁵⁵³ Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects*, 243.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Contestation can produce what Foucault described toward the end of his life as ‘kinds of virtual fracture which open up the space of freedom understood as a space of concrete freedom, that is, of possible transformation.’⁵⁵⁵ The long road of philosophy as resistance begins with a cry.

Thus, acts of impeding are not calls to rebuild the system as much as they are to rupture it. To contest and frustrate is not so much to speak but to reach for the limits of speech. Through our unreasonable affects we might find, “the promise of a contestation that would summon unknown existences, drag them from their sleep, or even—all the better—invent them.”⁵⁵⁶ What if the care for the limit of thought that summons and invents unknown existences grounds the ethic of, as Faber puts it, letting the other be/come?⁵⁵⁷ God’s tender care that nothing be lost and Foucault’s desubjectivating rupture can cultivate in us what Halberstam calls in his introduction to Moten and Harney’s *The Undercommons* “a new sense of wanting and being and becoming.”⁵⁵⁸ This new sense is, for Halberstam, its own kind of madness; it takes a certain kind of craziness.⁵⁵⁹ A cultivation and not a confinement of this crazy is what is sought here. Such cultivation is an erotic ethics and a grave attending.

And yet even if this cultivation summons unknown (or unactualized) existences it should not be read as a resurrection of the system that denied our brokenness, nor as a

⁵⁵⁵ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 120-1.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁵⁵⁷ Faber, *Divine Manifold*, 374.

⁵⁵⁸ J. Halberstam in Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (New York: Autonomedia, 2013), 6.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 6-8.

redemption of our madness as though the mad are in need of redemption. For, “We must confront [the undoing of the subject that is reason’s other] for what it can tell us about a form of contestation that negotiates an opposition between tragedy and irony—grief and laughter, the sadness of acceptance and the exuberance of rebellion—to become a kind of resistance that is neither acceptance or rebellion.”⁵⁶⁰ In this middle space between the sadness of acceptance and the exuberance of rebellion flickers the Holy Saturday of a bipolar time. Between grief and laughter, refreshment and disgust, there exists an embodiment simultaneously of prophetic despair of the world as thus and the manic hope that it might be otherwise.

⁵⁶⁰ Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 120.

Chapter Six: Unconcluded Affects

I cannot help but *feel* as though we have barely begun, and I *know* all too much has been left unconcluded. Perhaps instead of drawing any final conclusions, we might pause and attend to embodiments of our prophetic despair of the world and our manic hope that it might be otherwise. Perhaps we might return to a certain kind of madness, to acts of lament arising out of “oversensitivity” to injustice. In his critique over the loss of lament in Christian worship biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann writes, “A community of faith which negates laments soon concludes that the hard issues of justice are improper questions to pose to the throne because the throne seems to be only a place of praise... Justice questions disappear into civility and docility.”⁵⁶¹

But what if your community of faith is ambient? What if without being acknowledged as such our what we have enthroned as our community of faith is the neoliberal economy fueled by the all-pervasive logic of the market? How might we return laments to such an all-pervasive and yet intangible temple? How do we attend to, instead of negating, those moods that refuse to let justice questions disappear into civility, docility—and consumption?

This dissertation has hoped to expose itself to hauntings by affect alien and mad prophets who in their unwillingness to be docile, in their willful incivility, remind us that having been thus we might be otherwise. In each chapter I have hoped to show how attention to affects, those which are explicit and those that have too often been eclipsed, supplements political and postmodern theologies such that we are better able to cultivate different senses of what we might become. In attending to the moody emotions of those

⁵⁶¹ Walter Brueggemann, “The costly loss of lament,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 36:10 (1986), 59.

still struggling to get *a* life, to be given their full due, new questions of how we might become (politically and theologically) differently have taken hold. How do we slow down enough to attend to those we have eclipsed? What kind of bad investing might attend better to how networks of power tune us this way or that? How might we better fail together at redemption, going willfully unredeemed so as not to let the “irredeemable” pay our ransom checks? How have we cried out, and how might we better register the cry? At its heart, the political theology--one of affect, time, and worth—ventured here is about how to recognize more modes of crying out, and how to better register those cries. These concluding thoughts, then, are brief attempts at democratizing who registers and how they/we register the cry, of caring for cries yet unheard or unacknowledged. It is in this way only a beginning salvo into how a political theology attendant to mood might feel, whom it might recognize, and what it might do.

If I am to follow my own injunctions to attend to our material realities then I will need to take seriously how injunctions to lament--whether that be by loud contestation or the dwelling pause that serves as a refusal of one’s productive capacities—must attend to the differential opportunities to practice such performances of contestation. In other words, who has the freedom to slow down? Whose bodies will end up on the precarious frontlines? Of course despite all odds those in impossible situations have risked life placing their bodies on the line in a mad faith that things might be otherwise. But, we can make such blockage more democratic; there can be a redistribution of this type of care work. I want to suggest that such distribution might happen in two key and concrete ways. The first is through what Kathi Weeks calls a “utopian demand” for a guaranteed basic income. The second is an injunction to move even closer to sites of damage and

discomfort. These two practices constitute the theoethical work of grave attending. I name them: “Bread and Roses,” and “Indigestion and Stench.”

