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OCCUPATIONS: A REPERTOIRE OF EXPERIMENTAL POLITICAL AND ARTISTIC PRACTICES

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Acknowledgments

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Abstract

A story by Jacques Roubaud in his memoir *Le Grand Incendie des Londres* spurred this dissertation and its interest in experimental aesthetics and radical political acts. Roubaud, a poet in the Oulipo group that develops and uses highly restrictive forms, describes an attempt to get discharged from military service in Algeria in 1961 by foregoing food in order to become too weak and sick to serve. He calls this successful act a "clandestine hunger strike" and his "very first constraint," collapsing political resistance with literary form. The story changed how I viewed each term in the equation: by reading hunger strikes as self-imposed constraints, artistic constraints became more practical and worldly and the hunger strike became more creative and utopian — the aesthetic similarities suggested a link in how procedural forms could generate creative possibilities. I center the hunger strike in Chapter One, "'Variegated sound through beneath lit dark': Hunger Strikes and the Score," which focuses on American procedural poets like Bernadette Mayer and Norman H. Pritchard alongside Moroccan poets Saïda Menebhi and Abdallah Zrika to argue that political action is best viewed formally, as a "score." Doing so foregrounds the body and context of the actor while reconsidering avant-garde attempts at collapsing art and life. Moreover, by viewing a hunger strike as an intentional constraint, and by recognizing its frequency within prisons, I note the formal interplay and influence of adopting a constraint within a constrained space — of, that is, adding a self-imposed restriction as a protest against restrictions imposed by others. The chapter is multilingual across English, French, and Arabic, and is a microcosm of the dissertation's stake in what comparative, interdisciplinary readings might offer.

In this spirit, "Occupations: A Repertoire of Experimental Political and Artistic Practices," uses political acts to rethink utopian and resistant possibilities of postwar

experimental art, particularly in postcolonial contexts. This means looking for hidden, missed, and failed alternatives to the unjust and totalizing forces that entrenched their power in the 1960s-1980s (neoliberalism, First World dominance, continual forms of imperialism and colonialism). Artists in this period often sought to eschew the stagnancy of the artistic object, artistic creation, and representation for practices and acts that would spur change. But the language we use to talk about such experiments is still overly concerned with objects and aesthetic meanings. In response to this, my work uses social-ontological explorations of "practice" to emphasize not only the processual or bodily changes that such arts and political acts demand, but also the democratizing, nonhierarchical possibilities latent in performing them. This theoretical base is explained in the introduction, "Repertoires and Manuals," which analyzes how practices — and our unconscious and conscious collections of them — can recursively change beliefs and ideologies. By focusing on the minute, individual, small-group level actions represented by manuals, I argue for a renewed interest in survival-based tactics that may not be tied to larger level revolutionary ideals but still have encoded within them visions and versions of another, better world.

After the first chapter on hunger strikes, "Occupations" then examines self-immolation, sabotage, and squatting as radical and "illegitimate" political acts, acts that were less about highly organized political power and mobilization and more about the everyday work of making do, resisting, and forcing change. They are also all acts that reached peaks of use, global spread, and mediatization after World War II, when artists and writers (occasionally referred to as the neo avant-garde) were also testing new ways of creating and new modes of art that could be sewn into life. In Chapter Two, "Sincerely Anyone: The Impersonal Aesthetics and Psychopolitics of Self-Immolation," I draw from cases of political suicide and experiments in

impersonality by French poet Danielle Collobert to argue for a nonnational political identity based on communal responsibility. This is derived from self-immolation's emphasis on sociopolitical context over psychological factors and mental illness, a reversal that makes use of impersonal poetics to turn even non-political suicide into a matter of social justice. Tracking Collobert's impersonal aesthetics helps describe how self-immolation interpellates a community, as Collobert's vague, shifty narrators establish a subjectivity that hovers and oscillates between the reader and the narrator. In postcolonial contexts, I map this movement onto the recent theorization by Mahmood Mamdani of a nonnational political identity based on the figure of the survivor (where anyone in a given state can count as a "survivor" of a previous catastrophe): I offer a similar identity that, as opposed to the survivor's possible recursion to self-interest, is grounded in the death of the other.

In Chapter Three, "Destroy, Disrupt, Parasite: Sabotage as Symbol or Survival," I show how sabotage defines the practices and objectives of both political actors – which span from South Africa's ANC resistors to French anarchist groups, Mapuche communities, and pirate radio stations — and artists, which include Auto-Destructive artists Gustav Metzger and Jean Tinguely, Fluxus and Situationist plans for city-wide art, and an art piece by Trevor Paglen and Jacob Appelbaum that parasites the WIFI networks of the museum it is placed within. The chapter categorizes sabotage across three blurry types —object sabotage, network sabotage, and parasitic sabotage — to argue for the latter's conception of everyday life, enduring resistance, and avoidance of cooptation. Though often meant as symbolic acts, object and network sabotage can damage coalition building by harming or threatening populations that otherwise might be sympathetic to the resistor's aims. I use Paglen and Abbelbaum's piece as well as pirate radio stations to consider parasitism as an alternative form of sabotage.

Chapter Four, "Living with the Great Number: Squatting, Participation, and the Fold," pursues the tensions between autonomy, community, and dissensus by reading together the act of squatting and participatory art, before outlining a model of community formation based on the Surrealist game of the exquisite corpse. As a companion piece to Chapter Two, this chapter is similarly interested in nonnational belonging, which it conceptualizes through the "great number" — the scale of an entire population that necessarily avoids accurate representation — and the "ethnographic other," by which I mean the always potentially undiscovered member of a given community. To make this case, I study Thai filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Mysterious Object at Noon* (2000), a film that uses the exquisite corpse to riff on documentary and national belonging as the filmmaker features narrators from across Thailand and a troupe of amateur actors to tell and present a story. The chapter ends with an argument for "institutional blindness" as a way to allow for anarchic, bottom-up modes of community and belonging without thereby reneging on state responsibilities.

Finally, the conclusion attempts to draw out a "Theory of Maintenance" to think through the mundane, boring, difficult processes of simply continuing, of taking care, of sticking around, first by invoking the maintenance art of American artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles. In this way, the conclusion speaks directly to an undercurrent of the dissertation: practices of repair and survival versus practices of resistance and revolution. I argue against this binary by describing the Palestinian practice of *sumūd*, or "steadfastness," which is a practice and lifestyle of staying put on colonized land, of not leaving the land (unless and until one is removed) in order to both resist and to survive.

Interdisciplinary and multilingual, my research intervenes in a few different discourses. It is postcolonial, set in and after the decolonial era and seeking to use geographically and

linguistically diverse objects to challenge received notions of political belonging, community formation, and legitimate protest. In this way, I use sociology and ethnography to draw from the widened field of objects that contemporary avant-garde studies urges and to deploy methodological tools rarely used in literary research — my chapter on squatting, for example, features site visits to squats in France. My research also builds on Global Literature by reading across French and Arabic Literature from within an English Department, an interest especially due to my creative output as a poetry translator. Finally, my focus on resistance and everyday life engages the field of resistance studies and its examination of protest that occurs outside of defined groups and movements. The looseness of this field has at times been critiqued for "translating," as Marshall Sahlins writes, "the apparently trivial into the fatefully political." My analysis, however, is geared toward prescriptive alternatives: my highest and most naïve intention is to use the vital reality of truly resistant acts to question how aesthetic, cultural, everyday acts and arts *might be used* shape the next world.

Introduction

Repertoires and Manuals

One of the first tasks of the culture of resistance was to reclaim, rename, and reinhabit the land. — Edward Said

Occupation vs Occupation

In late January of 2017 I was on a bus that had left the tiny coastal town of Tarfaya, Morocco — a sand swept minor port where French author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry spent two years managing an air mail route and which now houses the Antoine de Saint Exupéry Museum — to head south to El Aaiún. Though the trip was only an hour, the voyage spanned years: El Aaiún is the largest city in occupied Western Sahara, a strip of desert that has been under Moroccon control since Spain abdicated its former colony in 1975. Spain had intended to leave this strip of desert to the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y Río de Oro, or Polisario, until King Hassan II led a "350,00 civilian-strong 'invasion'…known as the Green March" (Mundy 256). The March had the effect of halting the transfer of power to the Polisario, overwhelming native Sahrawi numbers and leading almost half of the population to flee into exile in four refugee camps across the Algerian border — a border strung with landmines and 1700 miles of a defensive sand berm. Earlier, in Sidi Ifni, a sleepy fishing village south of Agadir, I had passed one of the many murals that commemorate the March, a landmark still widely admired in Moroccan national consciousness (Fig. 1). This is evident even within the mural, which is titled قسم المسيرة, or *The Oath of the March*. The accompanying text is a first-person oath swearing to God to ابقى, or *remain*, *stay*, and that, by remaining "in the spirit of the glorious March," one will be the "defender of national unity from the coast to the Sahara." This is an oath for families — the second line involves teaching this oath to the oathkeeper's offspring — who acknowledge the intimate connection between "staying" and "defense," that occupying a space is both a domestic life and a political action.

Fig. 1. A mural in Sidi Ifni, Morocco commemorating the Green March

For the native Sahrawi, such a connection is a matter of survival and resistance: in October 2010, 5000 Sahrawi established the Gdeim Izik camp south-east of El-Aaiún to protest Sahrawi discrimination and call for Western Sahara independence. The camp of tents existed for a month before Moroccan security forces violently disbanded it. Noam Chomsky has suggested that the camp and its violent repression mark the true beginning of the Arab Spring, rather than Mohammed Bouazizi's self-immolation, and as Samia Errazzouki and Allison L. McManus note in their introduction to the edited issue *Beyond Dominant Narratives in the Western Sahara*, "situating the Gdeim Izik protests as the beginning of the 'Arab Spring' disrupts a historical narrative that is centered on a decades-long struggle for self-determination in the Western Sahara" (4). That is, struggle is often a matter of time and endurance rather than the spontaneity and excitement of the Arab Spring — in its early days at least. It fills lives and requires living,

before and in the midst of and after the revolutionary acts and movements that seek new organizations of the world and its resources.

This tension, between the extreme and the mundane, between the stories I heard and knew were real — Amnesty International after all released a 2015 report called "Shadow of Impunity: Torture in Morocco and Western Sahara" and Sahrawi and Moroccan hunger strikers are routinely imprisoned — and the absolute ordinariness of experience, followed me through my time in El-Aaiún and the minor resort town of Dakhla that hung its fingernail off Wester Sahara's southernmost tip. I met, for example, an activist for tea, sitting in the midday sun outside a café, and he flipped through photos of bruised activists while telling me about the next protest and how to follow him, from a distance, to it, but that it was almost certain I would be snatched up and deported before I arrived. Though he hushed me at certain questions and looked suspiciously around us, he also wore a deep crimson thawb that drew wandering eyes to our single point. As I walked a dozen meters behind him, he would text me about the secret police that were already trailing me; I saw no one, which was both a skepticism and a confirmation. Eventually I lost sight of the red but when I arrived at the location that he eventually geo-tagged for me, I saw no one again, no one that seemed protestor or police anyway, just a more or less empty square, a few individuals milling between shops, so I bought a pastry and flagrantly spoke with the women making them ("Avoid speaking with locals, as anyone might be a spy," I was told) and existed for a while while nothing happened. The next day I wandered into malls and watched the shiny SUVs pick through the sandy roads, signs of a city that had been built on top of a city, the subsidized Moroccan lifestyle displacing older and diminishing Sahrawi numbers. El-Aaiún simply functioned. Nearly 50 years since the Green March, the only overt difference between it and any other Moroccan city were the few dusty MINURSO ("United Nations

Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara") vehicles, remnants of a failed mission whereby "the people of Western Sahara would choose between independence and integration with Morocco" that began in 1991 and has in 30 years led to no referendum. This has Jacob Mundy writing that "it is difficult to be optimistic about prospects for a swift and peaceful resolution to the conflict" (255), but one might similarly interpret MINURSO presence as the artifacts of a *de facto* resolution that has already occurred, in favor of the occupiers.

Starting with this history and my brief, outsider experience of it invokes the overlapping, contradictory, and enduring concepts and affects of "occupation" that are at play, jostling for recognition and reality. There is the present occupation of another population's land that reminds us in the postcolonial age of the very real and lasting effects of formally ended colonialism as well as the many spaces still negotiating literal, land colonialism. Simultaneously, there is the use of occupation as a tactic to counter colonial occupation, such as in Gdeim Izik, taking up space "illegitimately" to protest the legitimized illegitimacy of a national project of theft. From sit-ins to Occupy Wall Street, from Mapuche blockades of natural gas companies across Patagonia to *sumūd*, the Palestinian practice of staying put in a place, groups and individuals have found a kind of power in occupying a place, in being where one is not meant, from the perspective of a corporation or a state, to be. An occupation can also a profession, a hobby — things that occupy your time, and the question of time, of stretches of it, is central to how my dissertation figures artistic practice and political act.

This dissertation, in other words, is about ways to take up time that challenge or sidestep or replace normative and mainstream forms of life. It is about alternative forms, and as such draws from experimental practices in the post-WWII period in art and politics, both of which were especially in this period wells of creative, alternative thought and act. Radical and often not

directly movement-oriented political acts organize the dissertation chapters: the first two chapters, respectively on hunger strikes and self-immolations, are more individually- and bodily-focused, while the second two chapters, on sabotage and squatting, turn to community formation. Alongside these actions — which are ideologically ambivalent and diverse, practiced by minority groups but also occasionally by those in power and co-opted by governments — I collect a transnational group of writers and artists, all of whom operate from a foundational motivation of changing life through art. Sometimes this is explicit and clear, as it is for Fluxus sabotage practices, Trevor Paglen's critical art, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, and the Situationists. But sometimes this is more of an innate or less declarative goal, such as is witnessed in Apichatpong Weeresethakul's 2000 film *Mysterious Object at Noon*, the procedural writing of Bernadette Mayer, Jacques Roubaud, and Norman Pritchard, or the figurations and styles in more seemingly traditional texts like poems by Saïda Menebhi and Abdallah Zrika or the fiction of Danielle Collobert. The global cast of this study was initially motivated by an attempt to understand the crossed lines of influence and activity that occurred especially in the decolonial period across North Africa and in France. What occurred within the US, what we had kept in-house, seemed in France as more dramatically and geographically split, the aftershocks of Algeria reverberating and leaving behind objects at once familiar and not: racial oppression, linguistic difference, the shape of community, the meaning of resistance. As I read and followed the ways individuals tried to modify their surroundings, survive oppression, and live their lives, I found the artistic and political contexts and objects spiraling out, accumulating. Each one was like a fragment of colored glass washed onto the shore, and I was picking them up and holding them to the light to see the strange ways the light refracted and to guess at the original shape.

Beachcombing was inspired by William Gardner Smith's *The Stone Face*, a 1963 novel only recently reprinted.[1] Smith's novel begins in a way somewhat familiar to Black American exile in Paris: the main character — a painter named Simeon — discovers that racism hadn't followed him from America to France. In an early scene, a white French woman turns Simeon's offer for a drink down and Simeon, embarrassed, thinks, "*Racism*. It was omnipresent. It was here in Paris, too," before seeing the woman's boyfriend, "a tall African, black as anthracite" (6). But this is only the first half of the novel, which changes when Simeon meets the Algerian community in Paris. He witnesses the consistent police oppression against the community and is stunned when an Algerian cheekily calls him "white man." "The world was a pyramid," Simeon realizes, "and at the apex were the great rich peoples — the Northern Europeans, the English and recently the Americans. They imposed their sliding scale on the rest of the world. Here, the black man was inferior; there the Arab, there the Jew, there the Asiatic — according to where you were" (93).

The way Simeon explains race and hierarchy in France seemed to map onto what Matthew Frye Jacobson calls "two of the most important layers, or strata, in the historical ground we now occupy," what he names as "the frankly imperialist history of militarism" and "the overlapping history of geo-economics, aggregations of capital, and the power structures of global finance" (282). Though speaking in a US context, Jacobson's dual interpretative paths are easily placed onto the French and North Africa decolonial period, the mixture of imperialism and capitalism that has cleaved and crafted the racial and communal oppressions specific to a place. By reading on both sides of the Mediterranean alongside coterminous work in the United States and occasional global mirrors — in Thailand and South Africa and Palestine, for example — I

[1] My thanks to Ken Warren for introducing this novel in his "Black Writers in Exile" course.

want to track the representations of and resistances to these dominant forces. Doing so requires an investment in the avant-garde, the periphery, the experimental, and the marginal: from these nonnormative positions, I seek out unexpected allegiances, logics, and, most of all, practices, that can be rediscovered or emphasized in new lights. That is, this project is about the occupations that individuals and groups take on in order to counter the occupations states and corporations levy against them.

Illegitimate Repertoires

Let me rephrase some of that more structurally. There are two sets of objects motivating this project, and one spatiotemporal context (with exceptions). The objects are 1) acts of resistance, which I have come to refer to as "illegitimate acts," because "resistance" is a tricky, overly large and paradoxically too constrained concept to actually define these acts, which are sometimes not very resistant at all, while "illegitimate" signifies the radicality of the act without also signifying the radicality of the aim, and 2) experimental arts, plural because literature, performance/visual art, and film are all represented, and "experimental" instead of "avant-garde" to gesture toward the tentative, ad-hoc character that subtends and follows many of these arts, and because "avant-garde" too often has distracting disciplinary and class borders.[2] The spatiotemporal context is a triangulation of the US, France, and North Africa from after WWII until 1980 or so, a span meant to capture peaks of Leftist politics in the West (and their

[2] This last point is explored by Mike Sell in his 2010 essay "Resting the Question, 'What is an Avant-Garde?'" While Sell attempts to recuperate the term "avant-garde," I prefer to bracket it from the essay given the transnational and interdisciplinary comparisons. Moreover, instead of placing this dissertation within "avant-garde studies," I see it as aligned with theories of social practice. That said, I share an intention Sell aptly explains: "Within a conception of the avant-garde that understands it as articulating a cultural politics within a wide range of social formations, the avant-garde can be approached as a varying, situational articulation of the 'politics of form.' Such an expanded field enables us not only to bring more subjects into the purview of avant-garde studies, but also allows us to consider the cultural production of already accepted avant-gardes in more sophisticated fashion" (765).

subsequent, sometimes immediate, disappointments), the fervors and aggressions and letdowns of the decolonial period, the Civil Rights Movement, and anarchic, middle-class explorations of other ways of living. It is also a time period where arguably each of the acts studied here — hunger strikes, self-immolations, sabotage, and squatting — surge in popularity, use, and visibility. And it is a period of a vibrant return of experimental art that often occurred in groups and loose-knit schools and movements, Black Arts and Oulipo and Fluxus and Le Nouveau roman and the authors within *Souffles/Anfas*, social orientations of artmaking that speak to doing something together, even if not the same thing. There are exceptions: the fourth chapter involves a Thai film made in 2000, the conclusion focuses on Palestine and the practice of *sumūd*, often translated as "steadfastness," and this introduction skips around contemporary events and objects. I consider these exceptions as proofs of the enduring, operative character of the arts and acts central to the dissertation, practices that have been asynchronously developed in accordance with different contexts and histories, practices that often travel in time and space and whose effects we are still in the wake, if not pure presence, of.

Still, it is admittedly strange, even inappropriate, to try to consider "art" and "act" together like this, to think about poems and hunger strikes, or films and squatting, where the shared term is "practice" and not "representation." After all, *using* poems and novels and other objects to think about the world — from climate change to gender roles to regionalism to any of the radical acts I have mentioned — doesn't have the same shakiness to it. This is because whether of thoughts or people or whatever else, art has a promise seemingly latent within it to help its subjects be seen differently. I think there are two basic ways it does this: representationally and formally. In the first, the text or the image shows something previously unseen, or something seen but not with this detail and accuracy, like Based on a True Story

movies, or *Moby Dick*. The second is the art for art's sake way, where the work avoids direct reference to the world, but its very detachment is, as Adorno argues, "socially motivated behind the author's back" (43). From Kant to Rancière, this type changes not what is perceived or how a thing is perceived but how perception itself is doing the perceiving.

Instead of using art representationally or formally, my emphasis is on doing art, the activity of creating a work, and as such each chapter involves and invokes the observer, reader, or audience in a more dynamic fashion. That is, focusing on doing art rather than (only) reading it is also focusing on the possibility that others can and might also do art the way artists are, or learn from an artist's activity in order to modulate it for one's own purposes. While this doesn't mean I eschew close-readings or interpretations — they are especially present in Chapters Two and Four — it does mean that alongside symbolic and interpretative arguments, I am chancing prescriptive, pedagogical modes. Not just what something might mean, but what you or I might do. One of my influences here is Hans-Georg Gadamer and the role of "application" in interpretation, where the application of a law or a scriptural principle in a concrete situation fuses a static text from the past (necessarily from the past) to a present context. Putting the text into action in this way creates its realest meaning. I am shifting this movement back a step or two to the actual act of creating the text in the first place, suggesting that application is making concrete — creating — from a trove of possible processes, forms, and ways of making. That is, making a text or an artwork or a film is, first, the application of one action from a larger *repertoire* of possible actions.

"Repertoire" here comes from two different disciplines — the sociology of contentious politics and performance studies — that use the term for divergent but complementary purposes.[3] Theorizing it against the "archive," which is the collection of seemingly stable objects of knowledge like texts and bones and artifacts, Diana Taylor considers a "repertoire" a kind of "embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing – in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge" (20). Taylor argues that the archive's apparent permanence and objectivity has given it priority as a "system of learning, storing, and transmitting knowledge" (16) even though "civic obedience, resistance, citizenship, gender, ethnicity, and sexual identity, for example, are rehearsed and performed daily in the public sphere. To understand these as performance suggests that performance also functions as an epistemology" (3). One of the crucial aspects of the repertoire — perhaps the most crucial, and certainly what links an aesthetic repertoire to a political one — is its essential flexibility: an individual has the agency to change and modulate the forms and processes they receive, which means that the actions of a repertoire "do not remain the same. The repertoire both keeps and transforms choreographies of meaning" (20). By performing an action from a repertoire, one carries it forward in time while changing the action and the repertoire itself. This is the doing of knowledge.

Scholars of contentious politics have come to much the same conclusions (often with much the same rhetoric: both performance studies and sociology consistently use jazz-related metaphors). For Charles Tilly, a "performance" is a claim-making action linking a claimant and an object (like a worker and a boss), which can include such disparate examples as "presenting a

[3] Indeed, Tilly, who popularized the use of "repertoire" in the late 70s to discuss how social movements act collectively, first brought the word from its more prosaic definition in performing arts, where it signifies the available songs or performances a group is able to perform (Morrison 3).

petition, taking a hostage, or mounting a demonstration," while a "repertoire" is the set of performances available to specific groups in specific contexts. "Repertoires vary from place to place, time to time, and pair to pair. But on the whole, when people make collective claims they innovate within limits set by the repertoire already established for their place, time, and pair" (35). A repertoire is thus modular and dynamic, as it is for Taylor, but to a degree — it is also a restriction and limit.

While it is worth questioning this aspect of Tilly's definition given the speed and global reach wherein tactics and performances are today disseminated — Palestinian activists, for example, tweeted tips for dealing with tear gas to Black Lives Matter protestors in Ferguson, and acts like Mohamad Bouazizi's self-immolation shift the windows of possibility in many contexts, making self-immolation a viable tactic in places where it formerly was not, as I mention in Chapter Two — noting the finite and limiting quality of a repertoire can also help make sense of what actions are *not* considered legitimate forms of protest and contention. It is here where I have learned from Banu Bargu's understanding of "the convergence of disparate, unrelated struggles around the globe toward a common repertoire of self-destructive techniques" (14), though instead of focusing only on corporeal and self-harming or destroying tactics, like Bargu's death fasts and immolations, I frame this study on a larger repertoire, one composed of *illegitimate* acts.

To consider an act illegitimate is to view it as at odds with the set of beliefs, values, and norms one has accepted as composing the shared world — whether or not the individual themself personally shares these beliefs.[4] This means legitimacy doesn't only arrive from believing an

[4] See Max Weber's *Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (1964) as the touchstone for sociological investigations into legitimacy, especially pages 124-132 and 386-392. Johnson et al provide a more contemporary analysis of Weber in "Legitimacy as a Social Process" (2006).

authoritative structure — a state, a government, a policeman — to be legitimate, but also from the assumption that others accept and share the values represented by a social order. In other words, the granting of legitimacy is ultimately within the agency of a society itself, even though this social power is often (though less so in the wake of a conspiracy theory-driven contested election in the US) hidden and unrealized. Asef Bayat notes that "states rule not as external to society through mere surveillance but weave their logic into the fabric of society, into norms, rules, institutions, and relations of power" (Bayat 25). The legitimacy a society confers upon a state or ruling institution is buttressed and concretized by the institutions themselves, a feedback loop (especially in more democratic states) that operates as a kind of legitimizing machine.

For some, this is enough. Legitimizing machines, after all, create stability for a certain subsection of the population, usually those who benefit most from the machines' outputs and have the most at stake in keeping them running. For others, the very imbrication of the state into the fabric of society that Bayat describes de-legitimizes ruling institutions while turning everyday life into a terrain of battle and resistance. When the state is in the everyday and the everyday is not offering survival, much less thriving, then responding with a repertoire of "legitimate" acts of contestation — like petitions or voting — becomes unsubstantial and impotent. A wider set of practices is necessary, the quasi- and il-legal, the unfair, the one-sided, those that swap blackmail for bargain and threat for petition, those that hide, dissimulate, and camouflage, that make use of bodies and habitations and the resources and structures that are at-hand — food, the postal service, abandoned buildings — that, in short, respond to state- and corporate-influence in everything by making everything a weapon of resistance or tool of survival. An illegitimate repertoire is a set of actions that, first, implicitly describes a seemingly-legitimized situation as not and, second, attempts to counter this illegitimate (and asymmetrical)

situation with experimental, radical, innovative, or formerly unacceptable or unthinkable practices. Occupation versus occupation.

Social Practice and Aesthetic Form

In 1958 Abdelhafid Khatib took a walk through the wholesale market of Les Halles in Paris where merchants were set up beneath high vaulted ceilings in wide halls open to the air. Khatib, an Algerian member of the Situationists, came to write a "psychogeographical study" of the place, one he describes as "extremely animated and well known, as much by the Parisian population as by foreigners who have spent some time in France" (14). Psychogeography, defines Khatib, "is a study of a geographic milieu's effects, whether consciously organized or not, acting directly on an individual's affective behavior [comportement affectif]" (13). The goal for Khatib, then, is something like a long, rambling walk, filled with pauses and tangents, without too many express aims or destinations. To be the body that would receive the visible and invisible impacts of the place, to register them and report back. To see what parts of self the world is actively and always constructing, reconstructing, messing with. To be messed with.

You can take on Khatib's project, of course, anytime you want, with a long walk and a few hours of free time and (it helps) turning the GPS off of your phone. This is the "dérive," of "drift," the Situationist practice of moving through the city that retains chance elements and acts "as a way to uproot the city by a selective, half-focused exploration of a site" (Murali 198). Or you can get help: *Dérive*, available on iOS and Android, is an Urban Exploration App that "gets you lost in your city and lets you share that experience with others" (https://deriveapp.com/s/v2). The app presents cards as quasi-tasks to help make your rambles extra-rambling, ranging from the clear and directional — "Go towards the mountains" — to the idiosyncratic — "Keep

walking until you pass someone wearing green. Take the first left." A user's derives can be shared in real-time on the app, and the cards can be modified for certain major cities or by the user themself.

For the Situationists, a dérive was not only a game, but also part of their repertoire of holistic, systematic change: "We must everywhere present a revolutionary alternative to the ruling culture," writes Guy Debord in "Report on the Construction of Situations" (qtd in Knabb 43). A walk is not only a walk, but is sewn with the thread of the possible next world, if only you can walk it right, if this walk can change the way you walk and what it means to walk, to *do* something and that doing to recursively change how you think, behave, and are. That is, both a walk and dérive can be considered practices — both belong to our repertoire of moving through the world — but the latter understands itself as such, and understands that, as such, it negotiates the social and the individual, quite literally reifying the structures or norms or legitimizing machines that are at play. Rather, a practice *can* do this reification, but does not necessarily have to.

What I am approaching is the social ontological definition of practice, such as by Sally Haslanger, who defines a social practice as "a nexus where individual agency is enabled and constrained by social factors; they produce, distribute, and organize, things taken to have value; and they are a potential site for change" (2). In other words, practices 1) balance or connect the world and the self, 2) define the things around the self that are available for manipulation (what Haslanger calls "resources"), and 3) represent social meanings, like ideologies or norms, which are both the possibilities and constraints of action (Haslanger's "cultural technē" or Bourdieu's "habitus"[5]). Unlike performances, practices are more essentially repeatable and enduring — a

[5] One of Bourdieu's winding definitions for a habitus represents its consistently constructed-and-constructing nature, as he calls it "structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (71).

performance can be thought of as a moment, as ephemeral, but a practice, "temporally structured, is intrinsically defined by its *tempo*" (Bourdieu 8, emphasis his). The temporality of practice is a key component of my analysis as it changes how a hunger strike, or sabotage, or squatting is perceived, how they work, and what they mean ("self-immolation," in contrast, is more wholly a performance — but as I hope to show, the effects of self-immolation are enduring, even if its performance is ephemeral).

Practices are where all the big ideas around us — capitalism and forgiveness and boredom and racism and national pride — are actually located: they are *right there*, in that way one walks in the city, whom one avoids, the eye contact, the dress, the confidence of the walk, the speed, the use of sidewalks. For the Situationists, to open the unconscious walk to the intentional dérive was a way of challenging the ideologies that had seeped into the body, into the marrow of decision-making. And they, like Bourdieu and Haslanger, saw in practice an opportunity for change: rather than operating on the plane of ideas and arguments, editing an action can work backwards and edit the thoughts and mindsets connected to the action. "To disrupt a cultural technē that promotes injustice," Haslanger writes, "we need to establish new practices that enable us to both discover and create value. Reasoning with people is not enough (though it may be a start). We need to create and affirm spaces of resistance, counter-publics, hidden transcripts" (18).

Khatib had a similar idea in mind, seeing the resistance and counter-public possibilities of Les Halles, which at the time of his walk was about to be moved to just outside the city.[6] Khatib writes that a better solution that "moves in the direction of a new society would require keeping

[6] This move was accomplished in 1971, when Les Halles was demolished and the wholesale market moved to where it currently is, in Rungis near the Orly Airport.

this space in the center of Paris for the manifestations of a liberated collective life."[7] This comment comes toward the end of the report, just as Khatib begins to speculate about changes that would develop "tendencies toward the play of construction and mobile urbanism," culminating in "a theme park for the ludic education of workers" (17). The market which asserts its own norms and ideologies on those passing through and those working in it becomes for Khatib a place for manufacturing new social practices, for expanding the repertoire in ways that at first blush seem illegitimate (meaning, here, less *illegal* and more *pointless* or *inappropriate*) such as by mixing "play" with "construction."

The report ends here – no, it doesn't end, or it does but it ends abruptly, unfinished. The report is incomplete and appended to it is an Editor's Note. "Our collaborator," reads the note, "was the victim of police regulations which, since the month of September, have forbidden North-Africans from the street after 9:30PM. … After two arrests and two stays in the Centres de Triage [the holding cells], he has given up his pursuit" (18). The dérive was, from its inception, meant as a subversive act to traverse spaces that had "[become] increasingly unfriendly for the pedestrian, who, consequently, became a marginalised figure by virtue of trying to overcome the linear imaginings of his immediate geography" (Murali 201), but Khatib reveals another politics encoded in the space, another subversion based not just on the encroachment of walking as/where one shouldn't, but rather on the provocation of simply being a certain body in a certain space. In 1958 the Algerian War has been ratcheting up, and 3 years later, on October 17, 1961, the bodies of people like Khatib, with similar origins and skin colors who were manifesting peacefully in the streets against a curfew imposed an hour earlier, drifting on their own dérive,

[7] This final phrase is "les manifestations d'un vie collective libérée" – it is perhaps worth keeping in mind that "manifestations" in French has more political resonances than its equivalent in English and is often used to mean "protests" a resonance here, if not the direct meaning.

will be fired at on the Neuilly bridge, the bodies thrown into the Seine. This event, long hidden from the cultural memory of the French, received its only eyewitness account in Gardner Smith's *The Stone Face*.[8]

My point in using Khatib's dérive as an example of the practices the dissertation gathers together is twofold. The first is that the Situationist tactic of the dérive is a poignant example of the collapse of art and politics into a real, concrete action, one that even has resistant or revolutionary ideals, as debatable as those ideals or the practice's efficacy might be. You have to speak about a dérive as a form that one takes on and enacts, and enacting it has both an aesthetic component — creative navigation of built space, the literal registering of sensation, the *aesthesis*, of an environment — and a political one — moving counter to the movements expected of a place and thereby exploring or testing the possibilities of existing otherwise. Khatib's walk took him through a market, but what if the card from the *Dérive* app says, as some in fact do, "Enter the next building" and you come across a police station? What parts of a city you might not normally walk in might an undirected walk take you to? Moreover, analyzing the dérive emphasizes the underlying connection of *concrete practices* as *forms*. As I explore in more depth in the first chapter especially, an individual's enactment of a practice like a dérive — or a hunger strike, or sabotage — both extends the form into a new context and changes it based on the context. Quite literally, no dérive can be the same. Focusing on practice in this way pulls together action, actor, and context in ways a completed object sometimes voids. Ken Friedman writes, in an essay aligning Fluxus events with the exquisite corpse, "Each object obscures the

[8] A well-regarded 2005 film about this very disappearance of the October 17 massacre is titled *Caché*, or "Hidden," and the historian Benjamin Stora refers to the "oubli," or "forgetfulness, memory lapse" of the French regarding the atrocities committed in Algeria and France against Algerians (see Stora's *La gangrène et l'oubli. La mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie*, 2005).

possibilities that are closed off when the object takes final form. An object suggests an aura of permanence that hides the process of its own making" (Denlinger 68). Practice and Form mutually reinforce not only their processes of making, but the places and persons doing the making.

Which leads to the second point. The person doing the making, here, is the Algerian Abdelhafid Khatib, his ethnicity politicized by the police in the process of his dérive. Race and its colonial source are hummed into being like pulling a wire taut, and an interpretation that only focuses on the act of walking, and not the meaning of it as well, fails to honestly and accurately read Khatib's experiment. This is to say that reading social practices *also* requires more traditional lenses of close-reading and interpretation. An act like self-immolation does not arrive with exclusively political or formal qualities, but always already comes freighted with symbolic meaning. While I stress over and again the social practice considerations of the experiments that make up the dissertation's landscape, part of my intervention in resistance studies or sociologies of resistance is importing aesthetic interpretation to scenes of radical action. Doing so both highlights the interpretations already at play in these scenes while attempting to open and challenge normative or prejudiced perspectives. In her article on gender and the dérive, Sharanya Murali quotes Gilles Ivain on the goal of the dérive as envisioning a new kind of city "that one encounters by chance in everyday life" (198). But doesn't an Algerian body in the late 50's in France already encounter a city very different than those of his white compatriots? What is the meaning of a dérive when the walker is suspected, if not targeted, by state institutions? How, in general, might the repertoire of available social practices widen or narrow based on identity and context, and what are the meanings of those actions an individual opts to harrow into reality?

Manuals of Making and Maintaining

Sometimes the ways these questions are answered, the resources they highlight, and the networks they create are unexpected, at least to someone like me, never unhoused, never in a country under some uncertain, ambiguous, and quasi-legal status. But joining *Watizat* (a play on the French pronunciation for "what is that") in the summer of 2021 as they met asylum seekers and refugees on the streets of Paris opened the spectrum of the possible. These walks are called "maraudes," a term that comes from looting but has been repurposed by French social organizations to mean something like food drives, the volunteers and members visiting streets and underpasses where the unhoused tend to gather to distribute food or clothing or necessities. *Watizat*, however, distributes its proprietary guide.

The guide, published every month since 2018, is a remarkable document. In French, English, Modern Standard Arabic, Dari, and Pashto (and now Ukranian and Russian), and differentiated between Paris, Lyon, Toulouse, and cities in the Oise, the guide gives practical advice for everyday concerns — finding potable water or a shower, where to receive free French lessons — information about the rights of those seeking asylum, and an in-depth account of applying for asylum, complete with insider tips to parse the draconian and bureaucratic asylum procedures in France. The guide is color-coded and printed with a designer's eye for spacing to prevent the pages from replicating the overwhelming amounts of information present on government websites. The writing is clear and the user (or you and I by visiting watizat.org) can, if they have internet access, download the guide each month without having to wait for a maraude (especially of use since many common encampment locations, such the Péripherique overpass on the Canal St Martin, are routinely dispersed by the government).

While the guide primarily recounts legitimate and legal information — it does not, for example, suggest where the best encampment locations are, or which metro stations are easiest to jump the gates at — there is a veneer of the illegitimate in both its very existence, by aiding the presence of a population increasingly undesired in France, and in its tactics for claiming asylum. These tactics are emphases — making duplicates of application materials and IDs — or reminders on timing — "Be careful, you have very little time to get legal aid from a free lawyer: you should **apply within 15 days of receiving the rejection letter from OFPRA** " (51, emphasis theirs) — or tips on how to speak in the important OFPRA (Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides) interview — "It is important to speak as naturally and spontaneously as possible. **Don't learn your story by heart**" (48, emphasis theirs). Finally, *Watizat* is ecumenical with the populations they seek to aid, ranging not only from those living on the streets, but also those in illegal squats. Again, neither the guide nor the group advise on how to set up a squat, but they shoulder up to groups that help maintain refugee squats or more ad-hoc, ground-up squats that are passed along by word of mouth. Providing information to squatters helps these individuals and groups maintain their health and possibilities while *de facto* helping them maintain their squats (while housing is provided with asylum status, *Watizat* does not differentiate between refugees who are seeking social housing and those who, as in one squat we visited, prefer more informal housing).

Given the general precarity of being an asylum-seeker, not to mention living in a foreign tongue, and the stringency of the asylum process, *Watizat*'s advice buzzes the line between resistance and survival.[9] Against institutional and normative structures meant to restrict refugee

[9] In this, *Watizat* is part of a semi- to fully-anarchist trajectory of manuals and guides that include works like Abbie Hoffman's *STEAL THIS BOOK* (1971) and the CrimethInc. Worker's Collective's *Recipes for Disaster* (2004). The latter especially emphasizes, through its running metaphor of "recipes" and being a cookbook, the concept of the "score" I define in Chapter One. Of course, *Watizat*'s target audience of refugees and asylum seekers have very

status and keep certain populations from entering France in all but minute numbers, it very intentionally seeks to provide refugees with as much information as possible, fighting this xenophobic and racist system. But simultaneously, and just as, if not more (for the individuals themselves), importantly, *Watizat* can help the asylum-seeker find a hot meal, recharge their phone credit, and get a Covid-19 vaccination. It is a guide, a manual for how-to-live, and its insight is that large impacts still require individuals who can eat and sleep and take care of their families. Resistance is often crossed with survival, the spectacle drowned by the durée, and the ways one positions oneself against an unjust state or situation can seem not only less heady and revolutionary but even complicit (does, for example, successfully navigating the asylum process legitimate it?). And when clearly radical acts occur (and they do, with greater frequency than might be realized), they do not always have radical consequences or aims: a prisoner hunger striker might simply desire better food, a warmer cell. A self-immolator's motivations may be laden with humiliation and frustration.

Resistance studies has grappled with the ambivalence wherein sometimes resistance is more a practice of simply trying to live better, not to prevent injustice or change a system, since James C. Scott's influential *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (1985). In this work, Scott defines everyday peasant resistance as a "prosaic but constant struggle," listing among his examples actions and practices like "foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, [and] sabotage" (xvi). This is far from the heroism and plucky determination often ascribed to otherwise disempowered groups fighting the system: as Scott notes, "Everyday forms of resistance make no headlines" (xvii). But the commonality of these practices, which must be considered illegitimate in their

different intentions, especially regarding resistance, than the more arguably middle-class citizens who might take up Hoffman or CrimethInc, as I explore here.

pettiness or canniness (depending on the perspective), speaks to their importance, as does their mix of intentions. Scott says clearly: "It is precisely the fusion of self-interest and resistance that is the vital force animating the resistance of peasants and proletarians" (295). Divorcing act from intention in resistance allows for a wider purview of what might count as resistance, or at least what practices someone seeking to resist can draw, gather, and learn from. Moreover, that so many of these practices can be united with self-interest reminds one seeking direct action that direct actors have needs, necessities, and lives before, during, and after a given operation.

At the same time, there is a vibrant risk in overplaying the hand of what counts as resistance: if one sees resistance everywhere, they flatten the globe of unequally dispersed oppressions and injustices. Michael Brown, in his tellingly titled article, "On Resisting Resistance," writes, "By finding grassroots resistance in Mexican telenovelas or the household rituals of the Javanese, we reassure ourselves that the pursuit of what might seem to be esoteric ethnographic detail is really a form of high-minded public service." As such, ethnographies of resistance can tend to "translat[e] the apparently trivial into the fatefully political" and can end in a "savage leveling that diminishes, rather than intensifies, our sensitivity to injustice" (729). And Shelly Ortner draws attention to how such studies may assume a single, unitary subordinate subject, failing to account for not only internal diversity and difference but also "the ambiguity of resistance and the subjective ambivalence of the acts for those who engage in them" (175). In other words, not only is context a crucial factor for analysis, but also there is context all the way down.[10]

[10] As valid and useful as Ortner's critique is, however, there is a level where abstraction and generalization are simply necessary methodological moves, and that the granularity of a certain level of diversity and a certain level of ambivalence is not only burdensome but impossible (why *wouldn't*, for example, every squatter in a communal squat have different reasons, motivations, and desires for their actions?).

While "resistance" has been critiqued as overly capacious and unspecific, recent critiques of "reparative" methodologies question the complicity of smaller-scale interventions such as *Watizat*'s how-to, or really any manual's attempts to *fix* or *hack* or *rig* a broken thing rather than to focus on the thing doing the breaking. Patricia Steulke, in her 2021 *The Ruse of Repair*, writes that "repair" has come to mean "ceasing to anticipate trouble to come or hunt for evidence of violence the academy already knows or suspects, and instead finding joy where one can, honoring practices of survival, finding comfort in contact across temporal and other scales of difference, and celebrating reforms as a win" (13). Alongside these minor effects are major affects of joy and optimism — of *doing something* — that stand in welcome relief for many against the feelings of paranoia or depression at the vastness of contemporary violence (part of the problem, for the anti-reparative, might well have roots in this disproportion of effect to affect). Late in the book, Steulke sums of the danger of the reparative: "sometimes the will to repair helps instantiate something worse," referring here to the books intention to track "convergences between activist, imperialist state, and university visions of repair in the late 1970s and 1980s [that] helped constitute the transition to the neoliberal racial capitalist order" (217).

Joining forces, critiques of resistance and critiques of repair seem to leave little room for what a group and manual like *Watizat* can offer and if it is useful, indeed little room for what there is to do in general. At the most extreme, questioning the triviality of the everyday and the complicity of practices of survival can disconnect us from the absolute mundanity of resistance, one that *Watizat*'s mission, to me, inhabits. Indeed, I see this as one way that Steulke's work overemphasizes its negative assessment of survival practices: by focusing on activists and academics, she does not include the real ways that marginalized people combine survival with

resistance: writing about Palestinian *sumūd*, for example, Hammad and Tribe point out that "indigenous understandings and forms of resilience … may not conform to the dominant Western narrative on resilience" (6). However, I take critics like Brown, Ortner, and Steulke to truly have their aim on academics, rather than practices, and in this sense a critique ultimately aimed not at *Watizat* (though partly: Steulke does specify "activists"), but at me, at this project, where the bones of the structure very much have to do with the shiftiness of the illegitimate practices at hand, how they resist, how they survive, and how artistic practices can help dig out, better understand, and even make use of new practices. In this, I agree with Steulke's claim that "the widespread commitment to the reparative… can sometimes seem to stave off the difficult work of imagining possible worlds that break definitively with this one" (17). But as discussed with Haslanger's conception of social practice, *imagining* possible worlds requires also new ways of *doing what you imagine*, and sometimes the latter has to come first.

To keep this research from a self-satisfied privileging of solidarity, I continually return the interpretation and use of artistic practices to actual scenes and acts of resistance and survival, weighing the arts accordingly and noting the critical (or "paranoid") aspects made possible by these experimental forms. This is to say that I appreciate and take seriously the calls for specificity, doubt, and skepticism provided by critiques such as those above, but I also take seriously the importance of doing, which is simultaneously a way to enter publicly and visibly into an arena of further critique. What I mean is that it is easier, I think, to judge an action than a theory: if you use a manual you quickly discover what works and what doesn't. It is, like *Watizat*, a living document — not because it can always be interpreted like Scripture or Law, but because it can always be actually changed, lines crossed out, additions written in the margins that then make it in the next draft.

The arts are good at this sort of thing, at manuals where the reader is meant to make their own additions and subtractions. My favorite, John Ruskin's *The Elements of Drawing* (1907), forces the reader into a new way of seeing through the practice of drawing: "Everything that you can see, in the world around you, presents itself to your eyes only as an arrangement of patches of different colours variously shaded" (3). What a day that was, walking outside after reading that line, breaking tree leaves and mailboxes and people's faces into patches of shade and apologizing for staring for too long. Ruskin explains how to create dimension through a series of exercises, the first of which is shading a box with different kinds of crosshatched lines, a drill I have exhausted myself with — Ruskin admits that "this exercise in shading is very tiresome" (8) — but diligently *did*, learning the proper speeds of sketching (too slow and the pen leaves blots, but too fast and the lines aren't parallel). Ruskin writes with the confidence in his student that learning to draw, and to draw well, is just there, just within reach, and a matter of repetition and trial, of practice. Drawing is a rearrangement of our relationship and use of what is immediately around us, which is to say of the resources at hand. Exercise 8 begins with clear and democratic instructions: "Go out into your garden, or into the road, and pick up the first round or oval stone you find." We are meant to set up a stone as the next object of our shading, for a simple reason: "Now, if you can draw that stone, you can draw anything" (26).[11] While, in my personal experience of pages and pages of stony stones followed by sketches barely resembling their objects, this has not proven true, it is a fallible, strong *claim*. A claim you test, that you can do and learn from, even if what you learn is that it is, perhaps, overstated.

[11] "Anything," Ruskin continues, "that is drawable. Many things (sea foam, for instance) cannot be drawn at all, only the idea of them more or less suggested; but if you can draw the stone *rightly*, everything within reach of art is also within yours." What a thrill!

Artistic manuals like this (or like any of the very many that have existed as long as art and which are especially relevant to the Oulipo group who appear in Chapter One) complement the resistance- or survival-centric manuals above by opening them to revision and change, by seeing them as not necessarily ephemeral but also not stable: just like the more abstract definition of the "repertoire," a manual is changed as the reader enacts its practices. I suggest, in this spirit, that the manual is the concrete yet changeable — so perhaps plastic — iteration of a repertoire and the possible practices that comprise it.[12] That is, a manual is non-exhaustive by definition (one only has to read the always despairingly finite list of problems in an installation manual's "troubleshooting" section to grasp this), possibly wrong by definition, and ready to be added to by the user. It's a document of expertise meant to be put into the world through action and in that acting its expertise is tested, reflected, cemented, denied, changed, edited. Perhaps it begins with a patronizing spirit of knowing better — here is *how to draw* — but the authority of the teacher is undercut by the simple fact of the user's activity, implicitly, or even explicitly, bringing the manual creators down to the horizontal plane of mutual engagement, even if one side of this engagement is a thing as seemingly obdurate and un-listening as a text.

Finally, manuals preach time. All of them do. Whether it is repetition or endurance, manuals do not have the revolutionary fervor of the manifesto's call for change or what Fanon calls the "grandeur and weakness of spontaneity." Its tight relationship with the everyday and with practice — Ruskin writes about the temporality of learning to draw, suggesting that some 150 hours of practice "will give you sufficient power of drawing faithfully whatever you want to draw" (3) — makes the manual a document meant to be returned to, kept at hand and re-read, not

[12] This is true even of manuals that are not keyed to the progressive or anticolonial register as this dissertation intends. Military manuals, for example, and survival manuals are composed of best practices. I look at one of these, the *Simple Sabotage Field Manual*, in Chapter Three.

one whose knowledge you acquire and put away. This is a different relationship to art and resistance than, I think, one is primed for by the temptations and tendencies to consume. Rather, a manual stresses maintenance, endurance, return, staying — it has, as Bourdieu writes of practice, a tempo to it. While the dissertation here is not a manual, it intends to learn from the form in its acknowledgment of enduring time and its desire for fallibility and change through enactment. To build a better world means to be ready for a drag and to be ready to be wrong.

Chapter Summaries

Interspersed between the chapters are four short essays I refer to as "folds." These are meant to be informal tangents from and away from the chapters themselves, often more personal. They are attempts to rethink some of the dissertation's interests in another style.

The first chapter, "'Variegated sound beneath lit dark': Hunger Strikes and the Score," extends my analysis of aesthetic form and social practice to set the theoretical foundation for the project. I use the hunger strike, a radical act with a deep history that still crested in popularity in the post-WWII period, to argue that political action is best viewed formally, as a "score," and that by doing so, the body and context of the actor is foregrounded in ways that reevaluate modes of avant-garde attempts at collapsing art and life.

I begin by narrating a story from Jacques Roubaud that has become one of the talismans of this project: his dismissal from the French military in Algeria after undergoing a series of "clandestine hunger strikes," an act he later referred to as his "very first constraint." As an experimental writer belonging to the Oulipo group that emphasizes writing in accordance with conscious, innovate aesthetic rules, Roubaud's comment linking hunger strike and constraint not only struck me as deeply suggestive, but also able to be extended to the history of avant-garde

procedural art. In the first half of this chapter, I look at Roubaud and Bernadette Mayer alongside Saïda Menebhi, a Moroccan poet and activist who was imprisoned in the 1970's for advocating, among other ideals, for Western Saharan self-determination. Menebhi underwent two hunger strikes and died during the second one. I use her poem, "Description d'une grève de la faim," or "Description of a Hunger Strike," to draw out not only the presence of the body but the paradox of the hunger strike — that it is a self-imposed constraint used against an other-imposed constraint (in Menebhi's and the majority of hunger striker's cases, this initial constraint is imprisonment).

The second half of the chapter turns to the concept of the score, which allows for the repeatability and transformation of forms across contexts. This is to argue that an essential component of the hunger strike is its shareability. I read experimental American poet Norman H. Pritchard's "Gyre's Galax" to analyze the concept of the "score" and argue for its culminating assembly of body, context, and constraint. I finish by discussing these contexts more specifically by reading شُمُوعٌ لِرَأسِ بُوبِي سَانْدَز , or "Candles at Bobby Sands' Bedside," a poem by Abdallah Zrika — who was also imprisoned by the Moroccan government and underwent a hunger strike in jail — about the famous 1981 hunger strike-until-death by IRA leader Bobby Sands. Zrika's poem and his context as a poet from the Casablanca *bidonville* of Ben M'sik invokes not only the way a hunger strike reorganizes everyday life into weapons and tools, but also explores the trans-national possibilities of solidarity in a shared political form.

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Chapter Two, "Sincerely Anyone: The Impersonal Aesthetics and Psychopolitics of Self-Immolation," continues my analysis of resistance's body and context by turning to a different practice of self-destruction, self-immolation, to ultimately argue for a nonnational political

identity based on communal responsibility. Since the inaugurating case of Thích Quảng Đức's political suicide in 1963, self-immolation — the practice of killing oneself for a political purpose, most commonly by setting oneself on fire — has popularized, transformed, and spread across the world. By working through historical and contemporary examples of self-immolation, I draw out "two histories" of political suicide: one that centers on the individual and on biography — whether by diagnosing, demonizing, or lionizing the immolator — and the other which instead sees self-immolation as the interpellation of an open yet specific community.

The second section reads a story/prose-poem by French poet Danielle Collobert, from her 1964 collection *Meurtre*. The narrative — a Beckettian story about a sculptor on the street anxious about completing a work — and Collobert's idiosyncratic, simple, and yet deceptively moving style help me explore impersonality as a tactic that simultaneously avoids psychocentric interpretations of political suicide while demonstrating the way a community can be called into being. This is especially emphasized by Michel Serres' theory of the quasi-object, which sees subjectivity as neither individual nor spread but in-passing, like a soccer ball where the subject is each person who has possession of the ball before passing it to another. I suggest that impersonality is better thought of as quasi-personality, operating according to a similarly shared, or passed, kind of subjectivity.

The final movement of the chapter builds on my argument for psychopolitical, instead of psychocentric, readings of self-immolation and its ability to establish communities by expanding the focus from political suicide to general suicide. Here, I refer to contemporary studies in suicidology that seek out social justice oriented interpretations of suicide. These interventions especially occur in the context of the "psychological autopsy," a genre of research and writing that attempts to establish the mental context for an individual's decision to take their own life.

Sociologists like China Mills, for example, seek a complementary "psychopolitical autopsy," in her case one that accounts for austerity politics in the UK as an immediate and causal impact on suicides. I finish the chapter by reading together these studies with Mahmood Mamdani's recent *Neither Settler Nor Native*, wherein he attempts to craft nonnational belonging. Rather than his symbolic figure of the "survivor" to conceptualize all who have survived a state's historical tragedy, I put forward the figure of the suicide, and its psychopolitcal autopsy, as that which might concretize nonnational — and as such, open to *whomever* — community.

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Chapter Three, "Destroy, Circulate, Parasite: Moments of Sabotage," most directly connects the aesthetic and political registers through a series of post-WWII experiments in sabotage. By organizing a typology of sabotage — object sabotage, network sabotage, and parasitic sabotage — I read and distinguish this history according to its goals, sketching the successes, consequences, and possible pitfalls of these types of sabotage. The chapter begins with the WWII manual of sabotage written by OSS Director William J. Donovan and its contemporary counterpart, *Simple Sabotage: A Modern Field Manual for Detecting and Rooting Out Everyday Behaviors That Undermine Your Workplace* (2015), which helps set up how sabotage as always encodes its opposite, from counterinsurgent practices developed by the military in the second half of the 20th Century down to workplace management strategies. From here, I turn to "object sabotage," sometimes called "industrial sabotage," which refers to the destruction of individual objects, weaponry, machines, etc. I use this term to bring together the 1961-2 sabotage campaigns by Umkhonto we Sizwe in South Africa and the auto-destructive art of Jean Tinguely and Gustav Metzger, ultimately arguing that the destruction of material is symbolic more than anything else, and in this sense, essentially aesthetic and representative. As

symbols, such sabotage either becomes absorbed by the institutions it targets or it condenses and disperses a real social energy that might have led to more collaborative and communal projects. I take these consequences as especially relevant rejoinders to contemporary calls for object sabotage such as Andreas Malm's *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*.

After object sabotage, "network sabotage" refers to the disruptions of systems, rather than individual objects. Like the first type, network sabotage has a representative dimension: one of its most important aspects is simply demonstrating a network — internet cables, train lines, the flow of money — that are difficult to grasp visually or conceptually. For example, one project of contemporary American artist Trevor Paglen is to photograph the places where the fiberoptic cables that span oceans and carry a clear majority of the world's internet information erupt from the ocean floor. I also refer to a quickly retracted Fluxus project to disrupt the postal service and annoy art institutions in NYC in 1963 and to the French anarchist group Tarnac Nine who were accused of sabotaging the high-speed rail in France in 2008. These more aggressive attempts at disruption and the breaking of a network are held in tension with the final moment: Mapuche resistance to resource extraction, which led to a "counter cartographic process" and the remaking of networks and institutions to better serve this indigenous community.

The Mapuche set up the final type of sabotage, "parasitic sabotage," which I use to refer to taking advantage of systems and networks that are already in place. Instead of aiming to destroy, parasitic sabotage aims to infiltrate and reroute, and as such it brings together more resistant practices like hacking with survival practices, like Indian *jugaad*, which are idiosyncratic fixes to everyday objects. Specifically, I focus on pirate radio stations and microradio, from the Algerian resistance radio station described by Frantz Fanon in his 1959 "Ici la voix de l'Algérie" to a long running anti-institutional program run by Mbanna Kantako in the

US to Mapuche radio programs that crossed the Chile/Argentina border in the 90's and 00's. These stations and programs which latch onto already established radio frequencies exemplify how individuals and communities attempt to use the infrastructure that already exists for more local uses. The chapter ends with an "artwork" by Trevor Paglen and Jacob Appelbaum called "The Autonomy Cube," which is both a sculpture and a router that sits on the museum's internet connection and opens a free Wi-Fi network while routing all data through the private Tor network.

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The fourth chapter is titled, "Living with the Great Number: Squatters, Participants, and the Fold." As a culmination of the dissertation's interest in community, I focus on squatting and squatter settlements to explore artistic participation, housing politics, and conceptions of the nation. In the end, I argue for a model of community formation based on the Surrealist game of the exquisite corpse. The chapter is organized by "folds," incorporating the formal tactic of the exquisite corpse, and begins by documenting my personal visits to squats across France. I then discuss political participation at the level of the squat and squatter colonies before detailing the the Japanese form of the *renga*, which incorporates multiple individual contributions into a coherent but ultimately unlimited whole, or rather, it is an n+1 form that is always able to accumulate and add. The next fold returns to squats more specifically to list the challenges that informal settlements pose to normative modes of life, such as squatting's "queer politics of home" and its reuse of resources.. Returning to housing politics, the chapter thinks a debate in the second half of the 20th century, continuing today, between anarchist and Marxist architects and urban planners that restages freedom vs scale in terms of development policies. The debate is simultaneously a restaging of the dissertation's ongoing attempt to square reparative/survival

practices with resistant/revolutionary ones. I suggest that the Open Form theory of Polish architect Oskar Hansen threads between these sides as a way to privilege the individual *within* the group, while reducing neither side to the other.

To clarify this argument and put forward more prescriptive possibilities of the n+1 form, I read the 2000 film *Mysterious Object at Noon* by Thai filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul. Built as a modification of the exquisite corpse, this film sketches a map — even a "counter cartographic" one, to recall the Mapuche — of Thailand, emphasizing blue-collar and rural voices from the traditionally poor northern regions. At the same time, the film highlights the creative and productive powers of the *fold*, a structure of the exquisite corpse that blinds the participant (and organizer) to what has come before while the participant makes their own contribution. I see in the fold a larger, institutional critique and possibility and use it to put forward the concept of "institutional blindness" as a tactic to allow for spaces where institutions and states retreat from direct control. I follow this more practical tactic with a symbolic one, expanding the n+1 aspect of the exquisite corpse to encourage a space in our representations of community for the "ethnographic remainder," the additional other who might be unseen, to whom one might currently be blind. The ethnographic remainder is in this sense an attempted revision of imaginary communities that incorporates fallibility and humility in our senses of community.