Bread and Roses

Growing up we were not religious. Or rather we were not traditionally religious, but we did have faith. We had faith in the union and in *the* party (the Communist Party). We had faith in collective action. As such we did not worry over the loss of lament in Christian worship, but we did engage in our own singing of prayerful hymns. Sometimes even as an adult I find myself humming the following song, the lyrics for which were first penned as a poem by James Oppenheim, and the title of which birthed a political slogan after it appeared as a demand in a speech given by Rose Schneiderman during a 1912 textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Schneiderman insisted, “The worker must have bread, but she must have roses too.” One hundred years later we are still singing:

As we go marching, marching
In the beauty of the day
A million darkened kitchens
A thousand mill lofts gray
Are touched with all the radiance
That a sudden sun discloses
For the people hear us singing
Bread & roses, bread & roses
As we go marching, marching
We battle too for men
For they are women’s children
And we mother them again
Our lives shall not be sweetened
From birth until life closes
Hearts starve as well as bodies
Give us bread but give us roses
As we go marching, marching
We bring the greater days

For the rising of the women
Means the rising of the race
No more the drudge and idler
Ten that toil where one reposes
But the sharing of life's glories
Bread & roses, bread & roses oh yes

This poem, turned political slogan, turned song shares, in part, the ethos of Kathi Weeks's utopian demand for a basic guaranteed income. A basic guaranteed income ensures that regardless of status or productive capacity all citizens would receive an income that was sufficient, unconditional, and continuous. This means that:

The income should be large enough to ensure that waged work would be less a necessity than a choice...An income sufficient to meet basic needs would make it possible either to refuse waged work entirely, or, for the majority who would probably want the supplementary wage, to provide a better position from which to negotiate more favorable terms of employment.⁵⁶²

This demand for a basic guaranteed income is a demand not only for bread, but also roses. To demand bread and roses is to insist that life is not about mere necessity or sustenance, but also the sharing of all of life's pleasures. In the time of the precariat, and of austerity measures sweeping Europe, it is not just that our productivity has come to define our work that has us frantically saving time over spending it. Rather, we are desperate to prove our productive capacities because we need to eat. The exhaustion over the mood of the election, over the constant demand to be productive, and over what my place within these moods lay, which I detailed in the introduction arose not merely from the desire to provide academic service with a smile or to be very unqueerly successful, but significantly also from the need for the bare essentials of life. We are at the heart of how neoliberalism affectually manipulates and oppresses us when we can diagnose how

⁵⁶² Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 139.

the layers of anxiety arising from our need for survival--an anxiety as detailed in chapter two that may have killed Maria Fernandes, and that *is* bringing on slow and rapid death for far too many people--converge with the feelings of worthlessness from never being satisfactorily productive or efficient. The demand for bread and roses, and the guaranteed basic income that democratizes the availability of such a demand, regardless of one's laboring potential, resists such oppression.

What would it mean to no longer struggle to live, *and* also to be granted a life full of roses--full of *time* for pleasure, creativity, rest, sex, thought, and play? This demand is political, but it is also theological. The demand for bread and roses affirms an economy of grace. In an economy of grace it is not what one does or provides, but rather one's existence that engenders God's love. The demand for bread and roses (a guaranteed basic income) further represents a Universalist theology, one that honors the inherent worth of each singular life, and its interconnection with all other actual entities. Indeed, part of the rationale for the demand for a basic income is the recognition that we are interconnected in such a way that must refute an exclusivist "We built this" attitude. According to Weeks, "The demand for basic income extends the insight of the wages for housework perspective that an individual's income depends on a network of social labor and cooperation broader than the individual wage relation."⁵⁶³ In other words, a basic income acknowledges all those who right now go unacknowledged in the wage system. And yet at the same time, unlike the demand for pay for housework, it resists a work ethic that ties our right to *a* life to our labor.

⁵⁶³ Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 142.

The demand for a guaranteed basic income is one divorced from wage labor. While some dedicated income policies tie wages to future productive potential, the one for which Weeks advocates in her Postwork politics, “is a basic income rather than a wage support, an unconditional income instead of a participation income, and a social wage as opposed to a capital grant.”⁵⁶⁴ This means that the income is not tied to one’s productive worth, and that it is continuous as opposed to being granted as a one time capital investment. A guaranteed basic income is a commitment to care for all people regardless of what they can do for the state, for anyone else, or for themselves.