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Finally, the conclusion, "Maintenance Theory," directly reflects on the survival-based, reparative tactics that each chapter invokes and gestures toward. I use "maintenance" as the key term for processing these theoretical approaches in order to think through the mundane, boring, difficult processes of simply continuing, of taking care, of sticking around. The conclusion

locates this fusion in the Palestinian practice of *sumūd*, or "steadfastness," which has its own history of occupying other-occupied spaces and, in resistance, simply living there. I place *sumūd* next to the work of "maintenance artist" Mierle Laderman Ukeles, whose performance pieces began in the early 1970's to explore maintenance rather than creation. While both *sumūd* and Ukeles have ecocritical possibilities — explicit in the latter — the conclusion also refers to the figure of the mother that is symbolically central to each.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said notes how Britain's Ireland "was subjected to innumerable metamorphoses" in order for it to "no longer…appear foreign to the imperial eye," and that "what was done in Ireland was also done in Bengal, or, by the French, in Algeria." Tactics like anglicizing names and remapping the land and its boundaries went hand in hand with the overarching goal of subjugating the people. For decolonization, then, "one of the first tasks of the culture of resistance was to reclaim, rename, and reinhabit the land" (226). What does a "culture of resistance" mean today, in both its symbolic and practical registers, when the terrain no longer appears all that foreign to so many of us, when a culture of capitalism and imperialism has infected us down to our cells, our unconscious, our everyday? How can we reinhabit this place? One way, Said claims, is though the "almost magically inspired, quasi-alchemical redevelopment of the native language" (227), and that is what is at issue in this dissertation, a redevelopment — a recovery and an innovation — of the forms that already exist, that are hidden or out in the open, redeploying what we *have* against what there *is*.

Chapter One

"Variegated sound through beneath lit dark": Hunger Strikes and the Score

> This constraint has no hidden virtues. It resembles other daily activities: getting up, dressing, shaving, eating. – Jacques Roubaud (*Le grand* 31)
>
> And here's the big question, am I ready to die? I don't know. But I strongly know that I am not ready to live the way I am now. – Yulia Tsvetkova
>
> All poetry is incomplete until it is read aloud. – Lorenzo Thomas (25)

Introduction

In 1961, five years before joining Oulipo, the French group devoted to creating and exploring "potential" and generative forms its members refer to as "constraints," Jacques Roubaud served in the French military in the penultimate year of the Algerian War. Conscripted as a scientist to map fallout from France's first nuclear explosion in the Algerian Sahara, Roubaud says in an interview in *BOMB*: "I didn't want to do it, but I didn't want to be an objector either." He recounts this paradox in *Imperatif Catégorique*, the fifth book to his sprawling memoir, *Le Grand Incendie de Londres*, writing, "I had to do something. I had to do something. Something. Yes, but what?" (§35).[1] Roubaud was in a fix: either choice seemed to legitimize the larger, controlling system — in this case, militant French colonialism — because just as service was equated with citizen responsibility, running from this service linked resistance to criminality.

Beyond this binary of illegal resistance/legitimate service, however, Roubaud discovered a primary, operative ideology that works on the human form itself: an able-bodied citizen is one that therefore can fight, and whose resistance is therefore threatening and illegal. That is, the seemingly inescapable choice of criminal or soldier is sustained by an underlying logic of bodily ability. If Roubaud could *disable* himself, such as by fainting while on the job, he might be

[1] Translations mine unless otherwise noted

repatriated "as one unable to adapt to the Sahara."[2] His plan: "So I had to immediately… go on a hunger strike. As soon as it was thought, the idea of a strike invaded me. I would go on a hunger strike" (§36). Silently and subtly, Roubaud began to skip his meals and faint in public, turning his body into a message of his inability to be a soldier — and also a resistor — and he was sent back to Paris. Roubaud named this his "grève de la faim clandestine," his *secret* hunger strike. Even more pointedly, he would describe this strike some fifty years after he employed it as his "very first constraint" (*BOMB* interview*)*.

This anecdote has a parable quality to it, not only acting as an origin story for Roubaud's career of formal invention — his use of the board game *Go* to craft his 1967 sonnet cycle ∈, for example — but also attesting to the creativity latent within constraint and thereby linking artistic process with biopolitical resistance. A hunger strike is, after all, a *form* of protest: its innate flexibility and shareability mean that it can mold itself to diverse contexts and actors, that it can be learned and spread. As a form, a hunger strike shares with poetic constraints an interest in almost arbitrary means for non-arbitrary ends. What, one might ask, does starving oneself have to do with political speech? That is, the one does not directly cause or relate to the other, as does voting for a representative or labor-striking for better conditions, and humans have voluntarily given up food for diverse, and resolutely a-political, reasons.

The disconnect, or at the least indirect connection, between action and motivation, between object and message, makes the hunger strike rhetorical at its basis. It is about speech; it says something. Or rather, a hunger strike says very little on its own, but requires as a foundation a vocal, expressed motivation and reason (Roubaud here is the outlier — one might say his hunger strike is the most literal as the message simply is the effect of not eating, i.e. weakness

[2] Undeniable here is the intimate link between bodily ability/disability and the racialization of the colonial project: only white, French bodies would be able to avail themselves of this third option.

and diminishment, and the "real reason" is hidden from public expression). You say what you want, and you hunger strike in order to get that thing. Better heating in a prison, visitation rights for a father, political recognition, world peace and the end of war. Part of the aesthetic, rhetorical ingenuity of the hunger strike is that it can work for all of these and more, that one can pick it up in a prison (as is most common) or in front of the White House or at a busy intersection. These scenes are themselves crucial to the meaning making of the hunger strike, as the typical striker is a highly visible one: not only is the message declared publicly, but usually the body is as well.

Thinking through Roubaud's parable is a way to consider how aesthetic form and political form can overlap — "can" meaning here both "have at times, in the past" and "may, in the future." Writing $\in$ is not the same as giving up food to escape taking part in a state's logic of aggression; they are not two ways of doing one thing, but they are *two similar ways* of doing two different things. This is what form is, the structure of change, the (as I call it in the dissertation's Conclusion) portal through which things enter and become different. Specifically here, these forms each operate by constraint, removing elements from the scene of making and in that removal changing the body, the message, and the practices one might use to make. I ultimately argue that constrained forms are best thought of as "scores," able to be replicated and transformed across contexts, histories, and individuals just as the hunger strike itself has historically spread, linking Soviet anti-Tsarist prisoners with British suffragettes, Irish republicans, and Gandhi's famous deployments of *satyagraha* before expanding further to smaller-scale, less mediatized protests and claims across the globe until today the hunger strike is literally omnipresent: there is never a time where someone somewhere, often in some prison, is not intentionally foregoing eating for a reason. During the period when I've drafted, written, rewritten, and edited this chapter, I've come across hunger strikes in India protesting pollution in

the Ganges, hunger strikes in Turkey against the imprisonment of Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan, hunger strikes in US prisons, a hunger strike protesting a dam preventing whales from swimming in their natural routes, a hunger strike protesting the closure of an elementary school, hunger strikes by immigrants in the US protesting detention, by immigrants in Saudi Arabia protesting detention, by immigrants in the UK protesting detention…

And even outside all of these reported hunger strikes, "clandestine" hunger strikes are continuing under my government's auspices. Unlike Roubaud, whose strike had to be secret in order to refuse participation in the Algerian War without being marked as a resistor, the Guantánamo Bay prisoners have not chosen to keep their hunger strikes secret: the American government has simply decided to disallow reports on them. In 2013, The *Washington Post* reported a spokesman for the government's claim that, "The release of this information serves no operational purpose and detracts from the more important issues, which are the welfare of detainees and the safety and security of our troops." *The Miami Herald*, tracking the Guantanamo hunger strikes, notes that the last available information was provided on December 3, 2013, when 15 prisoners were on hunger strike and all 15 were being force-fed. Since then, each update features an ominous "? Total hunger strikes." Who are the hunger strikers right now, as you read this, and why are they striking?

In this chapter I collect scenes of hunger strikes, which include two Moroccan poets, Saïda Menebhi and Abdallah Zrika, who undertook hunger strikes in prison for two different reasons, and experiments with aesthetic constraint, which together with Oulipian experiments include those by American poets Bernadette Mayer and Norman H. Pritchard. By doing so, I can describe and analyze how the disparate objects of hunger strikes and constrained poems, when understood as scores, emphasize the body, direct attention to context, and in their enactment

become highly transmissible. These three aspects of the score, as I conceive it, are interconnected: it is because the body and context are attended to that a form becomes portable; a form's portability is what illuminates different contexts; enacting a received form in a new context requires new bodily movements and practices. As such, by sketching the score from two different angles — the political and the aesthetic — I am simultaneously arguing for the score as the form of form, as an integral way of thinking about practice that traverses the rest of the dissertation. A way of doing, rather than a way of thinking, perceiving, interpreting, or reading. A way of doing differently.

There is a deep optimism in thinking one might leap from the form of the hunger strike to the form of procedural art while keeping hold of the rope of real life, remaining attached to protest and struggle and a vision of a better world. It is an optimism that has been spoken in many different ways in the post-WWII period. Writing about the Language poets, for example, Charles Bernstein claims, "The poetic authority to challenge dominant societal values, including conventional manners of communication, is a model for the individual political participation of each citizen" (219), while Bruce Andrews explains that experimentation is a "practice that unveils demystifies [sic] the creation & sharing of meaning" and is necessary to challenge the "dominance of ideological restrictive notions of what poetry & language can be" (19). Beneath such assertions are theoretical frames like Theodor Adorno's, where "the lyric work of art's withdrawal into itself, its self-absorption, its detachment from the social surface, is socially motivated behind the author's back" (43). That is, political engagement is either the explicit motive for experimenting with language, or it is the implicit effect of a defamiliarizing artistic practice. It simply *is* political, and this politics simply *is* resistant.

Or so it has been claimed. Towards the end of *DuBois' Telegram: Literary Resistance and State Containment* (2018), Juliana Spahr concludes, "Literature has a long history of teaching about inequality. It just is in this current moment too dependent on those institutions that create and maintain inequality to be a meaningful alternative to them" (186-7).[3] Similar critiques had been levied previously by writers like Peter Bürger, Christopher Butler, and Stewart Home, all of whom note the avant-garde's reliance upon institutions that neuter its sociopolitical critiques and subversive cultural production.[4] And from a more general perspective, Jonathan Eburne and Andrew Epstein, in their introduction to the 2014 "Poetry Games" issue of *Comparative Literature Studies*, ask the question of Spahr's book and my own research in poignant terms: "Are [poets] successfully enacting a resistant or politically efficacious aesthetics or are such works best thought of as merely symptomatic of, or even complicit with, the systems they would critique?" (9).

Roubaud's story, however, does not begin with poetry's political capacities: his clandestine hunger strike belongs firstly to a very different avant-garde tradition as a redeployment of a form that had already made it to France. Increasingly popular in the decades after World War II,[5] the hunger strike arrived first in French prisons at the end of the 1950s, influenced by what sociologist Nicolas Bourgoin describes as "a collective movement of incarcerated Algerians during the events [événements] in Algeria" (134). Opposite the necessary secrecy of Roubaud's strike, Algerian prisoners undertook hunger strikes in order to force the

[3] Just as troubling is Spahr's account from the Cold War to the contemporary period of US government's use of avant-garde literature as soft power, mobilizing it for purposes far from, and even opposite to, the resistance many experimental writers dreamt of: "By 1993 poetry had switched back to become a genre more associated with accommodation than with resistance" (164).

[4] See Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde* (1984), Butler, *After the Wake* (1980), and Home, *The Assault on Culture* (1991).

[5] According to Scanlan et al. in their comprehensive study of hunger strikes, "The most tumultuous time [for hunger strikes] was between 1977 and 1987 when 371 (25.7%) of all reported hunger strikes occurred. This period was followed closely by the period between 1961 and 1971 when 300 strikes (20.8%) took place" (292).

French state to recognize them as political prisoners rather than criminals. Visibility was the crucial element of their protest – the crucial element of most hunger strikes – that created and subverted a second binary. The Algerian prisoner could be a legitimate criminal or a legal subaltern, rightly punished or rightly obedient, but to be a political prisoner would make them an *illegitimate criminal*: not a criminal at all, but someone now bound by Geneva conventions. Moreover, to call the Algerian a political prisoner would admit that they are a prisoner of war, and thus that the conflict *is* a war, a recognition the French government long avoided (and one still present, it seems, in the French psyche as Bourgoin uses the term "events," one the government had adopted, to describe the war).

This is to say that Roubaud upends and reverses the avant-garde tendency to describe art as inherently political by instead claiming artistic possibilities latent within a politically viable form. While Roubaud's commentary on his own hunger strike offers an invitation to consider hunger strikes both methodologically and aesthetically, the act's real resistance can prescriptively change how literature and art is viewed and done. In other words, this unity of art and practice, of communicating a thing and doing a thing, has a pedagogical consequence similar to the one John Ashbery ironizes while he interviews Harry Mathews. Mathews, the first American member of the Oulipo, explains the purpose for Oulipo, claiming, "We say that we invent forms … that are very hard to use, very demanding, so that these will be available to other writers, a kind of contribution made to the potentiality…" before Ashbery cuts in, remarking, "Very thoughtful of you." Mathews assents, responding, "Exactly. It's very thoughtful of us and never really happens" (43). But outside of Ashbery's slights, it is exactly this naïve, even *thoughtful* practice that interests me — largely because what Mathews refers to as the "true activity, which is to experiment in forms rather than in writing" is the history of the hunger

strike. The often successful form of the hunger strike has been an innovation in political speech and action that opens new, clear ways to make claims and have those claims answered, and the stake of this chapter is that formal experimentation can have more, other, similar consequences and creations.

Embodied Constraint

When the French protectorate ended in Morocco in 1956, the exiled Sultan (later King) Mohammed V was reinstated to rule until his death in 1961. After his death, his son Hassan II took the throne and ushered in a 20-30-year period of repression considered the Years of Lead: alongside a crackdown on "leftists, feminists, Berber/Amazigh activists, and Islamists" (Slyomovics 74), this was a period where, as the *New York Times* reported in 1977, the "rich of Morocco are becoming more opulent and the poor are finding survival more difficult" (Howe 6). The government forces were aggressive and few did not know someone who had not been disappeared. In such an environment, students and youth activists began forming to agitate against the government's oppressive machinations and general disregard for certain populations. In the early 70s, 23-year-old Saïda Menebhi became involved in the group إلى الأمام (Ilaal Amam), or "Forward," which sprang from a "clandestine Marxist-Leninist political party" founded by the poet Abdellatif Laâbi and the militant Abraham Serfaty. Laâbi was integral in establishing the Moroccan poetry and culture review *Souffles* in 1966. He would be arrested a year after branching *Souffles* into its Arabic language counterpart, *Anfas*, in 1971, and released in 1980 (Harrison 1-3). Ilaal Amam's primary target, while protesting the entire system of Moroccan oppression, was to fight against the 1975 government-led colonial project known as the Green March, which resettled hundreds of thousands of Moroccans in Western Sahara, a

territory the country still occupies despite the UN's support for Sahrawi self-determination. Criticizing this occupation even today risks censure in Morocco, and Menebhi's support for Western Sahara quickly led to her imprisonment in 1976. During her imprisonment, Menebhi undertook two hunger strikes – the first to seek a trial, and the second to seek status as a political prisoner – and died on December 11, 1977, after striking for 34 days.

Menebhi's case highlights one paradox of the hunger strike, a paradox that is at the core of its origins, which are most frequently dated to Russian prisoners in 1878 protesting prison conditions. From its beginnings, the hunger strike is "predominately, though not exclusively, bound to the prison environment" (Michelsen 101), and as such is an act of deprivation from within a scene of deprivation, and intentional constraint taken within a constrained environment. Tarrow calls such acts "contentious politics," explaining that they are developed "when changing political opportunities and constraints create incentives for social actors who lack resources on their own" (qtd Scanlan et al. 284), one of the few times the word "constraint" is actually used next to hunger strikes and acts of resistance.[6] Writing of the Guantánamo detainees, Ian Miller explains in his *History of Force Feeding*, "Having been stripped of their capacity for political communication and placed in an institution that severely restricted personal freedom, the simple act of not eating allowed detainees to reassert control over their bodies" (1), an explanation that appears frequently in hunger strike literature. Shahshahani and Patel note, for example, that "refusing food is usually the only method of meaningful protest, because their bodies are the only remaining sphere over which they still exert control while incarcerated" (2), while Bourgoin writes in his study of carceral protests in France, "Undertaking a hunger strike is to indicate, to

[6] Another instance is in Reiter's 2014 article, "The Pelican Bay Hunger Strike: Resistance within the Structural Constraints of a US Supermax Prison." Both instances focus on the external constraints, however, and not on the hunger strike as an act of constraint itself.

oneself and to whoever witnesses the act, the last bit of agency to which an individual still has access" (135). Notably, these claims come from studying the hunger strike in the prison environment, nearly the only place where force feeding occurs (despite numerous international bodies considering it a form of torture).[7]

This is to say that the hunger strike's power is derived from the agential, willed employment of the last item at one's disposal, which is the body itself. Summing these claims, Scanlan et al. write, "The power of the hunger strike might be its utility when other means of protest are not possible or ineffective, that is, when a political inopportunity structure exists that limits the emergence or effectiveness of other tactics in such a context" (277). The body is all that is left in prison, and is therefore equally the medium and the message of protest. As such, the body is the focal point of the protest's "propaganda of the deed" wherein the "communicative dimensions of nonviolent action" make words unnecessary — or less necessary, as the case may be (300). What began as a necessity – using the body because no other options for political speech were possible for the anti-Tsarist Russian prisoners or the British suffragettes, for example – became metonymically encoded in the protest's very rhetoric. As hunger strikes spread in popularity, spanning nations and populations, they left the prison while keeping the prison's logic, replacing the visible and explicit enforced deprivation of a prison cell and structure with less visible, disparate oppressions that do not weigh upon the individual striker alone – ranging from specific protests against polluting corporations, for example, to causes as general as climate awareness. Ambivalently pacifist and militant, the auto-aggression of the hunger strike has been able to just as easily name and blame an authority (prison guards, CEOs,

[7] Even more notably, the only *other* place one can be force-fed is in a Catholic hospital, due to the Church's complicated legal (dis)entanglement with US law. See Ann Neumann's "The Limits of Autonomy: Force-Feeding in Catholic Hospitals and Prisons."

entire economic orders) outside of the prison as it has inside. Doing so thrusts the authority into the role of starver: where, originally, the constraints of prison life were reflected back and intensified by the doubled constraint of giving up food, hunger strikes have widened their power to name and define a diverse collection of other authorities, oppressors, and enemies while retaining a practice that represents the striker's environment and protest via constraint. More simply: hunger strikes turn the situation of the striker *into* a prison, and the blamed authority into the violent warden.

As Johanna Siméant writes, "Having control over one's body is not just a strategic gesture (using the only means available), it also radically challenges the state's supposed monopoly on legitimate physical violence, and in doing so affirms its moral and symbolic superiority over the state" (42). Siméant describes what other political theorists, like Banu Bargu, call the "weaponization of life" that occurs in the repertoire of protest developed in the second half of the 20th Century. For Bargu, "technique[s] of self-destruction" make humans themselves into weapons" (9). While in this dissertation I do not include self-destructive acts that harm others, like suicide bombing, opting instead to concentrate on those that can still be partially described as "pacifist," like hunger strikes and self-immolation, Bargu's theorization is important. A hunger strike collapses the distinction Elaine Scarry makes when she writes that "what we call a 'weapon' when it acts on a sentient surface we call a 'tool' when it acts on a nonsentient surface" (173). The body is both the sentient and nonsentient surface of its action, easily objectified and just as easily empathized with: hunger strikes employ this dual aspect as a technique that can be seen *through* and one that can be copied and shared. By "seen through," I mean that the act, like I will argue with self-immolation, essentially means to give way to its message. As recently as February 2020, for example, a Boston University professor hunger

striking to protest the construction and pollution of a natural gas compressor station in North Weymouth, MA, said, “It's not about me… I'm a vehicle for putting the spotlight where it belongs” (Moran).

While other activists undertook hunger strikes, and died in prison, in the Years of Lead, Menebhi’s case is poignant for the journal of poems she kept while in prison, offering not just a message, but a series of messages of resistance during the timeline of her hunger strike. In “Description d’une grève de la faim,” she recounts how the body itself speaks in spare and startling lines. Composed in prison in January 1977 during her first hunger strike, Menebhi’s poem recounts the physical changes the body undergoes as the strike endures. The poem begins:

> Au début quelques douleurs
> et puis l'estomac apprend
> a ne rien broyer
> on ne pense plus à la faim
> d'ailleurs elle se garde bien
> de nous lanciner
> elle sait qu'elle sera réprimée
>
> In the beginning a few pains
> and then the stomach learns
> to grind nothing
> we think no more about hunger
> in any case it refrains
> from prodding us
> knowing it will be reprimanded

The first difficulty for the body is, of course, hunger itself – but remarkably, across nearly every hunger striker’s account, hunger itself is defeated in a number of days. In these first lines, Menebhi makes clear the pain and power of the body, which become tied together in the act of constraint, in the discipline and enforced deprivation of the strike. Hunger “knows it will be reprimanded,” which splits the body into its wants (hunger itself, the body working against the

subject) and its discipline (the decision not to eat, the body that *is* the subject) – the body as sentient and nonsentient at once. The body's pain, and the recursive act of discipline – the constraint of the self to be in a situation that will bring pain, and the further constraint of even the pain itself – creates an "object that was not previously in the world" (Scarry 170), which is the body threatening itself in the name of the State (or sanction, or prison official, etc.) with death. Such a body forces itself into the eyes of the disciplining authority, which makes more pertinent the fact that many prison strikers, like Menebhi, protest in order to be given a trial or a specific classification,[8] just as the detainees in Guantánamo Bay are hunger striking for their writ of habeas corpus, which has been denied them, and which is Latin for "that you have a body."

One way the form of the hunger strike compels a rethinking of form in general — including literary and aesthetic form — is how inseparable the body is to it. This contends with critiques and analyses that place literary constraints next to conceptual writing, thereby missing how the procedural experiments I refer to require an "embodied form." Spahr and Stephanie Young, for example, in their constraint-based non-manifesto "foulipo," write:

> We saw the eteat into constaint as an attempt by men to avoid pepetuating bougeois pivilege, to make fun of the omantic nacissistic tadition, of all that tadition of fomalism. But at othe moments we ween't so sue that this was eally a feminist, antiacist self-investigation. While this wok diectly avoided emotional and pesonal

[8] Per Ian Miller: "Historically, classification was a common motivation for hunger striking. In the 1910s, the Home Office refused to grant suffragettes political prisoner status, rousing numerous women to go on hunger strike. Similarly, Irish republicans often fasted (in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1970/80s) in protest against the British government's obstinate refusal to recognise their special status within the prison, to distinguish them from everyday criminals and thieves" (8).

> expessiveness, it was mostly engaged with conceptual inventiveness, not an especially adical move post the tun of the centuy.

Spahr and Young contrast male-dominated procedural work (already a debatable claim) with performance art done by women at the same period, ironizing their gendered argument by subtracting the "r" and thereby giving the words, when read aloud, a childish, unserious connotation. Their claim is not just that men in the 70s tended toward constraint and women used performance (though this is part of it), but that constraint does not seem to reckon with the body, with "how to both have a body and not be limited to it and have contol ove it." However, one of the interventions in this avant-garde history that a perspective originating from the radical political act of a hunger strikes makes apparent is the absolute centrality of the body to formal experimentation, which additionally broadens a reading of this period to include bodies that are *not only* white and male. This is not, of course, to align the stakes or processes of hunger strikes with experimental poetry. Rather, I want to use a material, physical practice to rethink and ground the ways art might be interpreted and even *enacted*.

That constrained forms do not only include the body, but require it, is at first vague and a little silly. There are, after all, varying degrees of embodied constraint. While many Oulipians saw a larger, structural value to constrained writing — founder Raymond Queneau believed that "inspired" or free writing subjects the poet to "other rules which he does not know," thus contrasting "conscious and unconscious constraints" (James 113) — the physical scene of writing is minutely (but still) changed. The author may need recourse to a dictionary at the side (such as with the n+7, where each noun is replaced by the 7th noun that follows it in a dictionary) or to an elaborate, written out plan (such as in Georges Perec's *La Vie: mode d'emploi*) or to a source text (such as for Jackson Mac Low). These are small changes, but they

are still important because the writing cannot happen without them. The real, physical scene is implicated in the composition in a way that knowing a writer has used a computer or typewriter or pen does not accomplish. Perec, in an interview, states: "Writing, for me, is a way of reorganizing the words of the dictionary. Or the books that one has read… The first work that this implies is a redistribution, a reorganization, and thus an availability" ("Entretien"). The world and language is redistributed *in order to* become available, to be used, and constraint is what does this.

At a more metaphorical level, the notion of constraint as a tool against powerful and otherwise hidden machinations of sense and structure is repeated across Oulipian theories, primarily for its power to express what one hasn't, and what maybe one couldn't, before the constraint. As Harry Mathews says, "There is no value inherent in the product of a constrictive form, except one: being unable to say what you normally would, you must say what you normally wouldn't," and Ashbery, always Oulipo-adjacent, confirms that arbitrary constraints "have a paradoxically liberating effect" (qtd Conte 240-1). From Perec's novel composed of words without the letter "e" (*La Disparition*), to his novel composed with words that only have the letter "e" (*Les Revenentes*), from the infamous n+7 technique to snowball poems (where each line adds a word) and reverse snowball poems (where each line… subtracts a word), Oulipian constraints stretch the resources and abilities of the writer. They press against the language that was "always already" on the tongue and reshaped, manipulated it, *crafted* it in the true sense of an object in an ouvroir ("workshop"). Next to Oulipo, poets like Jackson Mac Low and artists affiliated with Fluxus, including John Cage, consistently used chance operations for their work not to gain control against unconscious structures that were infiltrating the self, but to lose even more control. "I felt these ways of working allowed me to lessen dependence on the illusory ego

and let 'the rest of the world' enter into the works," explains Mac Low in one instance (Mac Low xix), and in another he states, "The goal was never to remove the author but always to make room for something greater" (qtd Spinosa 5).[9] From either direction, operative here is a critique of the normative ideology of the self and practices that are meant to resist the pressure to be a certain way. Whether for more conscious control or for more abandonment, the way to get there, for these writers and artists, was through restriction and rule.

There is a blurriness here that Marjorie Perloff attempts to clarify by distinguishing between "procedures" and "rules," writing that a rule "sends a definite signal to the audience" about the poem's form, but procedural poetics determines "not what is already fixed as a property of the text, but *how* the writer will proceed with his composition" (139). I want to run these terms together, however: by considering both procedures and rules "constraints" — in the act of writing, they are operatively the same as each redistributes the available — I am trying to redirect attention from the work to the practice of the work. In this way "rule" might also be read religiously, like the monastic rule, how one forms one's life according to established codes and directives. In an early draft of this chapter a reader at this point asked with exasperation if what I am talking about is as simple as diets and exercise routines: yes! These, like so many other conscious and unconscious rules, are scores one's life is set to. They are not, like a hunger strike, automatically political. They are not, like constrained poems, automatically creative. *But they can be both.* Realizing the forms that form you and learning about other ones and trying new ones is lifework. Art and Activism are resources.

[9] As a fascinating bit of literary history whose relevance to this argument is coincidental, Mac Low lists one of his first poems, in his collected *Thing of Beauty: New and Selected Works*, as a sound poem he wrote in November 1938 entitled "HUNGER STrikE what doeS lifemean." The poem moves through associated sounds that include both words and pure sound, opening, for example, with "Water and water and water and water/Whater you thinking about/Or are you doing/what areyou doing/Fire in grates are great~~es~~" (Mac Low 5).

Here is how Bernadette Mayer does it. In her 1975 work, *Studying Hunger*, Mayer states her procedure for writing the book: "I wanted to try to record, like a diary, in writing, states of consciousness, my states of consciousness, as fully as I could, every day, for one month" (2). The result is a long, loose work that was only published in its entirety in 2011, only 1/5 of it having been published previously. After writing it, Mayer said, "I knew this was not a publishable work. It's almost masochistic in and of itself to do something like that" (Nelson 105). More than anything else, *Studying Hunger* reads like, as Mayer points out, a diary: the everyday dramas and moments of life are presented piecemeal and with first names the reader rarely has any context for, days are recounted in their immediacy, and the work continues without any narrative larger than the mini pursuits and desires that crop up in the stream of life. These mundane elements are mixed with bursts of creative meditation, prose poetry, and lined poems – a miscellanea all the more striking for its rapid shuttling between the "artistic" and the personal, using the vague but powerful constraint to record her inner states as much as possible for a month to present language in its multitude of registers and possibilities and ways of negotiating the everyday life. About her *Midwinter Day*, which condensed the logic of *Studying Hunger* into documenting a single day, December 22, 1978, "a book-length chronicle of one day's thoughts and events *as they happened*" (108), one reviewer writes that Mayer's experimental work is "one of objective searching into the limits of language and how words shape our narrative discourse" (Burns).