Further, as a demand, one that is attentive to the right to enjoy as much as to the need to eat, a guaranteed income takes on a concrete utopian quality. Recall that for Weeks the utopian demand should be “grounded in the present and gesturing toward the future, evoking simultaneously... ‘nowness and newness.’”⁵⁶⁵ The demand for a guaranteed income attends to the present condition, our need for bread, and gestures toward a future in which we have the *time* to rest amongst the roses. And yet can it properly be classed as a prayerful act or even as the kind of grave attending to affect? According to Weeks, beyond being an issue of policy the demand is both a perspective and a provocation. She writes, “As a perspective, it is not only a matter of content of the demand, but of what it is that ‘we are saying’ [when we make the demand] ... a matter of the critical analyses that inform and might be elicited by the demand.”⁵⁶⁶ The demand for

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁵ Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 221.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 128-129.

a guaranteed income as a perspective is the perspective that insists on bread *and* roses. It is a perspective that allows us to imagine a world of wealthy time and a relaxed soul.

Further, what is being said when affect becomes protest--what I'm theologically calling lament--or when contestation becomes care? What critical analyses are formed when we gravely attend to our depressions, worry, and rage? What was Jonah's critical analysis of the mercy God showed to the Ninevites and perhaps not to him? How do we hear anew what Martha was saying about a theology that asks her to be dutiful so that others might be disciples? This concrete policy demand opens us to these questions and provokes counter-capitalist alternatives to lifeworlds such questions reveal. For Weeks the demand as a performance of the utopia or as a provocation, "should be understood as an attempted claim and incitement of antagonism, collective power, and desire."⁵⁶⁷ This is the kind of provocation, I argue, that affect theorists like Cvetkovich and Ahmed invoke when they persuade us to find within depression and unhappiness creative responses to an unfinished history, and what James attempts in her call to stick with the damage. It is the provocation I hope to engender in my request that we see what new alternatives arise when we remain willfully unredeemed.

One place the utopian demand might take us is to landscapes of desire denied by neoliberalism and the work ethic. Indeed, "the ethics of the demand that often seems to generate the most discomfort--specifically over the way the demand is seen to denigrate the work ethic and challenge ideals of social reciprocity that have been so firmly attached to the ideal of the labor contract."⁵⁶⁸ It is through the making of demands, the persistence

⁵⁶⁷ Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, 131.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

of different perspectives and the insistence of provocations, that alternate ethics of worth come into existence. Indeed, “Instead of, the politics of concession or the economics of sacrifice, the demand for basic income invites the expansion of our needs and desires...the demand is excessive, defying what are proclaimed to be reasonable limits on what we should want and demand.”⁵⁶⁹ In the excessiveness of desire we can hear an injunction to stick with the exceptions of neoliberal resilience in that we can desire that we all be cared for. In fields of desire nurtured by the utopian demand we can insist we be stroked gently open, and that we collapse into our beds and be given time to listen for the cacophonous rhythms of beautiful singularities. We can demand roses, lots of roses, big big rooms of life’s glories. Indeed, this is a demand for a world in which we do not have to demand roses—it is a demand for a world in which they are given, in which they bloom graciously.

Indigestion and Stench

“The sharing of life’s glories/Bread and roses, bread and roses,” would this not be a nice way to end? How wonderful to remain in the fragrant sweetness of such sharing. This may in fact be what becomes available when there is a more democratic distribution of care work, and so a more democratic distribution of pleasurable nonwork. And yet this dissertation was never going to end so rosily. The utopian demand provides the provocation for a more just nowness and a more hopeful newness, but it cannot be the last word. If a melancholic remaining with the bad investments is what helps to bring on such redistribution of care and pleasure, then it is to such remaining we must for

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

evermore return. For the demand is not the conclusion; it is the continuous beginning of ever more sensitively attuned laments. Additionally, it is my hunch that many of us are not repulsed by depression as much as we are familiar with it. Can we imagine remaining with damage we find more distasteful than the depressions theorists of affect have embraced? What kind of care-of-the-self and grave attending might that be? How might it feel? What happens when the bread gets moldy and the roses wilt?

According to Eugenie Brinkema, “Disgust haunts aesthetics; it not only must be disciplined, but it gives shape to the nascent philosophical discipline.”⁵⁷⁰ She uses what she calls the “cleaning up of Aristophanes’ hiccups” in the *Symposium* as an example of how an effacement of disgust and the rejection of the disgusting as being in ‘bad taste’ forms the philosophical and the aesthetic. This cleaning up, “[or in other words] the putting of [the hiccups] to work for meaning and the attendant neutralizing of their odor—is part of a much broader philosophical forgetting of the materiality of the body and the simultaneous forgetting (or disembodiment or making metaphorical) of disgust and the disgusting.”⁵⁷¹ It is possible that I have cleaned up or straightened out madness and depression too much. Perhaps they have been too hard—too productively-- at the work of meaning making in this dissertation. If an affect hermeneutic is always reading for the moods that we elide, then perhaps we need to look at places less easy to wipe clean, places or people with whom it would feel wretched to remain, those that might make us wretch and retch.

⁵⁷⁰ Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects*, 125.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 119.

In her essay, “Powers of the Hoard: Further Notes on Material Agency,” Jane Bennett engages Ian Hacking’s argument “that some forms of mental illness arise ‘only at certain times and places,’ and are semantically located between a virtue celebrated in the culture and its accompanying vice.”⁵⁷² Hacking provides the example of *fugueurs* (compulsive walkers) in 1887 France as responsive to the culture’s embrace of travelling and its rejection of vagrancy. Bennett offers “hoarding [as] the madness appropriate to a political economy devoted to over-consumption, planned obsolescence, relentless extraction of natural resources (‘Drill Baby Drill’), and vast mountains of disavowed waste.”⁵⁷³ What might it mean to attend to this culturally specific disorder? To what types of orders might we attend and which types resist when we pause within the hoard and smell its stench?

Neither Bennett nor I wish to valorize hoarding, or overlook its deleterious effects; however, she helps us to attend to what we might learn or what lifeworlds might arise when we stick with what we normally assume to be pathological. The hoarder, while in some ways fitting perfectly within neoliberal consumerism, is actually much more of a materialist. Conventional wisdom has it that our culture is too materialistic, but in fact we may not take the material with which we already reside seriously enough. Neoliberalism is not based on material attention to that with which we are already entangled, but rather relies on the desire for that which we do not yet possess. This is not so for the hoarder. Bennett quoting ethnographic research notes that, “Hoarders display

⁵⁷² Jane Bennett, “Powers of the Hoard: Further Notes on Material Agency,” in *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral: Ethics and Objects*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Washington DC: Oliphaunt Books, 2012), 248.

⁵⁷³ Bennett, “Powers of the Hoard,” 248.

what one researcher called ‘extreme perception.’ They seem to notice *too* much about their things, are struck *too* hard by them. ‘When most of us look at an object like a bottle cap, we think, ‘This is useless,’ but a hoarder sees the shape and the color and the texture and the form. All these details give it value. Hoarding may not be a deficiency at all—it may be a special gift or a special ability.’”⁵⁷⁴ Is this extreme perception not that which is called for by my grave attending—a being brought down to the myriad matterings of the world? Might hoarding be a monstrously crip sensibility that haunts us in order to question our own valorization of the usefulness of things, both nonhuman and those humans whom the neoliberal economy has made into tools for its own functioning? Indeed, to attend to hoarders might be to continue to attend to a problematic theology that defines worth with work or productive use-value.

In contrast to a theology of use-value, for hoarders, “the things with which they live, and which live with them in close physical proximity, are less ‘possessions’ (a term rarely used by hoarders) than pieces of self.”⁵⁷⁵ According to Bennett the things with which the hoarder resides often become “like one’s arm, not a tool, but an organ, a vital member.”⁵⁷⁶ How can we reside like the hoarder vitally with, in Brinkema’s Nietzschean formulation, “the *there is*, the *once more*, to life, the thinginess of the gaud?”⁵⁷⁷ To reside vitally will not be easy or comfortable. To reside with all the thinginess, to be extremely perceptive, to gravely attend, might be to be disgusted or to let that which had once

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., 245.

⁵⁷⁵ Bennett, “Powers of the Hoard,” 255.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁷ Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects*, 243.

disgusted us infect us to a point where care for it becomes part of (a la Foucault) the care of the self. For instance, as Bennett points out, hoarders no longer smell the odors of decay and filth emitted from “the cat-urine, black mold, rat feces, and rotting food in their cocoon.”⁵⁷⁸ The care for the filth has become so intimate that the hoarder has been transformed by such care such that their sensory processes have changed. To be sure there are legitimate concerns with what this transformation might have to say about the health of the hoarder, and hoarding cannot be analyzed properly without sensitive attention to dynamics of culture and economics. However, there is still something ethically interesting about feeling our way into this filth. There is something potent in sticking with the fecal matters at hand. Even, my dear readers, the discomfort you may be currently feeling at the mention of the stench of cat-urine and rat feces is interesting. That feeling of disgust has something to teach us.

According to Brinkema, “one must read for disgust. For all that it is so often figured as the supreme instance of the negative or excluded or radically nullifying, disgust is in fact one way of speaking about the possible and the new.”⁵⁷⁹ Disgust, for Brinkema, takes the form of disruption to the narrative, and as such offers possibilities of philosophy being otherwise—being more materially attentive. Returning to Aristophanes through a discussion of Plato’s *Timaeus* she writes:

[His] hiccups are surely the great reminder of the violability of this divine plan, for it is the rebellion of this place of lower creation that makes as much noisy disturbance as possible at the classical table, not only punctuating but reordering philosophy’s critical line. Instead of a myth of the body’s smooth, hard perfection, such a classical Greek sculpture posits, in this account the body’s sloppy, slippery

⁵⁷⁸ Bennett, “Powers of the Hoard,” 255.