And yet for interpretations like this, Mayer's interest in rules, games, prompts, and constraints speaks to an interest in embodied writing, rather than one in simply how language narrates. Mayer's writing is physical, bound by the requirements and demands put on any individual living their life: in *Midwinter Day*, these demands are maternal. In *Studying Hunger*,

relationships and routines and transportation repeat themselves. Mayer's work is adjacent, or even one with, the practice of the work: she writes continuously, deep into the night, in whatever moments she can, and the results are hurried, associative, and replicable (one might imagine a *Midwinter Day* written on the summer solstice or on a holiday). And above these frames, Mayer's practice is decidedly adjoined to a body marked female: though she certainly explores the "limits of language and how words shape our narrative discourse," one might just as easily argue that the foundational experiment is to explore the female body as the constraint – the limit and the generation – of language and narration.[10]

I am understanding work like Mayer's through the lens of the hunger strike for a couple reasons. First, doing so tells a different story of constraint that expands not only the interpretive elements of these artistic experiments, highlighting characteristics otherwise occluded by an attention to style, but also the kinds of works that belong to an avant-garde narrative that is too often too white, too male, and not actually representative of the various attempts at acting-otherwise that occurred in the post-WWII period. This is the descriptive dimension. Secondly, and at a more general register, founding the reading and making of experimental art on political actions can prescriptively encourage a more democratic praxis of art making, especially as methodologies like hunger strikes already come from more diverse and less institutionally powerful populations – it's an attempt to draft off of the real and successful resistant work done by the every-person.[11]

[10] "*Midwinter Day* and *Desires* occupy a privileged place in the history of American feminist poetics in that they represent one of the first sustained attempts to fold the 'women's work' of bearing children into the fabric of an experimental lyricism stretched to book-length proportions" (Nelson 109).

[11] "Success" is difficult to measure, but in Scanlan et al.'s sample of 327 hunger strikes where clear outcomes were reported, 75.5% of the strikes led to positive outcomes, "meaning that concessions were gained, persons were released from custody, granted amnesty, or sought-after reforms were achieved" (299).

While this is a grander ambition, it has a mundane resource, which is the body. For Mayer, the body's presence and movement through space, its absolute materiality, is an unquestionable, necessary component of the work. She cannot write her journals without a pen and notebook at her side, and without her consistent pauses in the stream of her quotidian life as a partner and mother to record her internal states. Similarly, Ron Silliman cannot write *BART* without sitting on the train all day on Labor Day, and he references the materiality of the work frequently ("I'm more cramped now, jacket, book bag, […] this blue ink is lovely, […] I flex my writing hand to ease the pain"[12]). And Jacques Jouet, a later Oulipian, similarly rides the Paris metro to compose his "poèmes de métro," which involves thinking of the next line of the poem while in transit between stations, and at the station stop, writing the line, then repeating the process for the entire journey (this process is described, in a superb example of the self-reflexivity common to procedural work, in this first metro-poem, "Qu'est-ce qu'un poème de métro?").

By opening a reading of constrained works to include the constrained body, the situation of the writer/reader – their everyday life – is integrated as part of the resources available for aesthetic treatment. That is, no longer simply a technique for language games, embodied constraint grounds poetic expression (or anti-expression) in physical movements, gestures, contexts, and lives. Perec saw this effect clearly in his work on the "infraordinary" that try to register the unnoticed, non-spectacular, yet omnipresent things and events in a location. Perec writes: "To question the habitual. But that's just it, we're habituated to it. We don't question it, it doesn't question us … But where is our life? Where is our body? Where is our space? ("The Infra-Ordinary").

[12] Silliman 304-308

For Roubaud as well, constraint is embodied and threaded into life. Of course writing is *always* done during life, but my point is how constraint signifies, stresses, "dislocates," and modifies the life that is happening before, during, and after writing, how constraint creates not only "new ways of capturing the real" representationally but new ways of engaging and interacting with the real. In the beginning of *Le Grande Incendie de Londres* Roubaud lays out his procedure. He wakes at 3AM and prepares to write until the daylight "will finally dissolve the electric yellow glow upon paper" of his desk lamp. He lists the paper and pens he uses, dates his entries, describes the movement from the first notebook to the "legible draft," and takes account of his breakfast routine of instant coffee. "This constraint," writes Roubaud, "contains no hidden virtues. It resembles other daily activities: getting up, dressing, shaving, eating" (31). Embodied constraint not only returns the body to the scene of creative experimentation, but also reorients everyday life: the constraint that forms the body simultaneously forms the world available to this body that is moving through it.

It has been important to refer here to "the body" in its most general and universal sense, for such generality refers to its eminent portability. You, too, "have a body," even if denied habeas corpus. As a useful reminder that some bodies are disproportionately visible, powerful, and legitimate, Menebhi's posthumous oeuvre makes evident her committed feminist and anti-colonial perspective. Menebhi's solidarities are one and the same with a "serenity that seems particularly woman-centred due to the abundant references to children, birth and the renaissance of woman as the generator of a future, utopist society," as Valérie Orlando writes (282). Moreover, Menebhi's female body must be acknowledged in its national context as a Moroccan female body, for Orlando continues: "Former female prisoners are also viewed, because of their gender, as martyrs and, therefore, their stories are considered virtually untouchable by the

public," and that if a female prisoner gave her testimony of rape or torture, it would "mean that Moroccans themselves had sought to annihilate their own being – their own mothers – and the life blood of the nation" (277). In Menebhi's case, not only does her poetry refer to torture committed by the state, but she *herself* takes on the self-annihilating practice of a hunger strike, both to protest her lack of a trial and, as we will see, to continue to draw attention to colonial solidarities.

Towards the end of "Description d'une grève de la faim," Menebhi stages how inertia and insomnia buffet the body, and in her waking hours she searches for "memories of passions," those affective ties that reaffirm Menebhi's determination and reminds her that the adversary is not the body itself, its weakening and impending dissolution, but "the enemy" – the authority, official, or government the strike is directed against. While Menebhi is firstly striking in order to force government and prison officials to grant her a trial, this is not the only aim of her resistance. The "passion" that returns her strength to the strike is not solely for her own rights as a prisoner (though this in no way discounts prison protests exclusively aimed at bettering the situations of the strikers themselves), for Menebhi's arrest came from her protestation of the Moroccan government's colonization of Western Sahara. Her other prison poems remind and reassert the solidarity she felt for the Sahrawi people, and beyond: the poem "Rêve en plein jour" ("Dream in Broad Daylight") jumps from the Sahara to Palestine and Chile, and earlier poems add Bolivia, Vietnam, Yemen, and Cambodia as she "captures the spirit of resisters against all forms of torture and abuse who suffered not only in Morocco but across the globe" (Orlando 279).

This cross-national solidarity foreshadows the movement of the hunger strike itself, but I want to end this section noticing the poems' first-person plural pronoun. "D'abord, [l'insomnie]

nous fatigue," "First, [insomnia] exhausts us," begins the final stanza, replicating a plural that is throughout the poem and signifies Menebhi's vantage from a collective (her hunger strikes occurred alongside fellow prisoners each time). The singular, individual, secretive body gives way to a community of hunger strikers, and to the reader, invited into the experience as well. That is, though Maud Ellmann writes, "Self-inflicted hunger is a struggle to release the body from all contexts, even from the context of embodiment itself" (14), I argue that Menebhi demonstrates how the starving body *unites* the body to a context even more tightly. It extends both the enforced constraint of the oppressor and the disciplined constraint of the strike itself to others, creating a community of contextualized, constrained bodies. Political action is reduced to the ultimate universal, which at the same time is the ultimately personal: the body in pain. In documenting the bodily pains and disciplines necessitated by a hunger strike, Menebhi crafts a poem that is also a lesson plan, "describing" hunger strikes both now and to come. By embodying constraint, Menebhi teaches it, makes it possible, makes it social.

The Score and the Everyday

Jacques Roubaud stops eating during his military service and this re-formed body discovers a re-formed world that is no longer available to the disabled body. But why *was* Roubaud where he was? What is the French body, dressed in military fatigues, doing in Algeria in the first place? Roubaud's clandestine hunger strike and his fight or flight dilemma obscure the basic colonial relation that has set him in Algeria, one that ultimately plays to his benefit as his superiors can more easily imagine the desert as inhospitable to the French body that simply faints a few times. And yet by adopting the hunger strike as his method, Roubaud is in fact taking part, slantwise, in a historically anti-colonial practice: Siméant acknowledges that "the

history of anticolonial and pacifist struggles, and, even more so, the struggle against colonial or imperial wars has been marked by the use of hunger strikes" (75).

This has been seen already in Menebhi's case, as her hunger strike not only protested her lack of a trial but also included her general protest of the illegal occupation of a sovereign land, creating an equation where the prison's institutionalized detention and violence, its ordering and management of life expands into colonial control and its own legitimized violence and plunder. This is what Fanon describes as "a world split in two. The dividing line, the border, is represented by the barracks and the police stations" (41). Importantly, the reverse telescope of the prison widening into the colony widens further to include the contemporary neoliberal state: the hunger strikes' innate flexibility has allowed it uses that range from the ultra-specific to the most general and global, which means an analysis of its formal capabilities can suggest certain, meaningful resonances between environments as specific as prisons and colonies and as general as life in global capitalism. Strikes can range from politically active communities to a "'little old lady who had been classed as a member of a cult' or 'very nice man who had lost custody of his son'" (Siméant 66).

The flexibility of the hunger strike that I have emphasized means that it can spread both across national and cultural boundaries and within different everyday contexts. It means that it is portable, and as such, shareable. Learning from such shareability turns from exclusively interpreting formal experiments for meaning and expression and to understanding form as creating, a model built by an exemplar and disseminated to the spectator-as-practitioner. The hunger strike as an experimental form of political protest helps make evident the ways in which art and literature *may also be* political, shared, and integral to building communities and solidarities. Shareability, which I define as the ability to adopt and transform an act from a

disparate geographic, political, or temporal context to one's own unique situation, implies a different conceptual frame than rule, procedure, or even constraint (though the hunger strike is, as has been discussed and will be returned to, about creating despite and because of the removal of resources). Instead, both the hunger strike and constrained art are better viewed, interpreted, and practiced when experimental form is understood as a score.

By reading both practices through the concept of the score, the temptation to individualize a hunger strike or an artwork gives way to the eminent sociality of working with a form that can be developed and handed to others.[13] This sociality first expands the picture of who counts in the avant-garde narratives, past the more or less male, more or less white subset of artists typically named, and secondly suggests that forms are not only embodied, but can be adopted – the description and prescription of this argument. In other words, procedural works implicate a reader who *may* perform their version of the work they are reading. As Cage says, "I think that more things would be noticed if many people did it" (qtd in Tyus Miller 11). Jouet, similarly: "I write according to the rules of the *poème de métro*. The reader reads the *poèmes de métro*. The form is shown/ shared/ collective/ irreligious/ plain spiritualist/ local/ memorable/ transitory/ funny/ reusable… This is a political position with regard to literature" (14). And Roubaud writes of his *Grand incendie*, "I imagine a reader faced with this mural 'the great fire of London.' I see him choosing a reading itinerary, coming close to it" (40). The constraints of writers and artists in this period are not only ways to reduce the ego or increase creativity or challenge normative structures: they are ways to invite the reader into the art-making process as active participants within the works that are being read *as well as* whatever works the readers might make next.

[13] In Chapter Two, I read more directly against the grain of individualist, "psychocentric" modes of analysis and interpretation.

Readers of constraint become active because, for one, constraints include within them their recreation during the reading process, which means that the reader is taking in a work while applying the work's rules anew, for themselves, as a score. This is how Roubaud himself labels his very procedural work "The Lamp," writing, "The poem's mode of existence should be above all *oral* (the manuscript version, typewritten or printed, are merely *scores [partitions]*)" (45, emphasis his). And the Fluxus artists adamantly referred to their works as "event scores," which Natilee Harren describes as "works meant to exist in multiple copies created and circulated apart from the artist's hand," works that took from musical notation the "mobility, relationality, and ambiguity" to move toward "an alternative conception of artistic form" (29).

The score can also help expand what counts as "procedural poetry" or "constraint-based literature" past the dominant canon, as the idea of shared form was crucial to some of the most experimental and forgotten Black poets in the postwar period. Aldon Lynn Nielsen describes "chant," for example, in ways where the elements I've discussed in constrained, procedural works are shared by the postmodern work in the Black American literature that he collects. First, chant must be heard and reheard, "it must have presupposed the possibility of reiteration … It is not chant if not repeated, nor is it orature unless it is transmitted, reworked, redeployed. Each member of the inheriting chain of tradition repeats the chant in a different voice, replays it in a different register, alters its rhythmic patterns" (30). Chant, like procedural poetry, is necessarily enacted by the reader in real, bodily ways. Lorenzo Thomas sees a similar tactic in the typographic experimentations by Black poets, aligning their spacing on the page with Olson's projective verse, but he overstresses authorial control, writing that Sonia Sanchez's "Queens of the Universe," "functions precisely as a score. The poem, as printed, indicates exactly how Sanchez performed it and how it should be read" (20). It is important to soften the "exactly" here

and instead note how impossible it is to speak a scored poem *exactly* as the author may have first performed it.

As an example, here are excerpts from Umbra poet Norman H. Pritchard's 1970 "Gyre's Galax":

> Sound variegated through beneath lit
> Sound variegated through beneath lit
> through sound beneath variegated lit
> sound variegated through beneath lit
>
> Variegated sound through beneath lit dark
> Variegated sound through beneath lit dark
> sound variegated through beneath lit
> variegated sound through beneath lit dark (46)
>
> …
>
> Twainly ample of amongst
> twainly ample of amongst
> Twainly ample of amongst
> twainly ample of amongst
> Twainly ample of amongst
> twainly ample of amongst
> In lit black viewly
> viewly
> in viewly (48)

Take a moment to read these lines aloud (or the entire poem, which is in the anthology *Every Goodbye Ain't Gone* and in Pritchard's collection *The Matrix*, which has been recently republished). At the third line something happens — the language is already jaunty, the word "variegated," with its quick strange unaccented syllables, speeds you into dense loud accents of Through Neath Lit — as your expectation of rhythm is caught; it's almost hard to read. Then the repetition of the first two lines feels now more native, choral. The chorus is reestablished in the second stanza but now ends with the heavy, percussive Dark. An extra syllable, an extra sound: it hammers, and when the refrain of the first stanza reappears now its incomplete and wanting. It

wants more. In the second excerpt there is again a difficulty, a thickness of getting through words — are they words? "Twainly," it is a kind of word, an almost word, almost "doubly" — that on their own are easy enough to say. Ample. Amongst. But "twainly ample of amongst" trips, despite its more coherent trochaic meter. The line repeats five more times and we get the hang of it, now it's a chant more than a refrain. You start to put a beat to it, your own rhythm. I do anyway. And right as it reaches the diminished pleasure of too much repetition a line breaks through like sunlight, clean and smooth if you can handle that tricky triple L, an alveolar even native English speakers can struggle with. Fortunately, the struggle is brief, and for fifteen lines there is only "viewly" or "in viewly."

Now visit the recording Pritchard made for the 1967 LP *New Jazz Poets*, which is readily available on YouTube.[14] Pritchard's syncopated yet nearly toneless reading is both wonderful and hard to imitate from simply seeing the score on the page. He pronounces "variegated" as a four-syllable word, already a large difference in the rhythm I had chosen. He lets himself be carried by the words at times, especially the repetition of "through beneath lit" and "above beneath," the latter almost wholly unworded. It is a benefit to have a recording of Pritchard, but even without one, reading it aloud on one's own adds to the poem and almost encourages perusing one's native tongue for similarly punctuating words, especially those with a high register too high for everyday speech, like "amongst," yet can fit sonically a created rhythm in repetition. I tried, after reading aloud, and my first draft wasn't great – *expatiated guffaw in bright light/which chimerical through gold*, the cliché of "bright light" undermines the thrill of discovery I had with "expatiated guffaw," and "gold" seems too automatic from "chimerical,"

[14] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhhsAllUFmg. Pritchard is slowly becoming the prominent figure in the histories of this period that he deserves to be seen as. Paul Stephens has written an excellent introductory account, "The transrealism of Norman Pritchard," for *jacket 2*.

perhaps because of the slant of "alchemical" – but in the process I stumbled over bits of unanticipated meaning, glimmers of connections happening in the object and process of language. While the Language poets in the introduction sought to disrupt normalized uses of language and grammar, Pritchard's score helps us *do it*: as Thomas claims, "All poetry is incomplete until it is read aloud" (25). The score as I am describing it adds a corollary: All poetry is incomplete until it has spurred another poem.

I want to return to the hunger strike, and specifically the history of its rapid expansion from its first cases, most frequently dated to Russian prisoners in 1878 protesting prison conditions, to its global saturation today, to emphasize this connective tissue between influence and reproduction, which is at the same time transformation. Though fasting itself has a much longer history, Russian anarchists imprisoned because of their protests against the Tsarist regime first refused food for political ends. But it was not until these Russian activists made their way to Britain that the hunger strike began its journey toward becoming a universally used tactic of resistance (Grant 116). The hunger strike was famously employed by British suffragettes who were directly influenced by Russian anarchists, and soon, "news of their hunger strikes spread through British imperial networks of governance and communication, conveyed by official and private correspondence, newspapers, books, and rumor" (141). Irish suffragettes and republicans began hunger striking, and the tactic would be used throughout the 20th Century, culminating in the Long Kesh Prison strikes where Bobby Sands and nine other resistors died from their self-imposed starvations (Ian Miller 16; Grant 141). Kevin Grant recounts in a brief narrative the diffusion of the hunger strike, noting how Indian militants invoked Irish republicans, how Gandhi was influenced by the effectiveness of British suffragettes, and how Cesar Chavez and South African anti-apartheid activists were inspired by Gandhi (142). Similarly, France did not

witness hunger strikes until Algerian nationalists refused food to seek status as political prisoners, rather than criminals, during the Algerian War (Bourgoin 134).

The hunger strike in its most powerful manifestation is a highly replicable act: it implicates its audience within the scene of its protest while offering itself up as a form that audience members might even take on themselves. This is why so many hunger strike histories are histories of group formation and social movements, how the plural of British Suffragettes is more important than any one striking individual, how even Bobby Sands is a representation of a group of strikers, many of whom also carried their fasts to death. This is also why stories of Chavez or Gandhi must be contextualized with their influences and whom they influenced, while stories of the unnamed – American prisoners, sans-papiers in France, current immigrants in US detention centers, those foregoing food together for numerous reasons global and local – must be guiding examples for a politics of solidarity and support.

That the score of the strike has been so replicable is due in part to its primary resource being the body itself, but also its ability to mold and adapt to any context, from prisons to the everyday. Scores as developed by Oulipo or Fluxus or Umbra writers have the same focus on immediate context: the *Fluxus Performance Workbook*, collected by Ken Friedman in 1990 and now published online (http://fluxus.lib.uiowa.edu/resources.html), for example, represents the history of Fluxus event scores. “Cut the coat along its entire length. Wear each half separately.” reads the score for “Fashion” by Milan Knizak from 1965 (63). Or Ben Vautier’s 1961 “Theft,” which instructs: “A theft is announced and the audience is searched” (102). One of my favorite Fluxus scores is one of the most popular and reproduced, Benjamin Patterson’s 1960 “Paper Piece,” where five performers variously Shake, Tear, Break, Crumple, etc. sheets of paper, and where they Poof and Pop paper bags. The everyday, that one can use the everyday, is inherent to

avant-garde scores as it is to the hunger strike — for after all it is not just the body the hunger strike constrains, but the food around it, the relations one has to action and energy, the ability to *do* the everyday. As Ian Miller writes about prison strikes: "Refusing food directly challenges the normal disciplinary workings of prisons. It disrupts day-to-day schedules and represents a firm rejection by prisoners of the regimented power systems that structure institutional life and the harsh, discriminatory conditions which they often face" (11).

That is, prison hunger strikes disrupt the mundane routines that compose everyday life for the prisoners. This is replicated in resistance in colonial environments, Fanon advising, "The struggle for national liberation does not consist of bridging the gap in one giant stride. The epic is day-to-day, difficult, and the suffering endured exceeds those of the colonial period" (135). Fanon notes in this chapter of *Les damnés de la terre* the issue of time that day-to-day resistance requires, critiquing the "Grandeur et la faiblesse de la spontanéité," "Grandeur and Weakness of Spontaneity." Resistance that reshapes life takes time, as hunger strikes "are long term and permit a continuous and progressive pressure against those nearby" (Bourgoin 133). In this sense can be recalled the usefulness of a words like the "rule," or the discipline, to add to the concept of a score: rather than individual, bounded moments of inspiration and activity that resulting in a work, hunger strikes encode the long time, the practice, of living otherwise.

In not only prison and colonial settings, but even in the less recognizably politicized settings of late capital where the state "endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply [life], subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations" (Foucault 137), everyday life becomes the terrain of resistance that tries to prevent a return of normalizing and hidden power. I want to end this chapter by looking at the early life and work of the Moroccan poet Abdallah Zrika in order to see how the hunger strike – and for Zrika, art as well – reorganizes the everyday

while using this reorganization to solidify the cross-national solidarities that Menebhi earlier sought to connect.

Zrika published his first collection of poetry, رقصة الرأس والوردة, *Dance of the Head and the Rose* in 1977, the same year Saïda Menebhi died. "In these so-called years of lead of political repression & student unrest, the book was an immediate popular success with the younger Moroccan generation—as were the many poetry readings he gave to audiences that often numbered in the thousands" (Joris and Tengour 715). Zrika wrote in Arabic, as opposed to Menebhi's French (the political language of Morocco), and his early work was, as Laâbi describes, "brutal, disheveled, wild, blasphemous, one could be tempted to say that it is voluntarily ugly—the same way people found Picasso's paintings ugly" (qtd Joris and Tengour 715). In a theocratic state, the use of the religious language of the Qur'an for social and political reasons was reason enough to condemn Zrika, who was imprisoned a year later in 1978 for "an attack against the sacred values and for public disturbance."

This attack was in the form of a handful of poems that took as their source the Casablanca *bidonville*, or shanty town, where Zrika grew up, called Ben M'sik. Infamous in Morocco, Ben M'sik is described as the "first shanty town in Morocco at the threshold of the triumphant modernity of colonial power, erected in the shadow of its industrial chimneys and its quarries of builders of progress and benefits of humanity" (Arrif 19). The bidonville's relation to modernity and colonialism in Morocco is ingrained even in the language: in *darija*, the Moroccan dialect of Arabic, shanty towns are called "karyan," derived from "Carrières Centrales," the housing projects designed by the French for Moroccan workers outside of Casablanca near active quarries, and the shacks are referred to as "beraka," derived from "baraque," which is French for shack (Benkirane). Historically in Morocco, "since its appearance

in the 1920s, the bidonville has been seen as an unacceptable product of modern urban life that needs to be immobilized and contained" (Pieprzak 34). Bidonvilles have faced continual resettlements and extinctions under the guise of public health (Arrif 75); they are in-between spaces that threaten the ruling powers where the conflict between the government, or Makhzen, represented by the urban, wealthy city-dweller, and the rebellious countryside, the Siba (السيبة) is restaged.[15] Fanon notes the power of the bidonville in Algeria, writing, "It is in this mass, in the people of the bidonville, in the heart of the lumpenproletariat, that the revolution will find its urban spearhead. The lumpenproletariat constitute one of the most spontaneous forces and the most radical revolutionaries of a colonized people" (125). In this sense, Zrika extends a lesson first noted in Menebhi: a colonized people can exist within a country – they can be set apart by group (the Sahrawi) or class (the bidonville), they can be bound by nationality or border. Zrika makes this clear in a poem where he compares Ben M'sik to Tel al-Zaatar, a Palestinian refugee camp that was destroyed during the course of the Lebanese Civil War in 1976. In doing so, he aligns the bidonville with a refugee camp and the destructive Lebanese Front with the Makhzen. Abdellatif Laâbi writes of this comparison: "The same siege. The same blood. The same endurance against evil and every crime" (Zrika 31).

His criticism of the government was already dangerously heretical, but the popularity of Zrika's readings made him a target. After his imprisonment, Zrika undertook a hunger strike to force a trial, influenced by Menebhi's death and the hunger strikes that occurred in the women's prison. Zrika's hunger strike proved successful, and though his sentence was predetermined, he

[15] The Makhzen/Siba conflict refers to the inability for any central government to fully control the rural, mountains regions in the north of Morocco, the Rif, which have long histories of rebellion, resistance, and anarchy. These regions are also inhabited by many Amazight populations. The tension between the government and these more autonomous regions continues today: in October 2016, a fish seller was killed when he dove into a garbage truck to save the fish that authorities had confiscated from him, which set off protests and demonstrations throughout Morocco and led to a number of activists still in prison – and hunger striking – today.

was still given an opportunity to speak.[16] In the introduction to his translation of Zrika's work into French, Laâbi describes the scene:

> He tried vainly to make the Court understand the double hardship of being a poet in one's destined country: to live all the absences, all the limits that are the fabric of daily reality for a son of the disadvantaged masses, to on the other hand suffer all of the inhibitions which are the result of incalculable attacks on the freedom of expression and opinion. (Zrika 32)

Where Menebhi's constraint of the hunger strike impels a reconsideration of the body, Zrika's constraint is the oppressive reality forced down upon him and his neighbors in a slum town, and it impels a reconsideration of everyday life. That is, Zrika too understands the multivalence of a word like "constraint," the double hardship that is experiencing oppression and communicating and creating from it. This is also to remember the dual of agency and context: there is a score written by others, institutions, and structures which one is set to; one creates, adopts, or transforms a score in response.

When Zrika speaks from the perspective of the bidonville, or Menebhi writes with solidarity in mind, when both start hunger strikes in prison that tie them to others, they are using an act of resistance to call attention to everyday infusions of power and control while uniting themselves with a community of those who suffer the same abuses. The hunger strike for both is, as it always is, intensely social: in constraining the self, the hunger strike diagnoses a larger constraint oppressively set against – or at least held as threat against– some population. Its implicit sociality is due to how it navigates the self and other, body and world. It is also the final

[16] In a personal conversation, Zrika mentioned how scared the guards were of him when he began the strike, a perception that accords with the act's continued popularity and rates of success.

bargain every body might make with the state: that either one has a role in the creation, management, and work of the institutions and resources that score everyday life or one withdraws the greatest commodity – human life, the body itself – thereby negating the state's existence.

Zrika's early work often finds rapports across cultural lines – one poem is song for Angela Davis – but significant to this chapter is the poem Laâbi translates as, "Cierges au chevet de Bobby Sands," originally شُمُوعٌ لِرَأسِ بُوبِي سَانْدَز, or "Candles at Bobby Sands' Bedside." This eulogy poem begins with Zrika's nearly surrealist fragments in run-on phrases only to narrow into the basic facticity of Sands' highly mediatized 66-day, 1981 fast until death in the HM Prison Maze in Northern Ireland, a strike that would extend to 22 other IRA and INLA prisoners. The poem ends:

كانَ الأحَدُ فَارغاً
وَالأثنيْنُ.
وَمَايْ.
حَتى يُونيُو.
وَالذي لمْ يَسْتيْقظ.
لنْ يَسْتيقظ أبَداً.
كانَ العَالمُ كلهُ أوْ بَعْضُهُ. غريباً. حَتى
الصُّبْح.

It was an empty Sunday
and Monday.
And May.
Until June.
And who did not wake up.
Who will not ever wake.
It was the whole world or a part of it. Strange. Until
dawn.[17]

[17] Zrika, "شُمُوعٌ" provided by author

Bobby Sands' hunger strike – beginning on Sunday, March 1 – affected more than Northern Ireland, his constraint rippling out to fill, via its emptiness, whole months, whole parts of the world or even the whole world. Zrika watches from Casablanca, only a handful of years after his own hunger strike, and becomes an ally to the case of Irish nationalism, able to relate to and sympathize with those resisting British imperialism through the shared form of resistance he and other North Africans employed in post-WWII Morocco, first against the French and then against the oppressive regimes after independence (in the case of Morocco, a regime supported by the French).

"Literary politics also depend on poetics, the shareable techniques that mark the site where literature touches the social and historical," writes Reed, emphasizing both the specificity and the universality, the score and the application of the score, that occur in a literary politics (6). Viewing the strike and poem as scores emphasizes the shareability and real-world possibilities of engaging with these forms: scores are the marks of a provisional poem that is only realized in the act of creation, in the application of the score's rules. A score is the culmination of what a hunger strike can offer for social movements, as it requires the reader to join the text to their life. While Peter Bürger may claim that "when art and the praxis of life are one, when the praxis is aesthetic and art is practical, art's purpose can no longer be discovered" (51), I am claiming the exact opposite, that creative practices that enjoin the praxis of life make an art far more purposeful, now opened to new fields that a larger majority of individuals can move within.

Though I have moved in the spaces of sentences between experimental poetry and the hunger strike, there is no claim that aesthetic form carries the same level of risk, action, and efficacy as political form. No group of writers can be located on the same plane of precarity as the hundreds of migrants in Libya in July 2019 hunger striking after airstrikes hit the migrant

detention centers in Tajoura ("Libya conflict"). No diffusion of shared poetic form can be given the same value of resistance as the hunger strikes adopted by Syrians and activists "in Belgium, Switzerland, Turkey, France, the United States, Jordan, Egypt, Qatar, and other countries" (Al Nofal). But the writers using these experimental forms still saw them as social ways to transfer the authority of artistic meaning to the reader. This is also, I think, one way to talk about what Fanon calls "la littérature de combat," which "informs national consciousness, giving it form and contours and opening for it new and unlimited perspectives" (228). Because of its shareability and its universality, constraint gives the reader/perceiver/audience a real agency, interpellating them as actors within their sociopolitical contexts – this is why I have not only stressed the work of two Moroccan writers who spoke and acted against an oppressive regime, but why Black and underrepresented art and literature are essential to this narrative. Bringing to bear upon that literature that seems so apolitical, so indulgent, and so impractical a theory grounded in acts of survival and resistance is an attempt to reverse the tendencies of the avant-garde discourse and learn from the practical experiences and movements that have fought for better, more equitable societies.

Yulia Tsvetkova is a Russian artist whose work engages with gender occasionally through "seemingly naïve, 'child-like'" nudes. Her work has been routinely censored, and in May 2021, after months of house arrest after being accused of distributing pornography, she published a message explaining her decision to go on a hunger strike to pressure the government to hold a trial (she faces up to six years in prison, if convicted). In her note, Yulia explains her motivations and desires, asking herself questions like "Why a hunger strike?" and "Am I scared?" Describing her limited options she writes, "The starving person must have some kind of demand," and that the strike was the only option left for her to act against the state, who accused

her but had not even brought her to trial. Towards the end of the letter she expresses her uncertainty of being able to fast until death, but that “I firmly know that I am not ready to live as now” (Tsetkova). This is the power of the score — for Tsetkova, the hunger strike, for you and me, something else, perhaps — that can be taken, and held, and changed, that can unite others, or at least show a way, and as such can help an us become an us, and help us act.

Fold:

Absinthe, or Not Fitting In

There was a bar I liked, "Cantada II," that specialized in absinthe. They had an extensive menu and poured the water over the sugar cube from the traditional fountains that dotted the counter like domesticated chandeliers. I was going through a phase, yes, but the drinks were great and the bartenders knew what they were doing, would suggest milder or sharper absinthes, always recommended white absinthes though I liked the intensity of the green. At times it was like ripping up a handful of wildflowers and stuffing them in my mouth. I would watch the sugar cube uncube into jagged peaks, the louche cloud and silt into the glass. It was a whole thing. The place was important, because you can't drink absinthe outside of a bar, like Huysmans writes, "Everyone who is not an alcoholic understands that an absinthe, prepared in a dining room, is pleasureless in the mouth, unseemly and empty" (7). I would go after work, enjoying the light but clean buzz of one or two slowly sipped glasses before dinner, sitting at the bar with my backpack at my feet, my buttoned-down shirt tucked into my slacks.

The outfit is important to note because the bar was designed as a heavy metal bar and the clientele more or less came because of that, not because of the absinthe. There were occasional tourists, occasional absinthe-enjoyers, but by and large the average customer was, like the bartenders, part of an agreed upon set of styles and codes, drinking beer from the bottle casual at the tables. It was a form of life, one that I clearly did not belong to, the performance and fashion having an assumed, coherent link to inner being and authenticity of person. That's what it felt like, to be there and not be a part, at least. I did not have the metal studs on the clothing or the spiked and shaved haircuts. Some had filed a few teeth into points — this was a way of living I

was not practicing. Eventually I came back in the evening when the dancefloor in the basement was open, "Le Cabaret du néant," "the Nothingness Nightclub," where a table was shaped like a coffin and a single dancer moved slowly to pulsing electro. I tried, ordered a beer, waited for my body to match the music. It didn't happen; I was too inside of myself and outside of the self I would have had to be, all double-thought and conscious.

Cantada II was one of many times in my life where I wanted to know the script so that I might be part of what was happening, in the *in*. I have been, as long as I remember, deeply curious about subcultures and, for just as long, never part of one, something I experienced most recently when I visited anarchist squats, as I recount in Chapter Four. The language, the way of standing and moving and speaking, of being, I could never figure it out, and that, it seems, is an integral, essential part of the problem: there aren't guidelines for how to become a punk, how to become a gamer, how to become, even, a socialist. And if there *were* a guide, the real members would disown it (maybe less so with socialism, though I searched "how to become a socialist" and the blurb Google listed beneath the link to the Vivek Chibber authored *Jacobin* article read: "Dismantling capitalism"). The people who are there already seem to have always been there. Attempts to copy the behaviors and actions come across as cloying, at best, a kind of try-hardism, or fake, at worst, and inauthentic. Like you don't *mean* it.

It's not uncommon to refer to the bundle of performances in a given subculture as the "script." The word made sense to me because I already saw the groups and communities I couldn't seem to enter as operating according to a text I hadn't read, and this was because the one community, the one subculture, I *did* read fluently was so text-centric. Growing up Protestant Christian in the US means doing a lot of reading, and then trying to do the reading. Whatever the story, however vague or pointless or just brutal the reading seemed, the next step

was to try to figure out why it was there, how it was meant to change one's mind, behaviors, and actions. Everything had a depth to it, which is what Moretti was referring to when he called close reading a "theological exercise" (57). He meant it as a critique for how small the canon gets when you close read, but any canon is an extreme diversity when your starting syllabus has only one book. Yes, reading was a theological exercise, for me, then, and also now, but what I mean is everything else was and is also: encountering a given scene of difference was a theological exercise where I wanted time to read and reread and see if I could figure out the script, study it and know it so deeply that when I came back to the scene I'd be natural, no visible seams.

Scripts don't really work like that. As far as I can tell, the performances one is apt to label a "script" aren't actually written out anywhere, and if they are, it's as an ethnographic practice more than as advice or possibility. There are rules in subcultures, and terms, whole languages, but they are fit together haphazard and random— I have enjoyed learning languages because of the objectifying of these off the cuff histories, my friends exasperated as I ask if it's rude to say "I am going to take a beer," as one does in French when ordering, as if I'm looking for the cipher to understand a code that hasn't gotten one. You just keep doing it until you hit on the right series of words, of presentations, and even then you have to do it a bunch of times over before it actually feels like a script. Or so I imagine: Christianity was a culture I grew up in, didn't just *enter*, so its scripts did feel natural in a way. The long Sunday mornings and awkward weekly interactions with people you didn't know. The grape juice swapped for communion wine. The interminable khakis. I didn't know I was remaking myself until later.

And when I knew, in college, well, it was easier to continue this remaking. I had followed a romantic interest to the Anglican Church and learned about the "spiritual disciplines," things you do to *practice* the faith. To literally practice it. I remember one author explained it like

learning how to swing a baseball bat: you position your body exactly like the pro does, you try to copy his exact movements, until you start doing it. This is the opposite of a script, where practicing to be a goth is admitting you aren't one. Here the whole point was practice. There was a whole list of spiritual disciplines, different depending on the author, acts sourced from either Christian history or other faith traditions. Meditation, prayer, fasting... We would do them all, talk about their difficulties, how to do them better.

Things are different now, beliefs and behaviors have changed since then, but that's not the point. The point is that when Moretti calls reading a "theological exercise," I hear something more than reading so close that the text becomes holy. I hear an exercise that is exercising something, intimately connected to the body that will rise out of the chair and walk away from the desk and leave the book behind to do the rest of its living. I hear recipes and directions and scores. Reading that, even if hidden, has something in it that is instructive for what you might do, what you literally might do. Reading that invites, also, because there is no script that says you must be like this to read. I know that sounds wrong, like texts always establish audiences along some exclusionary principle or another, but the global diffusion of scriptural texts — texts that often even *feature* exclusion in their marrow — suggests otherwise. As if reading is more powerful than text.

Also in college I read one of my professor's books, *A Poet's Guide to Poetry*. Despite rhetorics of inspiration so many poets never seemed to have issue with the boring fact of practice, that you've got to end up doing it, and that by doing it you learn it also. From Ezra Pound's *ABC of Reading* to James Longenbach's *The Art of the Poetic Line*, as a poetry student I was assigned them all. They were books that took apart these objects coherent like stones, that didn't at first seem to be able to be taken apart in a meaningful way: you split a stone and you've

got two stones, now what? But what seemed a script was a score, I still remember lines, and when I write still hear the advice and even the hard rules: *You get only one exclamation point in your life*, said one professor, *so be careful when you use it.* I didn't follow that one, as much as I enjoy recalling it.

The last time I was in the city Cantada II was closed, for good it seemed. It was a loss and I wondered where everyone would go now. An enviable aspect of subcultures is their informal networks — another heavy metal bar, another corner table with friends, another dancehall of nothingness. I won't know where, but Cantada II was never my place anyway and the next one won't be either. That's not a bad thing. Not everything can be scored, not everything should be. Some things can be.

Chapter Two

Sincerely Anyone: The Impersonal Aesthetics and Psychopolitics of Self-Immolation

There is no suicide in our time/unrelated to history – Denise Levertov (188)

Afterlives and Additions

In Autumn 2019, a university student in Lyon, France (his name given only as Anas K) set himself on fire to protest cuts to university spending in France, writing, "I accuse Macron, Hollande, Sarkozy, and the EU for having killed me by creating uncertainty for the future of everyone."[1] Students across France mobilized, demonstrating on campus and occupying the higher education ministry building in Paris where they wrote, "Précarité tue," "Precarity kills," seeing immediately and implicitly in Anas K's suicide their own financial struggles. As an act of political suicide, this was neither new nor rare: since its initiating event in 1963 by the Buddhist monk Thích Quảng Đức, self-immolation has occurred with some regularity all over the world, some more mediatized than others.[2] Only a couple months before Anas K's protest, for example, the Blue Girl, an Iranian woman named Sahar Khodayari, self-immolated in front of a courthouse in Tehran to protest a possible prison sentence for dressing as a man to sneak into a soccer match. The Blue Girl's act, hospitalization, and death were spread widely on social media, and despite government attempts to downplay the incident, such as by warning her family not to speak, international support for female soccer fans led to women being admitted to a match in Tehran, the first after 40 years (Evans). And before that, at the end of the spring, I read

[1] As found in a report entitled "La precarité tue !" on *decidons.paris*: The letter was originally posted on Facebook before the student's account was deleted.

[2] Michael Biggs gives a good summary of the frequency of self-immolation in his 2005 essay "Dying Without Killing: Self-Immolations, 1963– 2002," though his numbers do not take into account "domestic" self-killings, such as by women across the Persian Belt (see forthcoming work by Sara Hassani, whose dissertation is titled, "Cloistered Infernos: The Politics of Self-Immolation in the Persian Belt").

remembrances that had popped up across the internet of David Buckel, an American lawyer and climate activist who had self-immolated in Prospect Park in April of 2018. His protest was largely seen as impotent (Englander), as representative of how little such acts influence Western audiences in democratic nations, yet here were new articles, poignantly describing Buckel's life and death, a year later, and while no great demonstration has been set off, no push toward new legislation or regulation because of it, I could not help but wonder if the afterlife of his act, or indeed of Sahar Khodayari's and Anas K's, was not finished.

This question, this possible openness to what self-immolation might still become, what might still happen, comes from the strange formal relationship political suicide has to its message and to its observers.[3] The immolator no longer speaks after their death: the act is, as Karen Andriolo writes, "flamboyantly visible, but it disables the performer from protecting the integrity of his message and from influencing its dissemination" (103). For commentators like Andriolo, this is a problem; in his *Politics and Suicide*, Nicholas Michelsen similarly notes that "the self-immolator can take on the role of facilitator of revolutionary spontaneity and proliferation through the production of iconic violence, but in abandoning any attempt to control the message, they inevitably have unexpected or even contrary communicative effects" (63). These anxieties speak to an unmet desire for the actor to be the ground for their message, their intention as something that can continually be restated, emphasized, revised, and the observers as passive receivers of a clearly stated claim. When the actor is no longer present, however, the untethered message becomes dangerously mobile, the observers radically freed.

[3] Throughout this article I use "self-immolation" and "political suicide" interchangeably, even if self-immolation has two associations that could be misleading. The first is the etymology of the term, which is from *immolare*, meaning "to sacrifice:" "sacrifice" encourages a religious reading, which I do not undertake here. The second association is with "self-burning," which is the most common form of political suicide, but not the only one. Neither term – self-immolation or political suicide – is perfect, as the latter is used primarily as a metaphor for acts damaging to one's political success or support ("Aligning himself with that group is political suicide"), and so toggling between them is a way of gesturing past their associations. Both, along with "protest suicide," can be found in sociological research.

In other words, political suicide is simultaneously creation and negation; it produces meaning but retains no authority over this meaning, these meanings. It crafts an inherently, explicitly interpretative space that those surrounding the death must negotiate, both with and without the individual who committed the act: look, for instance, at Mohamad Bouazizi's self-immolation credited with commencing the Arab Spring. The context surrounding his self-killing is famously ambiguous – a combination of poverty, government overreach, frustration, and humiliation – that ended with a dramatic, powerful, yet voiceless act, no note left behind, no express goal communicated. Observers, immediate and otherwise, found a link to this frustration that seemed open enough to bind, for a moment, a society across class and gender differences, just as it did across North Africa and the Middle East. How might self-immolation, as a political and aesthetic form, be understood here? How can we describe this spectacular presence, that becomes absence, that becomes communal?

I suggest that reading self-immolation as a stark, concrete, and very mortal enactment of aesthetic impersonality can help explain this movement from anyone, to no one, to many. Self-immolation is an extreme, radical bid for a communal kind of belonging: at once it contains a frustration of nonbelonging and a hope for other belonging in ways that deconstruct national identity and, potentially, reconstruct it along non-majority/minority lines. By looking to impersonal aesthetics, explored through a text by French poet Danielle Collobert, I argue for the salience of a political identity that is founded not on the self, but on the other. Collobert's 1964 *Meurtre* is an idiosyncratic work by a complicatedly political and artistic individual who does not figure in the standard canons of French literature, but who received consistent praise from figures like Raymond Queneau, Jean Pierre Faye, Jean Daive, and others. Though Collobert's own suicide in 1978 seems to overdetermine her work (in this way like Sarah Kane and Sylvia

Plath),[4] I am intentionally reading her work as representative of a view of art and suicide that resists biography by rerouting the subject through tactics of impersonality, tactics such as what Michel Serres refers to as a "passing" of subjectivity, or what Simone Weil calls "decreation." This is best seen in Roland Barthes, not only through the metaphorical resonance of the death of the Author — "an activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases – reason, science, law" (147) — but also in the comparatively less acknowledged author's return.

As Barthes notoriously replaces the Author with the reader, since "a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination" (148), the result is a deference of sorts, more clearly seen in aesthetics but operative for how political suicide is read and understood – not least of which is the meaning of the word "political." Michelsen's explanation of self-immolation seems to draft off Barthes, as he writes how "the actor's hopes and expectations immediately become inaccessible, evacuated by the event itself" (10). If the intentions of the immolator take backseat to the interpretations of the observers, what differentiates political suicide from non-political suicide? And if all suicide depends upon the observers and audience for its meaning, what does this mean about the identity of these observers? Who are they, what is their relation to a given act of political suicide? What, in other words, does it mean for suicide to be a text?

While acknowledging the vastly different registers combined in this last question – and in this essay – I mean it literally: both the act of self-immolation and contemporary theories in suicidology foreground the textual, ambivalent, open character of self-killing. In doing so, this difficult to apprehend act becomes a site for negotiating political identity – even, I suggest,

[4] Collobert joined the FLN to oppose French aggression in Algeria when she was 21 and who, because of this, fled France to Italy for a while, where she wrote *Meurtre*. She committed suicide a little more than a decade later in 1978 (Renouprez 175).

crafting a decolonized, nonnational political identity that implicates the self in diverse and shifting concerns of justice. How artists like Collobert position the author/creator and the reader is useful here, supporting the formal movement I am claiming self-immolation already does, and nonpolitical suicide *can do*, from psychocentric (the individual) to empty (the anyone) to psychopolitical (the many). Similar to Giorgio Agamben's theorization of the "whatever" in *The Coming Community*,[5] I suggest that our (any group of observers') relation to a given suicide becomes a part of our political identity, one that simultaneously holds us responsible *for* and responsible *to*. That is, by understanding political suicide as a foundational act of nonnational belonging – and by reading all other suicide as therefore a subset of political suicide, able to be historized and contextualized in the same manners and directing similarly our attention to justice instead of only diagnosis or treatment – I suggest that it can inform a postcolonial conception of Other-centered identity. Self-immolation, after all, is a tactic almost exclusively performed by oppressed and underrepresented populations.[6] By centering the praxis and knowledge of self-immolators and their communities, I am asking how their necropolitics can inform a reframing of political identity, using absence and negation to craft fullness and belonging (Richards 140). As an act that so often gestures toward the margins, suicide becomes a way to continually revise one's political identity, an addition of who must now belong for every life that took itself away.

The Space of Death

[5] Agamben describes the "politics of whatever singularity" as "a being whose community is mediated not by any condition of belonging…nor by the simple absence of conditions…but by belonging itself" (84-5). My thanks to Sianne Ngai for the connection.

[6] Perhaps most curious in the 20th Century history of self-immolation, however, is a tremendous wave of 200+ suicides in India in 1990 protesting the government's plans to hold places in universities and governments jobs for those from lower castes. These immolations occurred over six weeks and the immolators all came from privileged castes. The numbers are anomalous on their own in the history of self-immolations, but that the suicides came from populations with more ostensible power makes this wave of protest difficult to analyze (Biggs 2005: 182).

Something new was invented on June 11, 1963, when the Buddhist monk Thích Quảng Đức sat in a Saigon intersection and, doused in petrol, lit a match and burned himself to death. Individuals had set themselves on fire before, and individuals had killed themselves to protest political oppression before, but no instance of protest suicide had as reverberating and world changing effects as his.[7] Often misremembered as a protest against the Vietnam War, Đức's self-immolation was in fact aimed against the US-backed President of Vietnam: as a Catholic in a majority Buddhist country, President Diêm and his similarly Catholic administration had crafted and implemented policy favoring Catholics and discriminating against Buddhists – a month prior to the event, for example, police had killed several Buddhist demonstrators (Biggs 2005: 173). This history, including the support and planning from the monastery, the role of international media, and Đức's written explanation for his suicide, is important for understanding the factors that made his death so shocking, globally known, and effective. It is a history that has been recounted elsewhere,[8] but its unexpected aftermath is what has cemented Đức's suicide as one of the most influential acts of the 20th Century, one that has fundamentally altered the range of relationships between the individual and the institution. Narratively, I want to describe two versions of this aftermath that mirror or oppose each other in important ways: the first version, which I suggest is our received history self-immolation, sees the act as spectacular, infrequent, and heroic, while the second, a realer and more detailed history, understands its nature as strangely common, often communal, and self-abnegating.

This first version is easy enough. We know names like Thích Quảng Đức and Mohamad Bouazizi. We know the photo of the burning monk, replicated in every Vietnam War

[7] Self-burning occurred for religious reasons throughout Buddhism (Benn 2007), and Barbagli cites findings of over 20,000 suicides by fire from 1684-1691 among Old Believers in Russia (21).
[8] For one, the photographer who took the famous picture of the immolation, Malcolm Browne, offers a narrative account in his 1993 memoir *Muddy Boots and Red Socks*.

documentary and throughout pop culture, appearing even as the cover of Rage Against the Machine's self-titled 1992 debut album. We know the Arab Spring. We may even know Jan Palach and Norman Morrison. Maybe Jeon Tae-il. These instances of political suicide – these self-burnings, these men – seemed to have *done* things, after all. Đức's suicide led to the downfall of the Diệm regime and concentrated political attention on the Vietnamese people across the world, reaching even the desk of President Kennedy. Morrison's death, which at the time was argued to be powerless and overdramatic, was heralded in Vietnam, and, much later, accounts have suggested that Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, below whose office Morrison ignited himself, was so greatly affected by the death that his beliefs about the war, and even his actions, began to shift (Patler 20). Entire governments fell and nations descended into rebellion and war from the protests spurred by Bouazizi's self-immolation; Palach is still considered one of the primary motivations for the revolution in Czechoslovakia that occurred 20 years after his death; Jeon Tae-il's suicide in protest of labor conditions in South Korea "is widely regarded as the defining moment in the history of the labor movement in South Korea" (Cho 27), and is still today a popular reference point for Korean protests.

These acts have shifted communities, nations, and the world. But they have also become part of a tendency that locates influence and historical change within the Great Person who is read about in stunned awe as a strange, otherworldly, saintly figure. Admittedly, this strangeness and saintliness is part of what drew me to self-immolators in the first place – how could someone *do* that? How could they believe so much, care so much for an issue, an idea, so much as to give up one's life, and in such a painful way? How did Thích Quảng Đức remain so still? The act of dying becomes the fact of a dead person, the individual human eclipsing the social act and this biographical fascination casting a light backwards from the immolation to interpret a whole life

through a single event (just as do so many biographies of artists who killed themselves, for that matter). In this way, the self-immolator's internal state and psychology become distractingly important, and their reason and motivation (that is, an observer's reading of their reason or motivation) over-determinative.

At the same time, since self-immolations place their practitioners on an extraordinary plane outside the register of everyday humanity, observers can be tempted to read these actors in more pejorative terms: political suicides are frequently considered the results of an extremist or naive religious devotion or of mental illness.[9] Even while writing, I read a *NY Post* description of a man who poured accelerant on himself outside of the World Trade Center site before being apprehended as "in the throes of mental crisis" (McCarthy), and some of the first commentators on Đức's self-immolation attempted to place it within a purely religious context, suggesting that the immolator was an old, feeble-minded man pressured into the decision by powerful religious elites. To this end, a writer in 1967 put forward, "In Vietnam … there *is* reason to believe that the self-immolators performed their acts as historically sanctioned religious devotions, while a cynical and politically motivated church leadership has represented them as deeply felt political protests" (Fraser 28).[10] Such denouncements not only have supported the way that authoritarian regimes codify political suicides – in the Soviet Union, where survivors of immolations were held in psychiatric institutions, there were reports of government pressure on family members to admit mental instability (200) – but also do not hold up to sociological research. In "Dying Without Killing," sociologist Michael Biggs' data-driven account of self-immolations between

[9] Hovering outside this paper is also the figure of the suicide bomber. While often studied together – see, for example, K.M. Fierke's 2013 *Political Self-Sacrifice*, or Banu Bargu's 2014 *To Starve and Immolate* – I am drawn here to the act of self-killing that does not seek, and actively seeks against, the death of others to communicate.

[10] Angus Fraser's evidence comes exclusively from Chinese Buddhist scriptures, and a tradition that *does*, in its deeper history, feature religious self-immolation, as James A Benn, specialist in medieval Chinese religion, accounts for in his 1998 article, "Self-immolation, Resistance and Millenarianism in Medieval Chinese Buddhism."

1963-2002, these common critiques are noted before being dispelled: Biggs found that "the promise of supernatural rewards was not a significant motivation" in self-immolations, and, about mental illness, "we must conclude that suicidal tendencies almost never lead to self-immolation. I would go further and suggest that self-immolation is rarely explained by suicidal tendencies" (199-201). In other words, whether as praise or criticism, an account of self-immolation can quickly and easily slip into an account of the individual self-immolating – as if as eulogy, or diagnosis, or explanation.

By lionizing immolators or by dismissing them, we miss the opportunity to return political suicides to their contexts, to view them in their immediate and situational specificity as actions that house the concerns of an interpellated community and signify the violence of an identified oppressor. Many who study self-immolation stipulate some version of what Swaleha Sindhi and Adfer Rashad Shah write about Tibetan self-immolations: "What makes a death by self-immolation politically consequential is its capacity to become the focus of a community's social life. Self-immolation is 'successful' in this sense when it is not anymore about the one who performs it, but about the community in the midst of which it occurs and which suddenly recognizes itself in the predicament of the self-immolator" (Sindhi 46). As such, eschewing an individualist framework of self-immolation leaves room to note its substitutional and repetitive character.

A different narrative emerges from this perspective of self-immolation as an act that gives way to a community, one that can track the adoption and diffusion of a practice across many instances and countries. In the weeks following Đức's suicide, other individuals explicitly copied him, to the extent that the famously outspoken wife of President Diệm, Trần Lệ Xuân

(known as Madame Nhu), derisively condemned the "barbecuing" of Buddhist leaders.[11] By November, when a US supported coup overthrew President Diệm and his administration who had lost all support within Vietnam, four monks and a nun had burned themselves to death while a popular Vietnamese poet killed himself by taking poison, leaving behind a note that said, in part, "Like the high priest Thích Quảng Đức, I also kill myself as a warning to those people who are trampling on all freedoms" (Halberstam). From the South Vietnam context, self-immolation as political protest spread rapidly across the globe, becoming international almost immediately through its occurrence in Sri Lanka during a hunger strike by nurse aides: "Vidanage Vinitha jumped to her death from the building which housed the Ministry of Health. Although she did not adopt the signature method of burning, her inspiration was clear. 'Thousands weep over the fate of a Buddhist monk in South Vietnam', she wrote, 'but nobody cares about 400 Singhalese girls in our own land'" (Biggs 2005: 180).

So, in the first years after Đức's self-immolation, the practice included both secular and religious figures, men and women,[12] different nations, and different methods of suicide, from self-burning to poison to jumping to death. This leads Biggs to write, "As a result of [Đức's] act, within a few years self-immolation entered the global 'repertoire' of protest" (180). Self-immolation joins practices ranging from hunger strikes and sabotage to self-mutilation, graffiti, and hacking to compose a set of tactics that Banu Bargu claims "has come to mark a certain current of radical politics around the globe" (804). Alongside its radical, illegitimate character, self-immolation is a shareable and portable tactic: it is *not* an extraordinary act performed by extraordinary people (the result of explaining the act via the actor), but rather an extraordinary

[11] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_PWM9gWR5E

[12] In fact, one of the crucial details occluded by the Great Men narrative of political suicide is that women, globally, make up a clear majority of cases (see, for instance, Aghakhani et al 2).

act performed by ordinary people, people so ordinary, in fact, that they might be anyone, even (and especially) those who are often overlooked, sidelined, or uncounted.

Alongside the absolute democracy of who immolates – a Vietnamese monk, an American Quaker, a Czech student, a South Korean worker, an Afghani wife – political suicide is remarkable for its counterintuitive authorship. Though the act is both powerful and open to anyone no matter one's class, occupation, nation, race, or gender, the self-immolator immediately gives up all power over their political message. In a dramatic reversal, the high degree of agency and intentionality involved in killing oneself for political protest transforms into a nearly absolute absence of control over the message itself.[13] Whereas a hunger striker, for example, endures alongside the act of denying food, and thus retains interpretive mastery over their message, the self-immolator foregrounds the act of death itself. The message – from a specific plea to government officials, like Norman Morrison, to an emotional response to foreclosed futures, like Mohamed Bouazizi – is united, even overwhelmed, by the suicide so much so that the event becomes ambiguous and open to interpretation. As I quoted in the introduction, this is precisely the anxiety for many commentators: and yet, the closeness of the message to the act is such that it inheres within the act in a dramatically more powerful way than it would for hunger strikes. Though a hunger strike can act as a bargaining tool,[14] the decision to simply kill oneself for a message (without a prior threat) "is as strong a signal of the strength of belief as one can get" (Gambetta qtd in Biggs 2013).

[13] This is further complicated by the suicide note. I have mentioned already Vidanage Vinitha's note above; both Thích Quảng Đức and Jan Palach left notes as well. However, not only do many immolators die without notes, but also the note itself becomes opened to new readings and interpretations.

[14] "[The hunger striker can use death] to bargain with their adversary. Suicide protest, by contrast, is unconditional: no bargaining involved" (Biggs 2013: 408).

Together, these three elements of political suicide – its democracy, its portability, and its refusal – offer a compelling vision of political identity, one that is mobile, revisable, and empathetic across difference, one that centers itself around the message of death. As Michelsen puts it, "Immolations are not defined via intentionality, as illusory personal outputs of theological or ideological fantasy or fanatical over-identification with their social context; they acquire their reality with relation to the social facts which are instituted as a result" (Michelsen 60). The intentional actor – and of course, to carry out a self-immolation a Self must choose to Immolate, indicating a high degree of intentionality, especially as many cases suggest a good deal of previous planning rather than spontaneous death[15] – hollows out their intentional subjectivity via death, leaving an empty space from which and to which are drawn the lines of social facts, of *social* facts, of facts many other individuals might similarly, do similarly, experience. Whatever imagined communities hover and harrow to form the Self in the everyday are weightless next to the ties created between self-immolator and the observer, ties that pull the observer into the space of death, make that real death also their possible death. In her long 1970 anti-Vietnam War poem "Staying Alive," Denise Levertov describes self-immolation as "a vacuum/where there used to be this monk or that,/ Norman Morrison, Alice Hertz" (135). Considering self-immolation as crafting vacuum, an empty space left by someone who was a monk, or a Quaker, or a peace activist, is to acknowledge that there is suddenly a space left within a larger space, a tear in the "fabric of communal life" (Ziółkowski 7). This final phrase is from Polish academic Grzegorz Ziółkowski, who writes that self-immolation can overflow the

[15] See, for example, the intense and communal planning that went into Thích Quảng Đức's inaugural self-immolation. Harding describes briefly the "group action" involved in this act, where Đức's fellow monks formed a circle around Đức to prevent intervention (37). Biggs adds additional detail: "A detachment of monks and nuns prevented fire engines from reaching the scene by lying under their wheels. The performance was designed for maximum publicity, with journalists being alerted beforehand" (2005: 180).

individual to "augment the community's collective consciousness and harness the radicalism of the act to unravel the fabric of communal life." This vacuum is the space where others, now connected to the self-immolator as half-participants, half-witnesses to the suicide, enter, leaving behind the continuity of their former life. Self-immolation redirects attention to a larger community the vacuum appears within and becomes no longer even an act but a place that *can be* inhabited.