⁵⁷⁹ Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects*, 117.

form takes a series of defensive blockages and inefficient passageways, an Upstairs-Downstairs lure for transgression.⁵⁸⁰

Disgust as an impediment to the divine plan might be a lament against closed narratives in favor of the reordering of the philosophical line. Disgust materially engages the disgusted with the disgusting; it breaks the myth of our smooth self-enclosures. To take care to read for disgust, to be open to being disgusted without fleeing toward rosier smells is to take care to be transformed.

We might find the potential for such transformation in how hoarders seem to have found pleasure in what Bennett names drawing on Roland Barthes the “*advenience*” that is experienced between them and the hoarded. Such *advenience* might teach us how to resist philosophical closures: “*Advenience* is a making-present to human sense-perception, a jutting or intruding into the ‘regime of the sensible.’”⁵⁸¹ Following the concept of *advenience* as explicated by Davide Panagia, the becoming-sensible is to “[strike] without designating. An *advenience* marks a presence that we can sense but not know.”⁵⁸² To feel that which normally goes unfelt, but to do so without confining it in certain knowledge is the kind of erotic ethic Huffer finds in Foucault. It is a grave attending that seeks to witness to, while not capturing and commodifying, the damage. Indeed, if philosophy as resistance *begins* with a cry, then perhaps it *continues* with a stench.

Or perhaps it continues with a retch. Reading with Bennett the smells of hoarding had me squeamish. Reading with Elizabeth Wilson’s *Gut Feminism* I became downright

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 120.

⁵⁸¹ Bennett, “Powers of the Hoard,” 262.

⁵⁸² Ibid.

nauseous. One of the calls of this theology of unredemption is to attend to our damage, to invest in those that have been made the exception to neoliberal salvation. Reading with Wilson we might further this call such that we attend not just to those Others we find to have been most damaged and pathologized, but also to our own damaging as part of such systems of pathologization.

Wilson makes this request through her reading of what the DSM-5 classes as a feeding and eating disorder known either as “mercyism” or “rumination”: “the repeated regurgitation, rechewing, and reswallowing of food.” That the thought of this disorder had me literally retching the first time I read Wilson’s book, made me know it was to this visceral discomfort I had to attend. Mercyism is found in adults, but also frequently in babies who will nearly convulse trying to contort their muscles until milk has been regurgitated and they can languish massaging the semi-digested meal on their tongues.

Mercyism might be considered a kind of edible hoarding or a hyper-sustainable practice of recycling and reusing of food. Except, rumination is not nourishing or sustaining, and if not attended to in infants it can cause death (a result that depression and hoarding are not immune to of course). While there might be some interesting attention to pay to the slow eating that comes through practices of regurgitation, for now I am more interested in the implications Wilson draws from this practice. She asks us to attend to the bitterness that remains even in moments of care. She is in this way asking us to continue to make bad investments, and to do so with all the complexity that such moody investment might engender. Moving from mercyism to depression in feminist and queer theory Wilson argues:

That the politics of depression would benefit from more attention to the hostility generated by us and directed at our loved objects, ideals, and places. While there

have been lucid articulations of the ways in which hostility is directed by others at certain kinds of persons (women, people of color, queers and perverts, the poor, the outcasts, outliers and deviants of all kinds), the nature of our own participation in trends of sadism and hatred toward these objects—whom we love, with whom we may identify or collaborate, or to whom we may be sexually, economically, or politically attached—remains undertheorized.⁵⁸³

To attend to our own hostility, a hostility that Wilson surfaces by looking to bodily and mental “disorders” as much as to theorizations of depression, is to keep the affect hermeneutical circle going. It is to take the necessary care of the self required to realize our own acts of violent effacement, but too the joys we occasionally find in such violence. Wilson is not going to let us rehabilitate ourselves into the right kind of feminists, the good depressed girls; she wants us to see what might happen when we take seriously that thanatos haunts eros.

This attention to our own hostilities is a reminder to be vigilant of the ways in which I have already benefitted in my ability to overcome damage and be rehabilitated into MRWaSP, leaving others to pay the ransom. White girl inclusion has been built on black girl exclusion. My nonnormate mind and its moments of depression have not come close to costing me my life or family or job; this is tragically not the case for far too many people. To attend to the regurgitation of care might be to attend to such a reality. To ignore the complexity of this hostility might be to go redeemed at the expense of the irredeemable, or as Wilson puts it, “if we are unable to keep our conceptual focus on these intensely hostile forces, then our politics become redemptive—sadism is tamed, culture is salvaged, politics marches on to the good. For me, at least, the unacknowledged hostility necessary to enforce those political phantasies is the most bitterly depressing

⁵⁸³ Ibid., 85.

scene of all.”⁵⁸⁴ A theology of unredemption resists these political phantasies. It wants to attend to the bitterness as much as to the thingy joy of gaud. It wants to take care to be transformed in ways that are not redemptive, but rather attentive to the myriad affects produced in these care-full encounters.