Se Fait Tuer

Self-immolation is a necessarily interpretative act: when the emphasis of this interpretation is on the act instead of the actor, an analysis of self-immolation must deal with the social facts that make suicide possible. Reading self-immolation this way is to read it in accordance with Denise Levertov's couplet (and this chapter's epigraph) from "Staying Alive": "There is no suicide in our time/unrelated to history." Self-immolation, the simultaneous disappearance of the messenger and appearance of a message, becomes a historical site, one that not only pulls in the contexts of power, in/justice, and oppression, but also one that can be imaginatively (or empathetically) entered by an observer. It is the immediate creation of a possible community – one that may be chosen more consciously than our imaginative communities of nationality or race or other political identities.

Before drawing out further the implications self-immolation can have for political identity, I want to look at a more purely and specifically aesthetic tactic that similarly combines disavowal and creation, death and message. Namely, this tactic is the use of impersonal style that becomes popular in post-WWII France and is typified by Barthes' essay, "The Death of the Author." But just as with self-immolation, there are two ways to think of authorial negation –

one of which even sees the author return. And just as with self-immolation, the second way will help us understand the political purchase of impersonality, which I will show by reading a prose poem from Danielle Collobert.

Meurtre, Collobert's second collection (though she destroyed early editions of her first, the self-published 1961 *Chants des guerres*), anticipates Barthes' reversal of the Author and reader throughout the work through the strange, uneasy voice of its narrator(s). The individual texts waver between prose-poem and short story and range from three paragraphs to about 5 pages in length, most featuring a first-person narrator. In *Meurtre*'s final prose-poem the narrator reaches a thesis of sorts:

> One doesn't simply die alone, **one is killed**, by routine, by impossibility, following their inspiration. If I have always spoken of murder, sometimes semi-camouflaged, it is because of this, this way of killing. (110, emphasis mine)

To a question that *Meurtre* leaves formally open – is the narrator the same through each section/story/prose poem?[16] – this admission suggests a soft yes, and, moreover, a meaning attached to this possibly unified narration. That is, the poems have been about murder, a kind of murder, a murder not by others but by "routine" and "impossibility," by the habits of the self that endures and lives, which is in this way murder of the self committed by the self. This casts suicide as a hidden, yet plausible, term beneath murder: the overtly passive "se fait tuer," or "to be killed," makes visible the reflexive "se tuer," eliding the "faire" to form "one kills oneself" via routine and impossibility. The title of *Meurtre* becomes an act of outward violence that is

[16] One Collobert reader suggests, "The reader remains uncertain of the nature and meaning of the events evoked, as no stable first-person narrator controls the unfolding of these events" (Stout 301), but this is far from decided.

either directed from the outside *onto* the self or that derives from the self and boomerangs back. Self-Murder, the Murder of Self, this "façon de tuer" where the self that dies is killed by an other that vacillates between actual other or mirrored self.

Even if one rejects the shadow-suicide I am suggesting, the passivity of the phrase is evident, especially in its splitting of a unified self – the one that dies is the one that carries out a routine, for example – into component parts. Through the "impersonal, fragmentary, and disturbing vignettes" (Stout 301) of *Meurtre* the narrator consistently dislocates the self in this way, challenging the arenas of agency, control, and authority a self has and dissolving the borders of the body into its contexts. The first poem, for example, is about an "internal eye," and many of the poems deal with the strangeness and alienation of the body from itself. By looking more intently at a representative poem in the work – which itself offers a parable for the Death of the Author – I want to show how Collobert's bodily impersonal form spurs a non-mortal enactment of diminished self and substitutional body.

This three-paragraph text recounts the narrator sitting on the street, rolling a bit of clay between their fingers, shaping and reshaping it before destroying the shape – it is, in effect, the story of a sculptor. The story is recounted in present tense in a simple style whose simplicity belies an undercurrent of strangeness, of something not quite right. The tone is matter-of-fact and the events are held in an almost bound time, as if they have always been happening and always will – an impossibility the narration admits in an anxiety of this time ending. In these ways, the piece is representative of the collection: a strong, first-person voice that despite the strength of this voice offers no concomitant character and appears almost transparent, insubstantial, and a story that is told meditatively, alternating between thought and the mundanely physical.

The first paragraph is short enough to quote in full, typifying this voice and the direct, matter-of-fact tone that carries through the collection:

> It is a putty, rather crumbly, rather soft. I roll it, I lengthen it between my palms, I make it slide between my fingers. I do not want to give it a more definitive appearance, to stop myself at some stage of its transformation, so I continue this shaping unflaggingly. (30)

How to describe this elusive style? It is in some ways both basic and focused. Though Collobert's neutrality never links to a greater subjectivity or a psychologically rounded character, her touch is light and the action mobile, the *I* is featured, and the objectivity of the description remains human. Her style, representative in this way of Barthes' "colourless writing," a "transparent form of speech [that] achieves a style of absence which is almost an ideal absence of style" (Barthes 1981: 76-7), achieves a kind of physicality: the simple sentences can be mimicked while read, the hands almost tempted to move.

By the second paragraph of the prose-poem, it has become winter and the clay is cold and the narrator has "a little hope for the third form. Thus it will not be quite like the others." The sculptor fears creating an already made shape and their hope is that the recalcitrant clay and deadened hands might craft a new form (as if despite the sculptor's internal designs and intentions): "My hands, also, are cold, they are becoming heavy." The lack of a full character here lets the reader replace, in a way, the writer. At the same time, the narrator evinces an anxiety about ceasing their relentless shaping: arresting the clay in a form is also to give up the ability to revise, rethink, make right, and perfect – especially now, as the clay grows colder,

harder, and more difficult to shape. Time, which formerly had been open (despite the two sculpted shapes that momentarily – but not eternally – paused the narrator's modeling), is coming to a close, where it would transform the sculptor's activity from fallible shaping and reshaping into interpretive history. In other words, the pure potential of the draft will, eventually, become the closed object, cut off from further authorial control and left to the audience. (30-31)

This transformation is made clear in the final paragraph, which begins with an increased threat of the looming closure of time: the narrator describes a sharp pain in the right hand, a growing exhaustion with their modeling work. The final shape is imminent. Imagining throwing the putty away in this exhaustion, the narrator acknowledges that this act would be indistinguishable from finishing the shape, how "everyone would rush to the shape, thus irredeemably completed." Two of the observers might, so the narrator imagines, place the clay "on a pedestal in the island's square." Two others might desire to crush it beneath their feet. As for the rest, the narrator has no idea what reaction they will have to the clay, though "anyway, maybe it is not of great importance: (30-31).

If read as a parable for the Death of the Author, this poem presents the anxiety of giving up one's control over the object of creation, even while the actual act of making aligns with post-WWII tactics of impersonality. By this I mean that the sculptor does not plan the final shape of the object, but rather makes and makes and seems to expect the shape as a result of the process (it is linked in this way to the procedural methods of John Cage, Jackson Mac Low, Oulipo writers, and minimalist artists like Sol LeWitt and Carl Andre[17]). Collobert preempts Barthes by staging artist-death as occurring coterminously with production. In the titular essay, Barthes posits, "Writing is the destruction of every voice, of every origin": more apparent in the gerund

[17] Hal Foster, for example, notes the link between the Death of the Author and 1960s Minimalism in *The Return of the Real* (50).

of the English translation, the destruction of voice and origin is an activity, the underside of writing (/making) itself (Barthes 1984: 61). Or again: "Writing ceaselessly posits meaning in order to evaporate it" (66). By staking negation to the process of writing, this sense of authorial death can sneak the author back in: as long as the sculptor continues shaping and reshaping the putty, as long as they indefinitely extend *creating* to postpone *creation*, the narrator remains a subject to gaze upon and wonder about. Critics have not been slow to notice this – as Loren Glass notes in *Authors Inc*, the theorists who first promoted these ideas "have become famous authors precisely by announcing the death of the author" (5).[18] In practicing self-negation, according to this criticism, one ends up in the same cul-de-sac of the privileged individual that occurs in biographical interpretations of self-immolation and psychological interpretations of suicide.

Collobert's sculptor moves past this anxiety of control – the uncertainty of what the final shape will be that prevents them from finishing, keeping them "shaping [the dough] unflaggingly" – in the final line, noting that no matter what reaction the audience has, "maybe it is not of great importance." But though the content of the text only reaches that acknowledgment of the reader's eventual authority over the dough's meaning – to praise it, to destroy it, to ignore it, able to "find his desire in a text even when the author hadn't put it there" (Johnson 151) – Collobert's impersonal style is strangely invitational throughout the text. I say "strangely" because emotional responses like empathy and connection seem better tuned to more traditional forms of literary character building. But it is precisely her impersonality that accomplishes a substitutional sense of empathy. For one, the emphasis on the body and on movement, while

[18] Similarly, in his 1992 *Death and Return*, which analyses Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida on the question of the author, Seàn Burke writes, "The principle of the author most powerfully reasserts itself when it is thought absent" and "the concept of the author is never more alive than when thought dead" (qtd Wilson 348).

never distinguishing the body by any representational aspects or details, makes it possible to relate more strongly than a reader might on seeing the same actions performed by a rounded character. A lack of specificity and personality is also a space wherein the reader may insert their own. Similarly, Collobert features a subject with a *partial* psychology. The motivations and grounds for feeling may be ambiguous, ambivalent, or absent, but there are still statements of desire, like, "I do not want to give it a more definitive appearance." These desires float; they are unattached to a historical subject that would make them cohere; they enact a self that is being withdrawn so that another self (the reader's) might take its place.

Collobert's style cracks open the neutrality of impersonality, making it "an astonishing constructer of intersubjectivity" (Serres 227). I borrow this phrase from Michel Serres' *Le Parasite*, where Serres defines the "quasi-object" as an object that marks subjectivity and thus is neither purely subject nor object. It makes a subject appear, draws it in. Metaphorized as a ball in a game like soccer, the quasi-object conjures a subject that disappears when "passed," withdrawing subjectivity in the act of passing and bestowing it on the receiver: "the ball is the subject of circulation; the players are only stations and relays" (226). Just as in self-immolation a subject is formed, then subjectivity is passed to the observers willing to receive the message of this substitutional death, the "quasi-object" marks Collobert's impersonal subject and helps define Collobert's style as not exclusively impersonal but as shimmering between the impersonal and personal, wherein an invocation and establishment of a community – real or possible – requires a subject made and then undone, made and undone, again and again. "The 'we' is made by the bursts and occultations of the 'I.' The 'we' is made by passing the 'I.' By exchanging the 'I'" (226). The quasi-impersonal. We come into it, just as the narrator departs. It is the opening

of a space of real and empathic imagining whereby even our physical presences may become affected. Impersonal style digs out a space of exchange.

The Return of Anyone

Thought I have been using self-immolation and impersonal aesthetics to sketch out the empty space of an absent or withdrawn subject, absence is not synonymous, not fully anyway, with death. Death is an absence of life, but not an absence of everything: the body remains. As Cho writes, "Self-immolations are not bizarre or exotic aberrations of paying the entrance fee to the public realm. … Self-immolation teaches us the meaning of embodiment in the public realm, that human action is sited in a concrete material body" (Cho 36). It is this material body – a subject become object, a speaker become message – that makes possible the imaginative substitution an observer undergoes and the community that may be formed in the wake, where "the self-sacrifice of the individual body becomes an expression of the loss of collective sovereignty which materializes the injustice experienced by the community and thereby creates the conditions for its restoration" (Fierke 79). An observer becomes a community of observers, tied through a group identification with the material body at the center of the immolation.

Remarkably, Barthes also notes the importance of the material body. Though the first essay is his most popular and referenced theorization of the author, Barthes routinely ponders the role and personage of the author, twisting and complicating the original essay. One of the most startling aspects of his complexity arrives in the preface to the comparatively lightly read 1971 *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*.[19] Here, Barthes refers to "the friendly return of the author" (1971: 13), an author now lowercase. No longer simply an antithesis to the reader, this returned author (zombie

[19] Jane Gallop's 2011 *The Deaths of the Author*, a book that reads theories of authorial negation next to real deaths of authors, brought this preface to my attention.

author? resurrected author?) plays a productive, role in the text, one that is useful for setting up how the body as a message aligns with contemporary theories in critical suicidology that in turn can sketch the possibility of a political identity centered on the other's self-killing. Instead of struggling for power, Barthes' returned author is one we can "live with," precisely because it is no longer a coherent subject but now open, disparate, in pieces. That is, we are not meant to discover and follow the author's advice ("the program traced in his books"), but rather to "make fragments of intelligibility of the admired text enter our daily life" (12-13). As the returned author's text "transmigrates" into our daily life, it makes a "social intervention" and carries a "social responsibility" (15-16).

The returned author can do all of these things because they return not as a unified, singular subject, not as a "civic, moral" person, but only as a body, "un corps" (13). Though "cadavre" is more common in French for a dead body, it is nearly impossible as a native English speaker to not see "corpse" here. This is still a possibility for the translation, but more importantly it is a clear intention in the text: this body is a subject now *dispersed*, an act Barthes describes as "a little like the ashes thrown into the wind after death" (14). The Author dies in the text that gives itself over to the Reader who, in reading, discovers the returned author, the body, the dispersed subject, reduced to fragments, details, scraps that are remembered, that become part of the Reader's own linguistic composition and perspective, the Reader's own life. Isn't this what happens, a kind of reduction of the subject after death? Now we have fragments – memories or things left behind – but not the wholeness of the life. And these fragments can enter into us: when he talks of the text scattering out and joining our own textual lives, Barthes uses the verb "essaimer," literally meaning "to swarm," as bees. The text leaves one point, scatters out, and some of it joins me, combining with what I already am, becoming a part of my

own swarm. No longer a unified subject, the author is the components of one, floating off and able to be reattached to me, to you.

This process – where death becomes a reduction of dispersed, variable details to one or a few that can be incorporated into the reader – is an abstraction of what I think occurs when a community adopts a self-immolation as their own. The self-immolator's biography becomes reduced, their personhood dispersed, for a field of present social facts. Observers can find themselves in these social facts and, like the reader in *Meurtre*, discover a communion with the self-immolator, one made easier by the immolator's absent power and present body. Aligning, changing, even denying the intentions of the immolator, the observer makes a connection, imagines in the immolation their own biography, now also reduced to the relevant social facts ("passes the I" in Serres' terms). The psychology of the immolator is almost completely unnecessary: all that matters is the frustration or despair, and these only insofar as they target a political, that is, social, that is, shared, reality. *This despair*, of Sahar Khodayari, of Anas K, of David Buckel, of gender inequality and oppression, of austerity, of global warming, is offered out to us, and we say yes, we too have this despair, or no, or we shrug – a concern, not a despair – and so determine our relation to the invisible (until it marches), imaginative (until it revolts) community of those attached.

In *Neither Settler Nor Native*, Mahmood Mamdani argues that the nation and national identity must be replaced by the state and political identity, as the former instantiates and requires permanent majority and minority status, whereas the latter seeks to apply the law equally to all members (17,7). For Mamdani, the nation is a direct consequence of colonization, as colonizing forces sought to retain tribal and minority differences that in turn elided native majority power by directing benefits and services along tribal lines and to favored leaders

– otherwise known as indirect rule (3).[20] To reorient the demos toward the "mere state" and a shared *political* identity – an identity that unites across differences and "means that diversity is no longer politicized" – Mamdani analyzes how nation-building violence is treated (330). Traditionally, this violence – one of Mamdani's case studies is the Nuremberg trials – has been considered criminal: it is done by individuals who must be persecuted, and by individualizing it, such violence "is framed as irrational, antisocial, or pathological, its political content is ignored—its role in building and contesting boundaries of political membership goes unseen" (331). I think the analog here is stirring, as Mamdani accuses criminal interpretations of violence along the same lines that I am critiquing psychocentric models of self-immolation and that critical suicidology critiques its own history. By viewing violence – of others, of the self – as aberrational, the status quo is upheld ("We would never commit such an act," say the citizens of nations where such acts have been committed) and forums of doubt, uncertainty, and self-critique are made unnecessary.

For Mamdani, the political model of violence "acknowledges that, far from a transgression of the normal state of things, violence is itself normal. It is not excess; it is one of the ways in which politics is done" (332). Violence must be understood as operative within a state, the tool so many members of a state use to contest their belonging. Partha Chatterjee refers to these members as the "political society," a concept "proposed as the new, modal form of mass democratic politics across most of the world" and "meant to capture the political life of enumerate, classified populations – such as squatters, refugees, itinerant laborers – defined often by their illegal or para-legal status via the state" (Getachew 30). What "political society" maps,

[20] Mamdani further defines "territorial" indirect rule as a type of indirect rule, invented in the US, that "embraces the customary authority and law of institutional indirect rule but binds these to tribal homelands," thus further delimiting Indigenous American political threat by restricting their populations to specific borders (13).

and what Mamdani is seeking to unite, are the communities so marginalized that they are pushed out of the definition of a nation, of a national belonging. These minority communities sought empowerment through a political process that reified their minority status: as Hari Ramesh paraphrases in a review of *Neither Settler Nor Native*, for Mamdani, "the tribal and racial categories that colonialism invested with new and grave significance continue to delineate homeland, self-governance, and rightful resources. To decolonize the political is to enact a process in which these distinctions lose their previous salience" (Ramesh).

Ramesh follows this with two basic and, because basic, difficult questions: "How does this happen? And what replaces these distinctions?" Mamdani's specific historical responses to these questions are drawn from the anti-apartheid movements in South Africa, which emphasized, in Mamdani's reading, the "shift from majoritarian anti-apartheid politics toward nonracial democracy" (346). This shift implied and required a "novel political identity" that sought unity between communities that had been set apart and even included the perpetrators of apartheid within this new political identity, made possible by "redefin[ing] its target from whites to white power, the state that reproduced white privilege" (346).

Mamdani calls this political identity one of the *survivor*, using the words of Afrikaner member of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Wynand Malan. In South Africa, "perpetrators and victims – alongside beneficiaries and bystanders" were grouped together as survivors, as those with a place at the table after the violence of apartheid (17). Seeing oneself as a survivor means "uncoupl[ing] from permanent majority and minority status" and decolonizing the very conception of nationhood inherited from colonial history. It is an identity that does not sever itself from, because is defined by its relation to, the past. It is a weak identity, without its own cultures and traditions, without *personhood*, but this weakness is its promise. For one, it is

capacious enough to accept all who have survived. For another, it is flexible enough to be reshaped by future catastrophes, oppressions, and violence that must also be survived.

Still, the shared survivor identity risks problems that, I think, work counter to Mamdani's goal of historicizing political identity and making them less permanent. To define a survivor as "not simply a victim of the catastrophe who did not die" but "anyone who experienced the catastrophe," claiming then that "all must be born again, politically," raises flags that must be addressed. There are a few worth spending time on – does this reify catastrophes in ways national identities are already primed for, such that events like 9/11 or the Holocaust overdetermine a *kind* of belonging that accepts simultaneously a kind of nonbelonging (Arab-American populations after 9/11, for example)? Does the soteriological language of being "born again" threaten projects of reparation that still must operate based on, because necessitated by, minority identities?[21] – and but one question seems to subtend these more specific issues. Does an identity based on the figure of the survivor risk both a utopic universalism and a restricted set of who can claim the identity?

By asking this, I want to point out first that catastrophes are rarely as wide and all-encompassing so as to threaten everyone, from the center to the margin, in a state. I say "threaten" here because to believe one has survived something must require the possibility that one might not have survived. But there are national catastrophes that fall below this standard: while the shock, magnitude, and diversity of victims of 9/11 might feature this threat, the murders of Michael Brown and George Floyd (among others) feature a dramatically different pressure for me, a white American. Saying I "survived" these catastrophes seems, even in Mamdani's widest formulation, simply wrong. And that is where I find the most relevant and

[21] Mamdani denies this is the case, writing about the necessity of state sanctioned restitution (353), and the need for a vision that weds responsibility to "a positive program of political change" (351).

demanding criticism: Mamdani's survivor is the self in its most granular particularity. But minority identities – being from this tribe, being this race, being that religion – are able depersonalize the self to find a nearly objective attachment to others. In this way they already deal with the difference Mamdani desires for a weak, statist identity.

Better would be a political identity derived from our (always varied) relationships to the catastrophe of suicide, for a few reasons. First, suicide is ever-present and wildly diverse. As "mini-catastrophes," suicides resist a universalization of concerns and instead open inquiry to a host of national problems and the communities that face them. This requires viewing suicide as political, not psychic, the transition I have argued can occur by using self-immolation to found all suicide as an act of (or needing) social justice. Secondly, grounding political identity in suicide forces a recognition of and relation to the other that the grounding of the survivor lacks: the observer is tasked with the fallible, partial process of understanding, as well as the negotiation of empathy. Questioning the motivations of the act becomes opening the act to individual, communal, and sociopolitical possibilities – some of which the observer can relate more personally to, can adopt, even.

I don't mean to be mystical here: in fact, I am suggesting something that is already part of contemporary suicidology. Traditionally, inquiry into suicide takes the form of the "psychological autopsy," which is an attempt to understand the mental state of the subject that from the beginning pathologizes the subject and features a highly questionable methodology. Despite criticisms for a few decades now, the psychological autopsy is still considered the prime approach for studying suicide, and its primacy has meant that certain established "truths" have arisen in the field, such as that "on average 90 percent or more of those who died by suicide had a retrospectively diagnosable mental disorder" (Hielmeland 606). For example, a psychological

autopsy may ask a friend of the deceased to answer questions based on affective disorders *for* the deceased, like "Have you been feeling guilty about things you have done or not done?" (613). The informant must then take on the psychology of the person they knew, who has killed themselves – they must speculate, therefore, based on a question that already implicitly directs the informant toward mental disorders.

Recent considerations acknowledge the need for a new perspective and new tools, reframing even "non-political" suicide from a social justice perspective. For example, in his 2016 article, "Suicide and Social Justice: Toward a Political Approach to Suicide," political scientist Mark E. Button counters "dominant psychological and psychiatric approaches" to suicide by seeing suicide as a "solitary 'answer' to a set of collective and institutional questions about the conditions of a dignified human existence" (270).[22] Button seeks to "acknowledg[e] that suicide is also a collective burden of social justice tied to the distribution of primary goods within a political system" (274), a burden that can also "become the site of self-conscious political reflection and mobilization," even if private and non-political (274, 277-8). Button argues that analyses of non-political suicide must act as "a form of sociopolitical critique for the living, one that challenges the acceptance of what counts as normal" (278). This is what I have argued that self-immolation does on its own, and it is a way to refigure our relationship to those around us by viewing sites of self-death as places wherein community is not working.[23]

The analyses Button argues for are beginning to take shape. One of the best examples of this work is a study by China Mills, "'Dead people don't claim': A psychopolitical autopsy of

[22] See also the 2020 book *Suicide and Social Justice: New Perspectives on the Politics of Suicide and Suicide Prevention*, edited by Button and Ian Marsh.

[23] Though my argument does not seem to take into account variations like assisted suicide, when someone opts to die to avoid pain or simply pass on their own terms, I believe that the emphasis on a "psychopolitical autopsy" does not necessarily have to require critique. That is, this autopsy may as well communicate ways in which community *does* work.

UK austerity suicides" (2018). Mills' methodology seeks to preserve the individual who has killed themselves while encircling the social and political forces that not only influenced this act but may even be culpable:

> While a social autopsy dissects the interlacing relations underlying suicide by embedding individual-level factors within a broader social context, **a psychopolitical autopsy further develops this by also attending to the mechanisms through which social context (in this case austerity) comes to be rearticulated and reconfigured as individual crisis,** and the implications this has for public recognition of austerity suicides as well as for culpability. (308, emphasis mine)

Another way that a political identity based on suicide differs from that of the survivor is exactly this possibility of blame, mixed with a call to change the situation that is blameworthy. Who, after all, is to blame for Mills' case of austerity suicides? The set of austerity policies? Those who wrote these policies? Those who voted for those who wrote the policies? Those who influenced those who voted… If one extends far enough, even those who idly watched, even those who actively resisted, share if not blame then certainly *responsibility* for the individual suicide. A psychopolitical autopsy returns the body to society, places the dead back into the fabric of a community to ask what was missing, what was too present, and how we relate in empathic, and culpable, and responsible ways to that body. It is speculative without being pathologizing; it is a way to connect across otherness and to others without leaving those on the margins on the margins. It is shifting, historicized, and fallible: today my political identity may

thrum along the singular detail of austerity, tomorrow it may be the reduction of a life to homelessness, to isolation.

So suicide becomes self-immolation becomes the death of the psychic author and return of the political author and becomes, finally, a way to configure our identity around absence. My identity is "member of a population where X has killed themselves, where now Y has," an identity of responsibility – both responsible for and responsible to – and that in turn means we as observers are brought into an active role. Here, the writer returns as well in the form of the reader who must add what comes next. This means studying suicide as a symptom of more than (but including) the mind,[24] but it also means, as Mills advises, for coverage to "situate suicides within a wider pattern of deaths, and not analyse them as individual 'cases'" (316). And it means that our nonnational belonging is based on being those who live here, those who belong because we are here, like so many others here, and that means noticing and acting when those who should be here are no longer.

[24] "The complexity and multiplicity of factors that may contribute to suicide can occur simultaneously alongside invoking government culpability" (Mills 315), where other institutions and formations can be swapped when necessary for "government."

Fold:

Rage

India has been burning. Last month was the hottest recorded April and headlines, with no descriptive options remaining, gave way to direct quotations: the heat was "testing the limits of human survivability," said one headline, pulled from a statement by a lead researcher for the IPCC. "We are living in hell," read another, a quote from a resident in Turbat, Pakistan, where temperatures repeatedly reached 122F. There were heat maps with scars of black and, even scarier, white diagonal across the country. Another instance of the disparately diffused effects of a warming planet, another few days of interviews and photos and frustrated tweets and the grey blanketing nausea of buzzy impotence. What is there to say anymore? Even that has been said so often. Some of the most populated places in the world are getting too hot, may become too hot for humans. The writing is getting boring, a sign that one is in a situation where one knows, basically, all there is to know, that there is nothing left to be scratched to surface or put in some new compelling way.

Four Aprils ago David Buckel set himself on fire early one morning in Prospect Park. Before he acted, he sent an email to news outlets where he wrote, in part, "Most humans on the planet now breathe air made unhealthy by fossil fuels, and many die early deaths as a result — my early death by fossil fuel reflects what we are doing to ourselves." The *New Yorker* ran an obituary remembering his life as a prominent civil rights lawyer, and after their short blurb immediately after the event, the *New York Times* ran a longer article, a month later, titled "What Drove a Man to Set Himself on Fire in Brooklyn?" which claimed that Buckel's self-immolation may be the first political suicide committed in the name of climate change. In between the blurb

and the article, novelist Nathan Englander wrote an opinion piece for the *New York Times* titled, "A Man Set Himself on Fire. We Barely Noticed." Englander used his piece to talk about the different levels of attention between a comparatively quite self-immolation (Buckel performed his act early in the morning and out of sight in the park. He wasn't filmed and was only found after) and gun violence. Other articles focused on Buckel's community, his loved ones, his personal history.

2011-2020 was the warmest decade on record. 2018 saw heat records across the world: a highest minimum temperature of 108F in Oman, a highest African temperature of 124 in Algeria. There were brownouts and wildfires in California, fires also in Greece and Australia, in England and Ireland and even in Sweden, above the Arctic Circle, matching an "unprecedented drought" that forced Swedish farmers to send animals to slaughter for lack of feed. Sea ice shrank and carbon dioxide emissions rose. Summing the IPCC reports on the devastating impacts of a 1.5ºC rise in global temperatures, and the even worse ones if 1.5ºC is overshot, the World Resources Institute writes, "May 2019 be the year we put these learnings into action and start rapidly reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

A year later the *New Yorker* returned with "The Site of an Environmentalist's Deadly Act of Protest," already a meaningful switch from referring to Buckel through his L.G.B.T. advocacy and work, which reread the act through a book of photographs of the site called *Our Loss* by photographer Joel Sternfeld. The same year, a *Guardian* article ran titled "A lawyer set himself on fire to protest climate change. Did anyone care?" Most of this long article is far less pitched than its headline, at once a biography of Buckel and a report on the thoughts and feelings of those who knew him. Towards the end the author returns to its headline: "Buckel hoped his death would catalyze immediate action. It didn't."

Four Aprils later Wynn Bruce set himself on fire one afternoon in front of the U.S. Supreme Court. Bruce left no note explaining his actions but had posted publicly his climate convictions and his admiration for Thích Nhất Hạnh, who wrote in 1965 of the Vietnamese Buddhist monks who had self-immolated, "To burn oneself by fire is to prove that what one is saying is of the utmost importance." Bruce also posted a quote he attributed to Nhất Hạnh: "The most important thing, in response to climate change, is to be willing to hear the sound of the earth's tears through our own bodies." "Outside the Supreme Court, a life of purpose and pain ends in flames," wrote the *Washington Post*, and newspapers covered the act for days. No matter what friend says what, the full intention is hidden, a black box. We can call it the second case of environmental protest by suicide, but like every case of suicide, the reason has to have an asterisk, it is "psychopolitical" in that it is and always will have known and unknown mental components and sociopolitical components. Even as storied an act as a self-immolation cannot be let to overdetermine itself.

About Bruce's death, Jay Caspian Kang echoed a common media fear: what if writing about self-immolation inspires others? This is journalism's version of the Werther Effect, named because of an apparent rise in suicides among late 18th century readers copying the fatal act in Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. The Werther Effect had theoretical support in Gabriel Tarde's 1890 *Les lois de l'imitation*. Durkheim, however, quickly followed with his 1897 *Suicide*, where he was careful to warn against imitation being used generally to unite two similar events. Studying the rates of suicide in mid 19th Century France, Durkheim eventually concludes, "Certain as the contagion of suicide is from individual to individual, imitation never seems to propagate it so as to affect the social suicide-rate" (91). More strongly, and against theories of imitation as an essential mechanism of social life, he claims, "No fact is more readily

transmissible by contagion than suicide, yet we have just seen that this contagiousness has no social effects" (93).

But imitation and contagion returned in the 1970s-80s, primarily through a series of articles by David Phillips, who "compared suicide rates in a society before and after some highly publicized suicides, work that was influenced by contemporary studies of population-level mass media effects" (Cheng et al. 4). Cheng et al. claim Phillips' work is "among the most frequently cited" in claims of suicide's contagion. And yet, in their conclusion, they write, like Durkheim over a century earlier: "Undoubtedly, clusters are apparent and well described and population-level fluctuations have been demonstrated after key events. These do not prove contagion!" (8). The possibility, however, is still dangerous enough that a coalition of suicide experts put together the Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide. Do not glamorize or romanticize. Do keep information about the person general. Do not report on the content of a suicide note. Do provide "context and facts to counter perceptions that the suicide was tied to heroism, honor, or loyalty to an individual or group."

Wynn Bruce self-immolated four years and a week after David Buckel self-immolated, two of most prominent political suicides in the United States in many years. Was this Buckel's effect? The effect of it being reported, even if many of the reports were skeptical of its impact? Is a new terrible threat now slipping into the shadowed thoughts of our climate despair? "If You're Anxious About the Climate, Try This" another op-ed in the *New York Times* reads, another questionable title for a less questionable article about joining movements. Maybe this is the wrong track. Whether for political change or social change it's all about the effects of the suicide: did it do anything or is it doing too much? Meaningless action or a contagion set free to

wander and infect. But something is being said here, it's a loud angry voice, this isn't despair or even if it is it is a despair wresting a realness into its hands, like at least *this* can be done.

It was near midnight in early December and I was in Indianapolis at a gas station when it started to snow. Earlier that day I was in DC and I would be in central Illinois the next day. I don't remember the exact details, strange to say. It was a threat, something about pills, being checked into a center. I won't say more except that it is alright now, it doesn't end like that. I left to drive and it started snowing and the world felt like it was changing out there just as it had in here. The tires on the truck I was driving were bald, I didn't know, it was two in the morning when I spun and hit the median. The truck could still move, I limped it to a mechanic open all night that a cabbie told me about. Two hours later I slipped again and the truck dove into a ditch, I was fine, the truck was totaled, it seemed right. I was so angry, the whole time. So scared and so angry. I didn't care about his mindset, if there was something off or what, I didn't care about the effects, didn't think about it, I just wanted to care for him.

I was able to, others too were, a benediction. Family breaks at the seams and everyone comes rushing in to take their place at times like that. It is care for the broken world, a deep desire to repair it, an absolute, bone crunching rage that the break can open like that in the first place. How did it come to this? Fuck the diagnosis — how did the possibility become possible? It's not that suicide is contagious it is that too much of the dying planet is and some catch the horror and it comes into them: if we want to prevent the horror we have to prevent the horrible things. I know, it's not only that. But it is that, too, which means there exists preventative measures more important than the wording in an article or the fear of expression, it means that we *can* and that we haven't.

Chapter Three

Destroy, Disrupt, Parasite: Sabotage as Symbol or Survival

> What is termed culture reflects, but also prefigures, the possibilities of the organization of life in a given society. – Guy Debord
>
> What is this sudden dangerous noise at the door that prevents me from finishing and leads me to other actions? – Michel Serres

Moths

They are showing a propaganda film in the city center, attendance required. Since they took over the region, they've been more or less genial – the imprisonments and executions have given way to firm regulations and unyielding curfews, and the few officials who drop their stony, impersonal roles admit to a more open future, once the war is over, the dissidents quelled. "To occupy" and "to assimilate" will taste like iron in the mouth but eventually they will each just mean "to be" – at least so they say. You do not want any of this. You still remember the native tongue of this place, your tongue, the customs and foods and the Way of Life. There isn't much to do: those who fought back were slaughtered quickly, and those who didn't but could, had influence, controlled presses and radio stations, were jailed or otherwise disappeared. Still, you have already made a pledge to yourself, just as others around you have, silently, as if communicated at once telepathically to all still living here, to make life hard for the officials, no matter how genial they attempt to be. You speak slowly and in contradiction. *Maybe the house you are looking for is over there, but it may just as well be in the other direction*. Those in restaurants have accidentally dropped plates while serving. Those in factories find their tools breaking quickly. "A clumsy people," they say about you, "dull and without ambition."

And tonight they are showing a propaganda film. You were thinking about it in the kitchen as you burned your new ID papers on the stovetop so that you would have to get processed again and again. The film would be shown in an hour or two; the curfew was extended for it. It was just after twilight and moths were hovering over the flame and you tried gently to push them away. At once you knew. You pulled out an old paper bag and softly captured each moth in it. You kept the flame on and opened the windows and waited for more. You had four or five after half an hour and you put on a big heavy coat and hid the bag within it. It was a silly, random plan. But you've learned to follow up on these almost submerged inclinations. Everyone filed into the auditorium and sat quietly. The lights dimmed; the film began; you opened the paper bag and gave it a soft shake. The moths slipped out and nothing happened for a long time. Then the images on the screen were covered, then revealed, then covered again. The officials stalked the aisles with uncertain purpose until they finally saw up on the projector lens: a moth settling into the light. They batted it away but another returned until the rest of the evening you and everyone watched this tiny battle play out, stern and suited officials pawing at the air as one moth after another blocked the film.

Field Manuals and Counter-resistance

As Europe faces down Nazi Germany expansion, Wild Bill Donovan, head of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) is thinking about how individual citizens in an occupied region might make things difficult for their occupiers. There must be ways to weaponize the resources already at-hand, to take advantage of the run and regularity of everyday life, the fact that people just have to keep living, even under occupation, and that this means moving around and eating and working and in general interacting with the world, though the world has changed beneath

their feet. “The weapons of a citizen-saboteur,” he writes in 1944, “are salt, nails, candles, pebbles, thread, or any other materials he might normally be expected to possess as a householder or as a worker in his particular occupation. His arsenal is the kitchen shelf, the trash pile, his own usual kit of tools and supplies” (6-7). This is early in Donovan’s 1944 *Simple Sabotage Field Manual*, a document both delightfully strange and poignantly shrewd. The manual was produced and distributed toward the end of World War II, meant to be dropped as leaflets or broadcast over local radio to gather together citizens under occupation and give them a means of resistance, of turning what has been politicized against their will, such as the occupation of their lands by invaders, into willful political response by fighting back with the everyday.

Donovan’s tactics are wide-ranging. Some are direct — “Ruin warehouse stock by setting the automatic sprinkler system to work. You can do this by tapping the sprinkler heads sharply with a hammer or by holding a match under them” (25) — some are less so — “Post office employees can see to it that enemy mail is always delayed by one day or more, that it is put in wrong sacks, and so on” (57) — and some are simply poetic, like the tactic that introduces the chapter:

> Anyone can break up a showing of an enemy propaganda film by putting two or three dozen large moths in a paper bag. Take the bag to the movies with you, put it on the floor in an empty section of the theater as you go in and leave it open. The moths will fly out and climb into the projector beam, so that the film will be obscured by fluttering shadows. (57)

Like any manual or field guide, *Simple Sabotage* reframes what is around us, in this case separating our material lives into either what might be broken or what might break other things. In this way it's also a document that inspires additions. You get to even *use* your whole life of minor annoyances: that dripping faucet? How can I make the *other* faucets drip? The single out of service elevator? Why not put up an out of service sign on it even though it's working fine?

While it is difficult to accurately determine how influential *Simple Sabotage* was in the field, the document itself has had a strange afterlife since its declassification by the CIA. Every few years, its appealing directness and insightful psychology – "Purposeful stupidity is contrary to human nature," writes Donovan when explaining the need for a manual that calls for citizen-saboteurs to act contrary to their "habitually conservationist attitude toward materials and tools" (10) — pulls it into a momentary spotlight through one or another rediscovery. More surprisingly, however, the document has proven prescient for contemporary business management schemas of efficiency. An article in *Slate* describes how the manual's various advice to office workers for slowing business and crafting inefficiencies "perfectly describes your toxic workplace" (Onion), and another quotes Donovan's advice to "insist on doing everything through 'channels.' Never permit short-cuts to be taken in order to expedite decisions" (60), which maps well onto the overlay of administrative bureaucracy that haunts white collar employment. Articles using war-time tactics to diagnose faulty business practices abound, one author asking, "Is a horrible boss the ultimate saboteur?" (Hope), and a trio of consultants compiling their advice in *Simple Sabotage: A Modern Field Manual for Detecting and Rooting Out Everyday Behaviors That Undermine Your Workplace* (2015). Directly alluding to the OSS Field Manual, authors Rob Galford, Bob Frisch, and Cary Greene seek to "improve productivity, spur creativity, and foster better colleague relationships" by combating simple

sabotage in the workplace, even providing a free survey on their website, simplesabotage.com, so that you may diagnose your own organization's susceptibility to sabotage.The techniques put in place to challenge, defy, and annoy occupying regimes are here spun into counterinsurgent strategies to prevent such resistance and grease the wheels of economic efficiency. Every attempt to break and make inefficient the flow of power or money or productivity or control encodes within itself its own uselessness, the tactics the powerful can use to obviate and erase not just a given act of sabotage, but future acts modeled on it.

I am beginning a chapter on sabotage, artistic practice, and networks with these two different manuals because they structure and complicate just what it is sabotage does, who does it, for what purposes, how effective it can be, and what kind of responses and consequences it may spur.[1] Donovan, for example, is roughly of a piece with the history of sabotage, which can be etymologically dated to around the end of the 19th century, when Timothy Mitchell notes that the word was popularized by French anarchist Émile Pouget, who wrote *Le Sabotage* in 1909, and "within a year the new word 'sabotage' had been adopted in English." The practice has a longer history than the word, and Mitchell adds, "Foot-dragging and other forms of worker protest were nothing new. But the term 'sabotage' reflected the discovery that a relatively minor malfunction, mistiming, or interruption, introduced at the right place and moment, could now have widespread effects" (22). Mitchell is writing specifically here about what we might call "capitalist sabotage," which is done by workers against bosses and has its own history of adoption and negation by workers movements like the I.W.W.[2] In his brief keyword meditation

[1] A fascinating, though too tangential, contemporary use of "sabotage" is also in the self-help industry, where one finds title after title claiming to help the reader avoid or tackle their impulses to self-sabotage. In a more dramatic context, political (and sports) commentary refer to cases they consider grave instances of self-sabotage as "self-immolation."

[2] See Lossin (2021) for a detailed overview of the early theorization and practice of sabotage in the American workforce. It will seem a glaring absence, but I intentionally avoid lingering on capitalist sabotage here, for a few reasons. One is that it has been, comparatively, better researched than other forms of sabotage — though it is still an

in *Krisis*, Darin Barney acknowledges the wide uses of sabotage since this discovery: "Beyond workers' struggles narrowly defined, sabotage has also been a core tactic in slave resistance, anti-colonial liberation struggles, indigenous militancy, the women's movement, the militant liberalism of hackers and whistleblowers, and radical environmentalism" (145). For these movements, as for Donovan, sabotage becomes agency, the ability to resist or fight back from an asymmetrically weaker position.

And yet Galford et al.'s manual reverts back to the original positions of power. Their *Simple Sabotage* implicitly agrees with many definitions of sabotage: for example, Barney defines it as "the strategic disruption of established regimes of accumulating value and power by subtracting from their efficiency" (146), while Evan Calder Williams in *The New Inquiry* defines it as marking "an understanding that disruption of everyday, 'neutral' processes should be treated as a form of violence, and that sabotage is a transposable mode of social violence which advances itself by targeting just those processes" (np). These, however, are problems for an efficient workplace, and the team behind this "modern" field manual study the inefficiencies of unintentional (in this case) sabotage in order to remove them. They are playing a businessman version of a role that has been part and parallel of every act of sabotage: the counterinsurgent. Calder Williams writes: "One of the reasons why 'history does not point to an effective countermeasure to sabotage' is because the history of sabotage is itself a history *of* countermeasure" (np, emphasis his). Military theory dramatically realizes this point: the US

understudied practice and Lossin makes a case that its absence in industrial histories in fact reflects "the tortured efforts of histories to excise the word from the I.W.W.'s history" (78). I want to focus on the ways sabotage has been used against colonialism, against land and resource grabs, and to spur consciousness and material changes based on climate collapse. Finally, "capitalist sabotage" can also refer to "ca'canny," or worker slowdowns, as well as strikes, which as tactics to reduce efficiency for worker power are easier to report on, measure, and historicize. In an analysis of resistance among oil workers in Nigeria, for example, Julius Ihonvbere writes that the clarity of these actions has, as a net result, led to "too much reliance on data relating to strikes, unionization, overt political resistance, and, for the most part, a failure to discover and evaluate the silent, unorganized, covert responses ... [of] workers" (91). These latter responses are the emphasis of this chapter.

Army, for example, used the French Army's adaptation and countering of Algerian sabotage operations during the Algerian War to revise its Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, during the Iraq War (Tachikawa 67).

Given the transition of sabotage from its illegitimate corners to its appearance in mainstream political discourse — from reporters disseminating advice in Ukraine on how to make Molotov cocktails to Andreas Malm's incendiary calls for ecological movements to take up sabotage in *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* — I want to think through the consequences, pitfalls, and dangers that come along with this practice. This is not from an intention to become a counterinsurgent but rather to learn from the facility counterinsurgency can at times have in shutting down sabotage or absorbing its threat into its very logics, objects, and networks. To do so, I am shuffling between scenes of material and political sabotage, illegal acts done by minority groups against a disproportionally larger foe, and scenes of artistic and cultural sabotage that often incorporate similar tactics with similar intentions but occurred in roundly safer and more licit environments. Sabotage, however, can become especially metaphorical and broad when used in artistic settings — in her new *Surrealist Sabotage and the War on Work*, Abigail Susik uses the term to refer to practices that range from detournement and parody to automatic writing (12). While I don't dismiss its metaphorical nature (in Susik's case, the connection is primarily based on the critique of work done through such modes of making), I use real, political sabotage practices to sketch the boundaries of the artistic objects featured here. That is, I mean for the political cases to define sabotage and, in extension, the arts that traffic in similar or identical procedures. Recursively, scenes of artistic sabotage more easily distill sabotage into its rhetorical and symbolic components and represent the kind of imaginary autonomy that Donovan envisioned for his citizen-saboteurs — that they would be creating of

their own accord from the resources around them. Sabotage in this sense *is* an aesthetic act, especially for post-WWII artists who are attuned to the everyday and interested in institutional critique.

My goal is to describe and define a *kind* of sabotage that is possibly only barely sabotage at all, which I am calling parasitic sabotage, and which can include acts like hacking or *jugaad* or otherwise taking-advantage-of not for purposes of destruction but rather for survival and even thriving. This is the third of a tripartite typology of sabotage that structures the chapter, a structure where each type of sabotage is accompanied by a telling experiment from the Fluxus group — two that never happened, and one that did and does. The first is "object sabotage," which requires destruction and is represented by Donovan and 19th century Luddites, but also by the early years of ANC guerilla tactics and "auto-destructive" experiments by Jean Tinguely and Gustav Metzger. I will show how object sabotage is, ultimately, symbolic more than anything else — which is both a benefit and a serious problem. The second type is "network sabotage," which requires disruption and aims at supply chains, transportation routes, and communication networks. Network sabotage is representative, more than symbolic, and though it may try to affect the large, impersonal systems that structure our lives, its successes are often most evident in its depictions of these structures. Here I look at the Invisible Committee, Trevor Paglen's photography, and Mapuche resistance in Argentina and Chile. Network sabotage, even more than object sabotage, stresses and limits participation — the ability for a community to, before even replicating these acts, accept them at all. The Mapuche lead into parasitic sabotage, which I describe using pirate radio stations and another work by Trevor Paglen, one made with Jacob Appelbaum. By parasitic sabotage, I am referring tricks, hacks, workarounds, and covert practices that take advantage of institutions and networks, rather than seek their destruction. By

trying to describe and work out the ways parasitic sabotage benefits communities, avoids cooptation (by hiding from notice), and fosters a level of insider knowledge that can eventually aid the goals of systemic change shared by other saboteurs, I am suggesting this field of practices as deserving of further research and implementation. In an increasingly interconnected and surveilled world, I argue for a revised sense of direct action that seeks to be covert and to improve the lives of those sabotaging.

Love is in the Bin: Object Sabotage

Before you is a full matchbox, a site of absolute potential, ready with a simple flick to actualize. You can convert something, many things, to energy at the expense of the thing. It's almost overdetermined, the futurity of a pile of ashes and a burst of heat and power that can make something new. On the matchbox is written in all caps:

> TOTAL ART MATCH-BOX
> USE THESE MATCHES TO DESTORY ALL ART – MUSEUMS ART
> LIBRARY'S – READY – MADES POP – ART AND AS I BEN SIGNED
> EVERYTHING WORK OF ART – BURN – ANYTHING – KEEP LAST
> MATCH FOR THIS MATCH –

Ok, you think. After all, it was fifty some years ago that Duchamp started all of this by overturning a urinal and calling it *Fountain*. Maybe "art" has been waiting for these matches ever since. You agree with the impulse on the box, that we are still attached to a concept – art – and an institution – museum – that extend and concretize a whole genre of cultural production that

distinguishes itself via its superiority. It's not like we say "musician" and we exclusively mean "the most talented humans, the geniuses who have been born with a gift," nor do we say "music" and exclusively mean "a set of sound works that you must be taught how to appreciate or else you have a less refined palette, less sophistication, less *culture*." No, not only is music performed in open streets and bedrooms and bars, but many of us play or know someone who plays an instrument, who practices it, who fools around and strums a few chords, who hums in the shower. But call it "art" and now we've got difficulty – not necessarily difficult objects, per se, but rather the expectation of difficult analysis and comparative histories. Even the immediately pleasing stuff, the Sistine Chapels, the blurry water lilies, even this comes with whole bookshelves and intricate studies and postdoc fellowships. A set of prerequisites (how to look, how to be in a museum, what to analyze and in what words) is established around the art object, which Bourdieu calls the cultural capital that both allows for a stratified knowledge and retains, guards, entrenches the economic stratification that made such knowledge possible in the first place.

In any case, it's a lot, Art, and maybe it's best to tear the whole thing down, the serious objects denoting serious culture and their legitimizing institutions, so you take the box with its vibrant instructions and you bring it to the nearest gallery at night. It's closed; no one is around; you've brought an extinguisher to keep the fire contained. You break into the gallery and pick out the largest canvas, in the center of the room. You strike a match and light the corner of the canvas. Then another match, another corner, another match, another canvas, until you have one match left. The gallery is settling into a heavy blaze but before you leave you set the matchbox in the center of the room and strike the final match on the box and hold the flame to the box until it catches. You drop the box and heave up the extinguisher and retrace your steps from the

beginning, extinguishing each of what were formerly canvases and finally the small lick of what was formerly a matchbox.

None of that happened. The matchbox has not been used. It is under glass, part of MoMA's Fluxus collection, object number 2769.2008 (Fig. 3). It sits, as if waiting, but also as if dead. Another object in the collection of objects that are called Art and shown now and then in exhibitions of how people once thought, of their worthwhile creativity and their experiments in value and perspective. The matchbox *did* nothing.

What Stewart Home calls the "heroic" period of Fluxus (~1962-63), during which artists composed works that united a political and cultural movement and aimed at combating "serious culture," occurred a little after artists like Gustav Metzger and Jean Tinguely were already, in their own idiosyncratic fashions, experimenting with destruction. These more or less coterminous practices in the 1960s are part of the "rich history within avant-garde traditions of art that aims to degrade or destroy, rather than create, value" (Adamson 162).[3] As *Total Art Matchbox*, suggests, the purpose of degrading value was eminently critical, even self-critical, taking aim at institutions that *seem* to create value — capital, nationalism, museums, art itself — in order to demonstrate their contingency, and in extension, their malleability. But though the works I describe here, like *Total Art Matchbox*, are works of potential or real sabotage, they do not use their destructive powers to diminish or take down their institutions of critique. It would be too much to expect this first intention, for after all these works are intrinsically *symbolic*, they are communicative and interpretative rather than active: worse, however, is that these objects, with some ease, become coopted and accommodated by institutions, negating even their critical purchase.

[3] Susik especially documents how Surrealism used sabotage and other "effective and imaginative strategies of resistance against the wage-labour imperative" (1).

The German artist Gustav Metzger began his experiments with destruction by theorizing "Auto-Destructive Art" in a 1961 manifesto, defining it as "primarily a form of public art for industrial societies," while Home refers to it as "a therapy against the irrationality of the capitalist system and its war machine" (62). For Metzger, this art was about the process of destruction, the enacting of it, and thus his works were temporal: "Acid action painting" was made by flinging and spraying acid onto nylon canvases, dissolving the canvases in seconds, while "Construction with glass" involved glass sheets hung by tape that would eventually weaken and drop the sheets to the ground, shattering them. These works begin destroying themselves once they are put together, which is to say that the moment they are finished is the exact moment when they degrade, fall apart, and find a new entropic moment of completion. Though recreated in the Tate in 2004, 44 years after the first "demonstration" in 1960, these works can only be archived as their fragments – the results of their destruction and not the act of destruction itself.[4] In effect, the art museum becomes, through auto-destructive art, a history museum, presenting the ruins leftover from a past of utopian alternatives. Does the Tate preserve the bag of trash and the acid-worn canvas from the 2004 recreation with the same care that it does paintings and sculptures?

For auto-destructive artists like Metzger and the Swiss sculptor Jean Tinguely, the evolution (or devolution) of the artwork is where artistic and interpretive value adheres, and the results – all that might be gathered and archived – are simply trash, scraps, and ruins. The experience is ephemeral, bounded by the static object of potential on one side and the inert scraps on the other. Tinguely's most notorious work, the 1960 *Homage to New York*, shows the field of resistance that auto-destructive art engaged in, the attempt to sabotage the infusion of

[4] During the 2004 Recreation, an added bag of rubbish was mistakenly thrown out by janitorial staff. Though recovered, Metzger considered it ruined and created a second bag of rubbish to take its place.

economic and cultural capital into art. Tinguely fashioned together a machine from scraps he sourced in New York – a system of bicycle wheels, a stand-up piano, a go-kart, a bathtub – that was meant to destroy itself. The shuddering machine gasped and smoked before the fire department halted the performance. About *Homage*, Tinguely says:

> The machine was simply there, without the culture establishment somehow having managed to absorb it, make it museum-suitable, frame it, conserve it. It was a gleaming work of art and it vanished. **It had no value, no sense, a refined thing that was in no way commercial** ... In no way was this a search for stability. Total instability in vanishing, in smoke, and in the return to the trash can. ("Biography," emphasis mine)

Ephemerality is key to understanding auto-destructive art like Metzger's and Tinguely's. Occurring in the same period as Alan Kaprow's "Happenings" and Fluxus "events," which were artistic performances that were both impossible to repeat exactly and often participatory (Saper 114), auto-destructive art explores how art can be done without the element of preservation. This is art as experience, which also means art with a start time and an end time, art as finite. And if art is finite then it the institution that holds it is undercut. As John Dewey opens his seminal 1934 *Art as Experience*, "The work of art is often identified with the building, book, painting, or statue in its existence apart from human experience" (3), a list that itself assumes the existence of the institutional apparatus that safeguards these materials. Museums and galleries, Dewey states, "illustrate some of the causes that have operated to segregate art instead of finding it an attendant of temple, forum and other forms of associated life" (8). Auto-destructive art, like Happenings

and Events, join Dewey in suggesting that the specialness of art is in the experience one has of the object – only, for these 1960s experiments, "experience" is foregrounded in its fleeting, temporal, ephemeral reality. Not only is experience where art lives, but also, according to these works, once the aesthetic experience is gone, so too is the art. The machine, the canvas, the plates of glass: they cannot be experienced again except with totally new objects (an explanation of sorts for Metzger's demand to make anew the bag of rubbish for the Tate). Where the museum combines art and artifact into a repeatable experience of visiting the quasi-religious object that seems to disseminate its qualities outward onto the observer, auto-destructive art wrenches the experience from the artifact, leaving in the wake of its activity only ruins.

Ruins that, still, the museum preserves: Tinguely's above quotation is ironically displayed on the website for the Museum Tinguely, where one can also find a piece of *Homage* among its works registered as "Homage to New York (Klaxon)." Like Metzger, and indeed like Vautier's matchbox, Tinguely's anti-institutional, anti-commodity work has failed to truly escape preservation – neither the preservation of the object nor the preservation of its economic value. As singular artists with some – any – sort of material detritus to what are ultimately performance pieces, Metzger, Tinguely, and Vautier cannot wholly drain their objects of the rarefied collapse of art + artifact. MoMA and the Museum Tinguely's fragments of *Homage* and the Tate's leftovers from Metzger's recreated destructions are all imbued with a specialness ultimately summed in a certificate of authenticity: these are the real deals, we have them as markers of a past wherein *this* artist did *this* performance. Though film footage exists of at least Tinguely's performance in Robert Breer's *Homage to Jean Tinguely's Homage to New York*, this technological reproduction is buttressed, and far outvalued, by the fragment of the object saved by MoMA.

The institution does not simply avoid the critique of auto-destructive artworks, it absorbs their saboteur energies, redirecting this energy into another valuable artifact in the stockpile of things to travel to, to see, to preserve, to perhaps collect, and to make donations because of. The museum has swallowed the flotsam of ephemeral art in order to spit it back out as a shiny thing, when it was meant, in the destruction of the machine, to unleash from its broken pieces an *experience* that would flare up and bind the spectators and fall away, creating in the wake a community here and now that shared something. Now we can look at the trash and fragments and perhaps imagine the scene but mostly admire the experiments as past, thankfully removed from the threat that can yet be leveled by this art, which is *Why is all of this here? What do we make of these names and this prestige that we are here legitimizing and attributing and believing — and through all of that, creating value that is not art value or experience value but commodity value?*

That object destruction not only fails to critique the institutions of art such as the museum and the gallery but helps them shore up their own economic roles as storehouses of high-end commodity is demonstrated to the point of parody by Banksy's 2018 stunt with his 2006 work, "Girl With Balloon." After the piece was auctioned at Sotheby's in London for $1.4 million, a device within the painting's frame began to pull the painting down and shred it, getting halfway before stopped by attendants. The shredding mechanism, however, kept the painting in neat strips, the content of the painting so easy to make out that it was renamed "Love is in the Bin" and still sold. It is unclear just how intentional the half-destruction was: Banksy uploaded a video suggesting that the painting was meant to be completely shredded, but both the artistic position of the shredding mechanisms' failure (the red balloon still visible) and the strain of believing that highly skilled art professionals would not have noticed something amiss with the frame strongly

suggest that the partial "destruction" was the intended result. Either way, this half-destruction does nothing – far less than Tinguely and Metzger – to question the art object or the commodity realm this object is clearly a part of, a point made forcefully by a Sotheby's spokesman who said, "The new narrative is that Banksy did not destroy a work on its premises, he created one, adding value not detracting."[5]

These experiments outline some the limits of object destruction – namely the ease with which institutions and larger powers can coopt, counter, and accommodate these resistance practices. Such limits, even such negative results, come from sabotage's employment as a *symbol*. For symbolic sabotage, the real gesture is pedagogic: an audience will understand how an institution *might be* revolutionized or destroyed because of the rhetorical nature of this individual act that itself has no pretense toward doing the systemic change it is communicating. Home, always stubbornly returning each avant-garde project to its material consequences or lack thereof, recounts Metzger's interest in the "exploitative aspect of the art world" by describing one of his more aspirational projects: his call for a three-year art strike between 1977-1980. For Metzger, this was *not* meant to be a symbolic act but a real one, direct action against the institutions of galleries and dealers. However, as Home notes, "Metzger was the only *artist* to *strike* and the art world, contrary to Metzger' s wishes, did not collapse" (63 emphasis his). The action became symbolic, and as such retained the critical, unveiling nature that symbols can encode, but this example is one wherein can be seen clearly the distance, at times vast, between symbolic sabotage and the enactment of its aims.