Thus, to perceive the thinginess of life in new ways has political and theological import. Bennett drawing on Ranciere points to how “political power operates...by imposing a set of aesthetic-affective habits that restrict the range of what it is possible to perceive at all: they erect a ‘partition of the sensible.’”⁵⁸⁵ Who are the prophets that not only murmur from archives past, but burst through partitions of the sensible today? Who in their affect and materiality block up the divine neoliberal plan such that transformations might be possible? Who is practicing contestation as care? And how might we better attend to them?

To gravely attend is to remember to always look, feel, taste, and sniff for what peeks out from the closet doors many wish would stay closed. It is a theology attendant to a never-ending hermeneutical cycle of affect. The hoarder’s extreme perception, and mercyism’s reminder of our own hostility may be the impediments we need to better attend to the muck, particularly whenever we think we’ve found our own salvific uplifts. To attend to the muck in this way is to attend to the laments of worldly matter that we often work to silence.

Registering the Cries of Today’s Lamenters

⁵⁸⁴ Wilson, *Gut Feminism*, 93.

⁵⁸⁵ Bennett, “Powers of the Hoard,” 264.

Such attention takes moody form in Timothy Morton's call to remain melancholic in the face of global warming. In advocating for the End of the concept of Nature, Morton writes, "Isn't this lingering with something painful, disgusting, grief-striking, exactly what we need right now, ecologically speaking?" He continues, "The task is not to bury the dead but to join them, to be bitten by the undead and become them."⁵⁸⁶ To join the dead might be to attend to their graves and listen for their hauntings, but it also, following Robin James, might be to go into the death to short-circuit the machines that have been killing us. To join the dead is to stick with that which is blocking oppressive life. Following Morton into the poisoned mud, like following James into bad investing, is not a crucifixion or a resurrection, but a remaining that makes it possible to become again what we never were. This remaining awakens those parts of ourselves that had been deemed unproductive and indigestible, utterly disgusting.

To invest in the indigestible might be to invest in that which has been considered the shit, that which blocks up the system and its efficient production. Can we imagine becoming indigestible, or unproductively consumable? Can we imagine the parts we expel from pleasantries and efficiency as those parts that we need to amplify in our ambient temples?

Perhaps we should pause at attention; perhaps we should attend to those whose cries are in need of registering. It is with two forms of moody cries with which I wish to pause in this unconcluded reflection. One comes in a global lament more remote from my own practices of witness and the other from a much more intimate, but no less globally entangled cry. Both are forms of blockage embodied in grave, but backlit with hope,

⁵⁸⁶ Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 201.

activism against tragedies of the heteropatriarchal, white supremacist, and neoliberal world.

Blocking Disaster

The first cry with which we pause is that of climate activists making up a movement known as ‘blockadia.’ According to Naomi Klein, the communities that make up ‘blockadia’ as a growing movement of climate activists are increasingly “simply saying, ‘No.’ No to the pipeline. No to Arctic drilling. No to the coal and oil trains. No to heavy hauls. No to the export terminal. No to fracking, And not just “Not in My Backyard’ but, as the French anti-fracking activists say: Ni ici ni ailleurs—neither here, nor elsewhere. In other words: no new carbon frontiers.”⁵⁸⁷ Klein continues, “As Wendell Berry says, borrowing words from E.M. Forester, conservation ‘turns on affection’ – and if each of us loved our homeplace enough to defend it, there would be no ecological crisis, no place could ever be written off as a sacrifice zone. We would simply have no choice but to adopt nonpoisonous methods of meeting our needs.”⁵⁸⁸ Conservation turns on affection, but also as this dissertation has proposed, affectation—on how we are affected, what affects we are able to cultivate, and which ones we open ourselves up to feel. For the turn of affection cannot be reduced simply to love of homeplace. We must consider how the expression of such love has or hasn’t made those in power *feel*. We must ask if we are willing to give up some of what we love in order to defend that which is loved by others living for much longer in the zones of sacrifice than we.

⁵⁸⁷ Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capital vs. The Climate* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), 305.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

To attend to those in the sacrifice zones is to take seriously the critiques of power made by Huffer and Foucault in their attention both to who received and receives the mark of “the mad” so that rational moral man might be birthed, and to the practices of self-care that might open us to the desubjectivation needed to better hear the mad one’s cry. To attend to the sacrifice zones is also, with Robin James, to make bad investments in those neoliberalism has marked as toxic—the urban black man, the most precariously impoverished, the disabled, and all the nonhuman others we’ve marked as disposable. To attend to the no of blockadia is to attend to the noes of those marked as irredeemable, those that are not resilient enough to rehabilitate back into the neoliberal machine.

The “no” of the affect alien is the “no” of blockadia. For the “no” of the affect alien, while an act of wandering away from the yes of mainstream society, is not a wandering away from all sociality. When we give ourselves over to this affecting “no,” we can do so not only through one unified voice, but more so through an archival listening for the cacophony of cries murmured by those in the sacrifice zones, those on whose effacement the false harmony of neoliberal “progress” was built.

We might read blockadia in this way as an embodiment of the prophetic call of the feminist killjoy, a *collective* act of killing neoliberal joy—killing the jouissance of those that consider us disposable. But also the killing of joy of those who have believed they would survive the sacrifice. The blockadia killers of joy threaten theological, political, economic, and ecological complacency. This threatening is both a mode of mood work, the work of adjusting and being adjusted by affect, and a lament to a God who can feel our moodiness, feel when we are not in the neoliberal mood. It is a call to

God to take the tender care that global suffering not be lost; and hope that such suffering having been thus might be otherwise—yes, but.

To say no, not here, not anywhere, is to refuse to have let your homeplace go redeemed while others are left as the exception to redemption:

Running an economy on energy sources that release poisons as an unavoidable part of their extraction and refining has always required sacrifice zones— whole subsets of humanity categorized as less than fully human, which made their poisoning in the name of progress somehow acceptable. . . . Through various feats of denialism and racism, it was possible for privileged people in North America and Europe to mentally cordon off these unlucky places as hinterlands, wastelands, nowheres—. For those fortunate enough to find ourselves outside those condemned borders, myself among them, it seemed as if our places— the ones where we live and to which we escape for pleasure . . . would not be sacrificed to keep the fossil fuel machine going. . . . But in less than a decade of the extreme energy frenzy and the commodity boom, the extractive industries have broken that unspoken bargain. In very short order, the sacrifice zones have gotten a great deal larger, swallowing ever more territory and putting many people who thought they were safe at risk.⁵⁸⁹

Zones of sacrifice are formed through a theology that names profit as salvation, assumes consumption and conquest are divinely sanctioned, and marks far too many of us as abject waste and so disposable. This theology, one in concert with neoliberal redemption narratives and the Protestant work ethic, views the earth as such waste, but also those bodies historically aligned with earthliness and creatureliness—people of color, indigenous communities, women, the global south, and the impoverished. Instead of mourning the loss of Nature, perhaps we should get into the poisoned mud with those marked disposable. To stick with the poisoned mud is care as contestation. It is the cry that might begin a philosophy resistant to the disaster capitalism and acts of climate change denial that are killing us.

⁵⁸⁹ Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 281.

Refusing Death

The second cry with which I want to pause as I conclude, was one I thought I had registered years ago, and yet which a theology of affect brings me back to hear and feel once more.

On the morning of June 28, 2009 an illegal coup d'état engulfed Honduras, as wealthy factions in the judicial and legislative bodies employed the army to oust democratically elected president, Manuel (Mel) Zelaya. The next morning a young woman donned white robes covered with blood red paint and the word "Democracia" written across her back. Appearing almost priest like and surrounded by weeping women dressed as ritual mourners, black veils and hats casting shadows on their tear stained cheeks, the woman marched through San Pedro Sula until reaching the offices of *La Prensa*, a conservative newspaper, where she lay down in the shape of the cross, "crucifying" herself in the middle of the street.

What did this performance of living-crucifixion mean? What was the impetus for this piece of political theater? What was the response of its audience? These were the questions I asked Patty six months later while on a bearing witness trip to Honduras sponsored by the Harvard Committee for the Study of Human Rights. Patty met each of my questions with tearful silence. At first, I thought, the problem was my Spanish, my bad Gringa Spanish. So, I asked my colleagues for help, and each in their turn tried asking again, "What did this performance mean?" Finally, in exasperation Patty

proclaimed: “It wasn’t a performance. It was real. It’s my reality. I have been crucified. Honduras has been crucified. That is more real than me sitting here talking to you.”⁵⁹⁰

In constructing her theology of witness in the wake of trauma Shelly Rambo draws on the witness to Christ’s resurrection by Mary Magdalene and the beloved disciple in John’s Gospel. In both cases witness is characterized by the unrecognizable.⁵⁹¹ Using these two biblical witnesses as the basis for her theology, Rambo concludes:

The experience of witnessing of what remains of life... involves an encounter with what is not recognizable. In this encounter, there is a movement to reorient oneself in relationship to what is not immediately familiar. The movement involves interplay of the senses in an attempt to find one’s way.⁵⁹²

Here the life that remains in the wake of trauma is disorienting to those who witness such a phenomenon. Witnessing, in Rambo’s construction pushes toward the reorientation that occurred through the interplay of affect between Patty and me, such that I not only saw, but also began to feel the reality she portrayed.

In order for Patty’s voice (a voice spoken primarily through her silent act) to be heard this reorientation had to happen in acts of grave attention. I needed to see the photographs of her “blood” stained body, appearing lifeless, stretched out on black asphalt. I needed to hear the trembling in her voice, feel the tingling in my spine, my nerve-endings responding to her sorrowful gasp. The interplay of affects that comes in attendant relationship, not only disorients in order to reorient, but further awakens one to

⁵⁹⁰ My translation of Patty’s Spanish

⁵⁹¹ Rambo discusses in chapter the various ways Mary’s vision is impaired in her act of witness at the tomb (Rambo 2010, 84-91), and similarly how the beloved disciple upon reaching the tomb, looks, but doesn’t not fully see, (Rambo 2010, 92)

⁵⁹² Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: a Theology of Remaining* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 162.

ontological, political, and theological entanglements that have been previously eclipsed or effaced.

The space caused by this rupture of translatability is a space of the middle. It is from this in-between that Rambo constructs her Middle Spirit theology. Rambo's Middle Spirit is formed through the lens of trauma, which breaks down the binary between death and life. Through her crucifixion Patty embodied this Middle Spirit. She witnessed to the reality of the death-infused lives of those in resistance in Honduras. Yet, by embodying a *living* crucifixion, by continue to live in the face of a life haunted by death, but not fully destroyed by it, she witnessed to what remains of love in resistance. Still, it would be antithetical to this project, as well as a distortion of the Honduran reality, to say that Patty *resurrected*. When we sat together in that conference room, she didn't say, "We have been crucified and resurrected," or, "We have been crucified and will be resurrected." She said, "Honduras has been crucified." This is a disorienting concept of crucifixion. Christian theology regularly sees crucifixion as inextricably tied to close-at-hand resurrection, but Rambo and Patty urge resistance to this formulation. They force us to recognize the importance of the middle, of the way in which life and death can be seen as complexly and continuously interpenetrating one another. Indeed, by "crucifying" herself, while refusing to stay dead, Patty embodied a Holy Saturday theology. With this embodiment we might feel the space of the middle to be where most of us necessarily live.

This dissertation has argued for the middle. It has asked that we better register the cries of those like Patty, too often covered over or eclipsed on the way to more palatable resurrections. It asks us to remain with Patty on the middle day, to gravely attend to her

laments and to refuse to be redeemed as long as our redemptions come on the backs of crucifixions in streets to our South, or those in the centers of our own cities. This dissertation asks what it would mean to affectually stick with and to Patty, with those gone buried or not (if police never searched for the body) in Honduras like Wendy Avilla, the 29-year-old mother of four who was found dead and mutilated in a dirt lot, and Claudia Brizuela, shot to death by paramilitary forces in the doorway of her home. It asks to feel for, to touch on, to attend to the grief of those that loved Laquan McDonald, Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, Kandis Capri, and Amber Monroe. It asks us to attend to our own grief in the face of climate disaster, and to the moments where we cannot feel the other's pain. To attend to the damage is also to seek out the life, and so the love, even if it may feel weary and impotent, that remains. Sticking with how we might be affected by and affecting one another instead of covering over all those moods that do not fit in our rooms may not be revolutionary, but precisely in the everyday stickiness, moodiness might come to matter in ways yet unrealized.

There is a greater possibility for a more radical faith even/especially within radical political theology, one that can counter the demands of productivity and success engendered by capitalism. We will need to be willing to risk the messiness that comes with feeling: backwards, depressed, bored, and impotent, but also with feeling: ecstatic, turned-on, joyous, hopeful, and manic, in that each of these affects might have something to teach us about our individual *and* collective becomings and unbecomings, if only we were open to following them where they willed. After all, in the face of the gravity of what is, what might have been, and what might be, don't you want to be an affect alien prophet? Might a touch of madness be what we need right now?

Feeling Once Again, as Never Before

Can we attend to our touches of madness? Can we listen better to how we are feeling? Can an attentive “no”, for now, be enough to stop up that which is killing us and also that which demands we be redeemed out of our damage? Can we pause long enough to ask for other options? Pausing in the middle of my life sentence I can say that today I am depressed. I am angry. I am anxious. I am exhausted. I am also manic, which is to say I am also alive to the madness of creativity that often brings about joy and hope. I am touched by madness—my own and those of the weeping women in Honduras and the mourning mothers in the streets of Baltimore, Chicago, Ferguson, and New York. Perhaps you are too. Or perhaps you are or have been scared to be touched, to touch on such intensity of feeling, to become too touchy.

It is scary; I am also scared of what my moods might do. I am anxious about who I might become through the making of melancholic bad investments. I am worried about sticking to and with the damage. I am nervous about going unredeemed. But perhaps willfully going unredeemed is getting *a* life. Perhaps being brought down to the grave, feeling the gravity of pleasure and pain is how we access the hope that lights us from beneath. Perhaps abiding with irredeemable moods is how we ensure the fading background full of the murmuring mad ones not be lost. What if in the midst of the fear, and the depression, and the joy, you took my hand? Can I care for you and you for me? Will we spend time closer to the grave? Can we be halted and haunted? Will we be bent on not lying straight? Might we become again what we never were? It is time to pay closer attention.

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