Radical Flanks: Symbolic Sabotage

[5] https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-45900314

While artists like Metzger and Tinguely and the Fluxus members were thinking about destructive objects and destroyed objects to represent some desired change, or some flaw in the world and our ideologies, political saboteurs, despite operating from a position of far more risk, were *also* processing the symbolic nature and possibilities of their destructive campaigns — but for a different purpose. Despite the primary importance of object sabotage's symbolic and rhetorical registers, sabotage still risks limited mass participation and aggressive counter-sabotage operations by the government. I am thinking here about the decolonial sabotage typified in the first phase of activity by the Umkhonto we Sizwe (or "Spear of the Nation," or MK), the militant unit of the African Congress (ANC) that made real and active the fight against apartheid in South Africa. Occurring in 1961-2, squarely in the decolonial period where armed and asymmetric wars and revolutions were being fought throughout the Global South, this moment is especially useful for thinking about sabotage because, rather than one tactic among many in a decolonial repertoire, MK deliberately planned their first phase of resistance to be devoted solely to sabotage. From the FLN in Algeria to Zionist resistance to British rule to the Cultural Revolution to Che Guevara's *foco*, worldwide revolutionary tactics included but did not limit themselves to structural, non-lethal sabotage. MK, however, not only targeted meaningful and tactical buildings to bomb and otherwise sabotage, but they also took care to be certain of these buildings' vacancies at the times of bombing. December 16, 1961, 9 months after the Sharpsville Massacre of 69 peaceful protestors by the government, MK marked their arrival onto the political scene through bombs exploding "near government offices and critical infrastructure in all major cities in South Africa…. the first of dozens [of similar operations] carried out over the

next two years, all designed to minimize the possibility of 'civilian' casualties, while maximizing damage to visible government symbols and disrupting economic prosperity" (Davis 51).[6]

There were material reasons for focusing exclusively on sabotage: historian Simon Stevens recounts how the MK "had neither the capacity nor the authorization [from the ANC] to undertake immediate guerrilla operations" (243).[7] In *Spear of the Nation*, her account of the MK, Janet Cherry writes, "As MK had very limited weaponry or materiel for the sabotage campaign, members experimented with explosives obtained by various ingenious means, such as experimenting with shop-bought chemicals and stealing dynamite from a road construction camp and a quarry" (Cherry 20). This situation harkens back to Donovan's *Simple Sabotage* in that sabotage is often, almost definitionally, a weaponizing of the everyday. It also reminds that sabotage more generally is a practice, and as such is, as Sally Haslanger defines it, a "collective solution to coordination or access problems with respect to a *resource*" (20, emphasis hers). Calder Williams describes sabotage similarly by explaining that the act "sees the ground of its daily activity as a diachronic map and tremendous reserve of materials, aspects, and properties constantly contested and open to inversions" (np). Sabotage, like the other political acts in this study and, I argue, like what art attempts to do when it comes into contact with lived lives, is a restructuring and recoding of the world around us, lifting up objects, spaces, and bodies, and attaching new possible significances and uses to them. The always alternative. The other and alter — possibly within the literal reach of your literal hand.

[6] Stevens notes that this conjunction of symbolic targets and economic targets was a "continuing confusion about target selection and purpose," quoting MK member Denis Goldberg on how they "seemed to waver in between all these sorts" (253). However, from a Malm-ian perspective, as will be seen, this confusion is not important as long as it shifts the spectrum of possibilities, and from a strategic perspective, such a diversity of targets may go far in suggesting that nothing is safe.

[7] Stevens continues, "Mandela and his men lacked experience, training and firepower: at the time of MK's founding, they did not possess a single firearm."

These material, skill, and political considerations aside, MK's sabotage was meant to work symbolically in a different way than has been explored. Apartheid was not some silent, subtle force like capitalism that needed to be dragged into the light of day: there was no need for the MK to convince the Black majority that something was amiss. Instead, structural, non-lethal sabotage was intended to represent a dramatic shift: to the regime, sabotage said to pay attention and change, or else worse might come, while to the public, it said "the time had come to fight the apartheid regime" (Cherry 23). Nelson Mandela sums the first intention in his Rivonia Trial speech by referring to the MK manifesto, explaining "We hope that we will bring the Government and its supporters to their senses before it is too late." *Too late* referred to the second phase of MK operations, titled Operation Mayibuye, which "envisaged armed support for a national insurrection, with plans to bring 28,000 anti-personnel mines into the country" (Cherry 22). This plan would require the support of the Black majority whom MK hoped to catalyze with its sabotage acts and steel for future resistance.

In his recent polemic *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* in favor of ecological movements adopting practices of sabotage,[8] Andreas Malm describes groups like MK as providing the "positive radical flank" necessary for change: where while radicals "stoke up the crisis to a breaking point, [moderates] offer a way out" (120). Sabotage is still a symbol here — one directed at the powerful — and for Malm it expands the possibilities, repercussions, and consequences a situation might lead to. If, formerly, the most radical possibility is a march or a demonstration, sabotage communicates a more violent latent future (and though this violence is toward objects, there exists still at least the hint of the human at risk, as Mandela made clear). This is especially the case given MK's intention to create spectacular, visible, public acts of

[8] Strangely, no such instructions can be found in the text — though it should be noted how Malm's praise for sabotage riffs on the field guide and manual form, at least in the title.

sabotage. Malm quotes Gay Seidman to support this, who writes that MK attacks in the 1980s did not "come close to bringing down the state, but they provided physical evidence of a tangible *potential* threat to the regime" (Malm 71). Sabotage is the risky but necessary widening of possibility, the Batman of social movements who is both outlaw and protector, the sacrificial hero who makes what was the non-violent extreme seem moderate in comparison — and thus tolerable.

There is a lot to like in Malm's work, but it must be read carefully, for there is just as much that is skipped or elided. His use of the MK is a useful example. Despite their exclusively sabotage phase — no violence toward humans to the extent that Cherry claims, "In terms of costs in human life and suffering, not one life was lost in the nearly 200 acts of sabotage committed between 1961 and 1964" (23) — MK was stirringly ineffective in the 60s, according to most recent scholarship. Indeed, this is according even to the historian Malm cites, Gay Seidman, who writes that the highly principled strategy of the 60s "was not particularly successful militarily" before anti-apartheid activists in the 70s changed tactics toward popular mobilization and organizing. Stevens meanwhile notes that the *lack* of popular organization was "a feature, not a bug. The immediate objective of the MK High Command was to use spectacle, not to detonate popular violence, but to defuse it" (249). Symbolic sabotage reified the leadership of the MK via distance – it was not a lateral network of resistance nor an elected and supported body, but a small group that consolidated authority in the anti-apartheid movement. The movement of the 1960s was not the movement of the 1980s.

If the symbol failed to communicate — or communicated too well — to the public, both asking for support while pushing supporters away from direct action and mobilization, it was well-read by the government. The sabotage campaign never gave way to its second phase: "The

government responded to MK's attacks…by massively increasing spending on the police and military, and expanding police powers of 'banning', house arrest and detention without charge. Police use of torture became widespread" (Stevens 250-1). Counter-resistant actions by the government responding to symbolic violence and non-lethal sabotage were asymmetrically aggressive, so much so that Cherry claims, "It was to be another two decades before the 'masses' responded in overwhelming numbers to MK's call to 'make the country ungovernable, make apartheid unworkable'" (7), and Seidman explains that in those intervening decades, the ANC built up cells and weapons caches for its turn to armed struggle (117). Though Malm brings up the possibility that a radical flank can have *negative* effects and does mention state repression, he ultimately responds to it in quasi-religious terms: about two climate activists who destroyed mining equipment and were facing an unjust 100+ year prison sentence, Malm writes: "The consequent sacrifice is a signal to others that *this is worth fighting for*, even spending the rest of one's life in prison for, and the climate crises could do with some more acts of that calibre" (122, emphasis his).

More can be gleaned from both the anti-apartheid movement's resistance tactics and Malm's quick history of sabotage, but I place them in conversation to highlight the risks to movement building that object sabotage runs. At best, these risks are heroic sacrifices, but at worst they are threats to the exact mass support saboteurs who engage in symbolic object destruction ultimately desire. Crucial to Donovan's field guide is a canny awareness of the sociality of sabotage: not only are the tactics meant to avoid detection and reprisal — as opposed to Malm and MK's symbolism — but Donovan also writes of how the individual saboteur "may become discouraged unless he feels that he is a member of a large, though unseen, group of saboteurs operating against the enemy or the government of his own country and elsewhere"

(11). Moreover, whereas MK's aims included economic and governmental buildings that stood in for the apartheid regime, other targets — capitalism, climate change — are far vaster and more amorphous, able to warp and change along the channels and webs that support and reify them. A different opponent requires a different strategy, one that can negotiate the challenges of a network touching everywhere (and everyone) at once.

Break the Chain: Network Sabotage

The plan was sent to everyone in the group and scheduled for the next day. You spent the afternoon gathering materials – purchasing bricks, trying (and quickly abandoning the attempt) to mix concrete in the sink. Eventually you had about two dozen packages wrapped and ready before the evening ended, carefully stacked at the door. You planned your route: the nearest postal box was a block away, and if you ended up filling that one, there is another marked a few blocks east. Everyone else in the group was doing the same thing; the next day, postal workers would have to pick up a large number of heavy packages. Already, their routes will be slowed by the human limits of how much weight a postal worker can carry individually. And where would these packages be sent? This is the most ingenious part: to galleries, and concert halls, and museums, addresses also listed as the sender, so that these unstamped packages would be either sent to a museum or returned to a gallery (or whatever), where one of the addresses would be asked to pay the postage.

The goal was to create a disruption and annoyance to "serious culture." Down with *Art* with the capital *A*; down with the institutional arbiters of value – of aesthetic value that is really economic value. The postal workers would be forced into an unchosen ca'canny, a work slowdown that eventually would be revealed to the media as the group's plan put into action. All

over the city people would start to realize how much control they had at their fingertips – fill a box with bricks and do it with enough people and enough boxes and a whole system will come crawling to a halt.

This, at least, was Fluxus founding member George Maciunas' plan in his 1963 "News-Policy Letter No. 6," which, as Michael Oren recounts, proposed that

> [Fluxus members] get together to clog up the New York City traffic, subway, and postal systems (especially where they affected museums, theatres, and galleries) by stalling trucks at busy intersections. Bricks would be mailed to newspapers and galleries without postage and with return addresses of museums, concert halls or other galleries; and museum or gallery entryways would be blocked with deliveries of 'rented chairs, tables, palm trees, caskets, lumber,' gravel, sand, etc. Helium-filled balloons would explode high in the air, releasing fake dollar bills and Fluxus announcements. (6)

Stewart Home clarifies that Maciunas' suggestions would disrupt the transportation system and communication system: these were attacks not only against cultural institutions but also against networks of transport and exchange. If, Home writes, "the district selected [for the postal attack] was a business district the tactic would have been particularly effective with virtually no adverse effect on ordinary workers" (54). Maciunas' plan represents one of the earlier attempts at artistic interventions in "networks." Network sabotage differs from object sabotage because of its dramatic change in scale of opposition: while object sabotage requires proximity to the opposition – between the worker and the owner, between the citizen and the magistrate – in

network sabotage, no longer is the factory owner, or the museum, or the local government the target of destructive resistance (this might also be a point of critique against Malm's praise for acts like, for example, deflating SUV tires). Systems replace direct lines, and the target of sabotage becomes a larger, faceless entity that one perceives at multiple points at once, similar to how Calder Williams describes capitalism as "an enormous inhuman and self-drafting design project, both seemingly made for and by us, however viciously, and yet driven by principles and tendencies that can be assigned to no one, to no plan of action or authored project of accumulation" (np).

Network sabotage takes this new genre of opponent into consideration, firstly by simply (or not) representing its spread and stretch, and then by disrupting the paths of circulation and reproduction while attempting to bracket off spaces of alterity and difference. In this sense, network sabotage remains symbolic and communicative: just as the Fluxus experiment would have made visible the crossed lines of NYC postal system, acts of network sabotage highlight the routes of circulation and transportation whose control and effects are both at-hand in everyday life while also disparate, far away, and difficult to grasp. So Fluxus members make the postal system something one can *see* by disrupting it, by causing a failure that highlights its imbrication in our lives that passes unnoticed, and that Home makes clear is necessary for the transfers and communications of the elite. One can forget about the postal service, the Wi-Fi networks, the phone lines, while they are functioning; one cannot help but see them when they fail.

After all, more than a million kilometers of ocean-spanning fiber-optic cables have been laid on the ocean floor that carry 99% of the internet's data through the world, belying our sense of a wireless world that can flatten geographical distance and difference. As Nicole Starosielski puts it in *The Undersea Network*, there is a tendency to read our media and information culture

as one marked by dematerialization where "immaterial information flows appear to make the environments they extend through fluid and matter less" (6), which accords with Alan Liu's description of a network as "something that subtracts the need to be conscious of the geography, physicality, temporality, and underlying history of the links between nodes."[9] Invisible underwater cables (or distant satellites[10]) imply invisible networks that we can then fill with our utopian qualifiers: the internet is *decentralized*; it is *democratic*; it is a place of possibility, where one might leap out of constraints placed upon politically situated, material bodies. Contemporary debates around private control over popular social media websites and apps have made softened these utopian beliefs — there is less a sense that the "web has radically democratized journalism" and more a realization of "private property masquerading as the town square," as Mark Dery writes in his foreword to *Culture Jamming* (DeLaure, xiii) — but less so our attendant actions. That is, we *participate*, out of ease, out of the impossibility to do otherwise, in what we may know better than to participate in, a phenomenon Christopher Kelty explores as "contributory autonomy" (9, 249-251). The paradigmatic user agreements on any app are proof enough — but as are taxes that get filtered into military projects, or votes that legitimize as democratic an oligarchic ruling system. Sabotage tries to break the chain, at which point like a bone through the skin can be seen the structures otherwise and almost always hidden, and maybe now that they can be seen, and seen as *disrupt-able*, they can be changed. So the Invisible Committee writes of the inaccessible totality of networks, but the nearly almost present moments and nodes, the "fibers and channels… can be attacked. Nowadays sabotaging the social machine

[9] In the military and intelligence world, this invisibility — what is referred to as the black world — is a feature: Trevor Paglen notes that "Approximately *four million* people in the United States hold security clearances to work on classified projects in the black world. By way of contrast, the federal government employs approximately 1.8 million civilians in the 'white' world" (Paglen 4, emphasis his).

[10] Satellites are less influential in reality than in our cultural imagination: "Cables are now able to carry a greater amount of information at faster speeds and at lower cost than satellites (a signal traveling between New York and London takes about one-eighth the time to reach its destination by cable as it does by satellite)" (Starosielski 8-9).

with any real effect involves reappropriating and reinventing the ways of interrupting its networks" (112).

Sabotaging submarine cables, however, is difficult: snip one and data is displaced across other cables through planned redundancies – and in fact, one of the 400+ cables is damaged or cut by anchors or fishing boats or rocky ocean floor terrains every few days.[11] These are continuously repaired by one of the 25 or so cable repair ships constantly trawling the seas. Real sabotage done on submarine cables is done, most probably, by states: in May 2021, *Rest of the World* reported on weeks of internet disruptions in the Indonesian province of Papua, which the government blamed on a broken cable (Firdaus). This occurred, however, in the midst of a new cycle of violence between rebels and the Indonesian military, the effects of a pro-independence movement that has been active since Indonesian independence from the Netherlands in 1962. Whether the cable has been broken or not, the April-May internet blackout (one of several in the preceding year) represents the powerful control over the network the government possesses — even network failure is advantageous. And in Trevor Paglen's long-running work to photograph hidden sites of power, such as "blurry telephoto shots of NSA headquarters and some of the most secret military installations on the planet" (Wallis 78), he photographs submarine cables that, through cross-reference with Edward Snowden's leaked cache of classified NSA documents, he suggests are those the NSA has tapped. The photograph becomes not only a representation of the invisible, but also an eye watching an invisible eye that is watching us.

While states use networks to control movement – of information, people, money, things — network sabotage has a more utopian intention for activist saboteurs than solely the symbolic. The Invisible Committee, anonymous author tied to the French anarchist Tarnac Nine group,

[11] https://www.wired.com/story/russia-undersea-internet-cables/

writes in *The Coming Insurrection*: “The interruption of the flow of commodities, the suspension of normality (it's sufficient to see how social life returns in a building suddenly deprived of electricity to imagine what life could become in a city deprived of everything) and police control liberate potentialities for self-organization unthinkable in other circumstances” (119). How such a liberation happens and the real shapes it takes is an open question in the Invisible Committee’s provocative text, but the group, or members of the group, or people affiliated somehow (there remains some uncertainty about group belonging), was accused in 2008 of exactly what they described as they sabotaged France’s high-speed rail system, the TGV (Adamson 163). A *Time* report published soon after some 20 individuals were arrested notes that six sabotage incidents had recently occurred, and the Nov 8 incident was a “coordinated operation…that targeted four different rail lines in northern France and caused delays of nearly 160 high-speed TGV trains.” About the saboteurs, the report gives the almost heroic description that they “struck in virtually all corners of the nation without warning, and applied a high degree of knowledge and technical ability in putting the destructive metal hooks in place without being killed by the 25,000-volt power lines” (Crumley). No surprise, then, to read in *The Coming Insurrection* the question, seemingly well answered: “How can a TGV line or an electrical network be rendered useless?” (112). And, in defense of their call to “jam everything,” they explain, “In a delocalized economy where companies function according to ‘just-in-time’ production, where value derives from connectedness to the network… to block circulation is to block production as well” (125).

Blocking circulation and production are one thing to a company, but they are another to a person. This is both the intention and problem with network sabotage, which I suggest comes from its goal of making the everyday nonactivist *feel* the network. Time slows, travel plans are disrupted, goods are delayed – the web of the world lifts out of the subterranean and the

connections are felt in the realm of the individual, possibly even felt are the ways what is done might be done differently, what is accepted perhaps unnecessary. If the art of object sabotage comes from interpreting the meaning of a destroyed thing, the art of network sabotage is a more literal (or corporal) aesthesis, feeling the network in the body and by doing so reinserting a realness and physicality to the faceless, invisible networks that might now be intervened in. In the same spirit as The Invisible Committee, CrimethInc's *Recipes for Disaster: An Anarchist Cookbook* begins with a paeon to disaster, to "something interrupting the tedious routines that comprise existence for so many of us" (np). Like the mail being delayed and shut down by cement poured into packages.

But Maciunas' plan never happened. Fluxus members like George Brecht and Jackson Mac Low — neither of whom are criticized for quietism, Mac Low even editing the anarcho-pacifist magazine *Resistance* for a decade — quickly responded against the idea. Mac Low described the tactics as "unprincipled, unethical, and immoral" (Home 54) and advised Maciunas that Fluxus could not positively impact or attract working people "by making it *harder* for the ordinary worker to make his living or to get about the city or to communicate" (Oren 6). The more integrated a network is in everyday life, the more the unsuspecting and nonconsenting individual suffers the effects of high-minded activists — no matter if they might otherwise agree with their high-mindedness. Already a classic example from our own decade is Extinction Rebellion's October 2019 protests wherein they blocked the London Underground and Light Railway systems during rush hour, an act Malm critiques for this very reason, noting that in one viral video a voice can be heard shouting, "I need to get to work, I have to feed my kids" (Malm 124). As direct action meant to disrupt "the tedious routines that comprise existence" and "liberate potentialities," network sabotage can alienate the voices and communities needed to

mobilize against such a vast opponent. As symbolic action, network sabotage can work counterintuitively: the other side of an experimentally disrupted postal system by an avant-garde group is a postal system calculatingly neutered by a government seeking to, for example, call into question mail-in ballots. The other side of a building without electricity, which The Invisible Committee praises as an example of alterity from network shut down, is a building without electricity – for days. Might such actions end up justifying the presence (and protection) of the very networks meant to be critiqued, changed, and replaced?

I want to end this section by looking at an example of destructive network sabotage that made available an entry into and weaponizing of an otherwise hostile institution. This is the ongoing efforts by the indigenous Mapuche people (who are split by the Chile/Argentina border) to prevent encroachment and oil drilling on the Loma Campana plateau in northern Patagonia. The Loma Campana field is one of several that compose the 30,000 km^2 Vaca Muerta Formation, located mostly in Argentina (M7red). As recounted in *The Funambulist* by Buenos Aires based research groups M7red and Arena Documenta, the privatization of the Argentian oil company Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales (YPF), growth of oil drilling, and the 2010 rediscovery of a reservoir of shale gas has led to territorial occupation by not only the YPF but its multinational partners (such as Chevron). Concomitantly, consistent tactics of resistance employed by the Mapuche have arisen, as they have blocked access roads and demanded land rights for the last 20 years in response to these encroachments, often undergoing "violent repression and human rights abuses by the provincial state police" in response (Cárcamo-Huechante 62-3). This has accelerated in the last decade, specifically around the Loma Campana plateau. M7Red and Arena Documenta recount how in 2013 the Campo Maripe community (or the "Lof" Campo Maripe) of the Mapuche confronted security officers seeking to evict the

community by pouring 5-liter fuel cans out over fracking tower bases (the cans were filled cleaning product but gave the appearance of being fuel) while "a group of women climbed the tower chained themselves to the structure. For 48 days, six oil workers teams were stuck and unable to work."

Mapuche resistance caused slowdown after slowdown, an enforced ca'canny this time directed at nodes of the oil companies' vast network. The goal was not to stop the oil companies nor foreclose upon all drilling and fracking activities, but a more termite-level aim of guarding a land. But sabotage alone would not have achieved this aim: the occupation of fracking towers (and YPF offices in the nearby capital city of Nuequén) led rather to an agreement with the government to appoint experts to rule on the Lof's ancestral land claims, which had not been officially recognized and thus disallowed the Lof from the protections afforded Indigenous land (Goñi). To the political and corporate authorities' frustration, the committee supported the Lof's claims, creating a map that limned the community's historical borders, which overlapped with Chevron and YPF's oil field: "This map became the starting point of a 'counter cartographic process' that brought unease to oil companies and media outlets. Since then, companies and landowners are suing the Lof Campo Maripe for usurpation" (M7red). Court cases are ongoing, but the movement I want to highlight here is how sabotage's work stoppage avoids some of the critiques or counter-resistances mentioned above. First, it was a community-wide practice on multiple levels — the specific Lof reached an agreement to take action within its own community, and then also "with the cooperation of the Mapuche Confederation and other allied organizations." Sabotage was not done on the part of a community that did not ask for it, nor in a way that prevented participation, nor even in an isolated fashion: a counter-network was invoked and plans were disseminated transparently among both activists and community members.

Secondly, the sabotage act was part of a longer process of resistance that *included* state institutions, making use of both governmental legitimacy and academic expertise. Rather than elite technologies and knowledges that serve elite actors — the use of maps by energy companies to track and discover resources and connect them to their multinational networks, for example — the Mapuche were able to parasite, to join as unwanted participants, the mapmaking process which in turn recognized this peoples' territorial claim. Sabotage, for the Mapuche, has been one part of a multi-front resistance project seeking territorial sovereignty, and through its slowdowns, it created a space for another tactic – the hacking of institutions for their own benefit.[12]

Noise on the Line: Parasite Sabotage

It's not actually *Art* that got you down, you know that. It's that those moments of energy and connection, like something was happening, bursting out of the text and off the canvas, began to stretch further from each other, and in between a new series of activities and practices seemed to take up so much time, so much effort. You had to know about gallery openings and who was getting press, the up-and-comers and the one-hit-wonders and the on-the-decliners. There were bureaucracies and forms, on one side a standardization of something you thought was meant to flow in its unexpected currents and on the other a financialization that seemed tied to the whims of the wealthy more than what any random group might find stimulating, interesting, provocative, beautiful. There was just so much in Art that wasn't art anymore. And so much that was business. Destruction was one impulse. Giving form, even if for a brief moment, to anger.

[12] While in Argentina, the situation is positive enough where M7red and Arena Documenta can write that, "a reconstruction process of the Mapuche people inhabiting the current Argentine territory is happening," it is important to note that the scene across the border in Chile is quite different, as the Chilean government has continually labeled Mapuche resistors "terrorists" (M7red).

But another impulse was exciting and creative: seeking out the loopholes or hidden spaces or overlooked acts where you could return to those original energies and connections, where you could make something again but this time just ignore or cut out the whole stupid vast consuming apparatus of management and money. What if you didn't destroy art but slipped it into life and living, what if you didn't see networks as a problem but a possibility, there to be taken advantage of. You make an artwork but on a postcard, *as* a postcard, and you send it to your friend, who feels compelled now to do similarly. Sometimes drawings but often you and your growing network of everyday artists scour recycled ticket stubs and magazine clippings to make assemblages or play off the form of the letter itself, crafting their own stamps (Saper 56). As artworks, each piece is perhaps ephemeral, maybe this one was less developed than that one, this one clearly a failed experiment, another an unexpected masterpiece — but this doesn't matter as much, because as a project, as a practice, it is a way to see the world and share the world with specific, intentionally chosen others. A bound set, but one where entry is granted easily and enlargement always possible. An n+1 community.

Correspondence art began in the 1960s and almost immediately became international as artists sent art to each other in increasing networks. As Ken Friedman writes in the forward to the mail art anthology *Eternal Network*, mail art "has invited the citizen into the museum. It has taken the museum into the mail box" (Welch xvii). Mail art still exists, in the US and in Latin America and in Europe, latching onto the postal system to democratize art through democratizing a network: in his *Networked Art*, Craig J. Saper recounts a quote from Fluxus member Nam June Paik who describes what is at stake by relating it to Marx's revolutionary call: "Marx: Seize the production-medium. Fluxus: seize the distribution-medium!" (133). At once a call for parasitic sabotage — taking advantage of what is there — and a critique of object sabotage, Paik's

detournement recalls another critique of ANC sabotage levied by the left. When in 1986, two decades after MK's first stalled phase of resistance, ANC's *Radio Freedom* called for workers to "intensify their strike actions by sabotaging machinery, destroying documents, and making sure that commodities coming off assembly lines are useless," ANC leader and labor activist Nimrod Sejake argued that not only did such destruction signify "the inability of workers in that place or at that time to unite and use their collective power," but also it deprived workers of their own property (Sejake). Sejake wrote that destroying machines amounted to "devastating [workers'] property, namely, the means of production: factory plants, machines, etc., which are absolutely necessary for the production of the means of consumption to sustain the people – without which any 'liberation' would be meaningless" (Sejake). Like Sejake, though in a less Marxist register, I am suggesting that *alongside* the need for resistance and revolution, it is necessary to consider projects of alterity and human thriving that can use existing infrastructure as it is, intact, at least for now, for the immediate future.

This is not an argument for retreat: even in the often-utopic genre of mail art, other practitioners have seen its critical edge. In Mexico, Polish artist Marcos Kurtycz sent 365 threatening letters to Mexico's Modern Art Museum, one a day, "each reflecting the artist's inventive use of collage and his exploration of a wide range of printing techniques, including directly imprinting with ink traces of his own body on the letters" (Halart 48) and many Latin American artists who "conceived of their mailings as 'bombs'" (84). Mexican artist Ulises Carrion writes in his 1977 essay "Mail Art and the Big Monster": "It has been said that mail art is easy, cheap, unpretentious and democratic. All this is rubbish" (qtd in de Lacaze). For artists in autocratic contexts, like Uruguyan mail artist and poet Clemente Padín, the very privacy and hidden aspect of mail art was a threat: Padín was jailed for four years for "hurting the morale and

reputation of the army," and the Stasi in East Germany "was particularly worried about mail-art subversion," which led to a collection of mail artworks in an archive that "now also contains one of the largest collections of mail art in the world" (Saper 66).

Mail art, even its enthusiastic and unrepressed form, retains an illegitimacy, an incremental occupation, that is at once both about everyday life and about enduring resistance that I refer to as "parasitic."[13] I am taking the term from Michel Serres' 1980 *Le Parasite*, wherein he works through its multivalence (especially in French) and analyzes the systems and networks the word complicates. The traditional definition of living at the expense of another intervenes on our network maps where "the flow goes one way, never the other. I call this semiconduction, this valve, this single arrow, this relation without a reversal of direction, 'parasitic'" (5). The parasite is, in this schematic, an interception in a network — neither the station (or node or point) nor the relation (or message or flow) between the stations, but a third element. Serres' winding, slippery rhetoric is best explained by the second definite of parasite in French, one that does not carry over into English, which is "static." A parasite is the noise on the phoneline that is not you nor me speaking, but a third sound, the sound of the support itself, of the relation itself. It is not the call, not either of our stations, but "a relation with the relation," the static on the line that makes noise and cannot listen (or, is a one-way arrow).

[13] Along with James C Scott's theorization of "the weapons of the weak," seeing sabotage and resistance as part of everyday life for groups under oppression, this thinking draws from Asef Bayat's work on "social nonmovements," which is how he characterizes the urban disenfranchised who nibble away at the commons by their "quiet encroachment" (45). For Bayat, "*nonmovements* refers to the collective actions of noncollective actors; they embody shared practices of large numbers of ordinary people whose fragmented but similar activities trigger much social change, even though these practices are rarely guided by an ideology or recognizable leaderships and organizations" (14, emphasis his). An important difference: though these insights have been useful for thinking about parasitism in everyday life, my cases are still intentional acts of political resistance, which neither Scott nor Bayat require. "Intentional" opens whole new discourses: I mean it in the naïve sense as "done with the express goal of political change."

The parasite is not, therefore, the pest. As "interceptions" and "accidents in the flow along the way between stations" that are the bringer of "changes and metamorphoses" (11), the parasite is the noise that "gives rise to a new system, an order that is more complex than the simple chain" (14). Parasitic sabotage is then an act that does not *destroy* the object or the network but *hacks* it, crafts a relation to the relation, develops a way to do what had not been consciously or intentionally thought before. This means the goal of parasitic sabotage is not, primarily, symbolism/threat, as in object sabotage, nor institutional critique and revolutionary change, as in network sabotage (though both may be present in some degree): the saboteur is neither a hero standing in for what everyone *might* but *won't* do (or shouldn't do) nor a radical disrupting the networks essential to life. Parasitic sabotage instead points to living-with the institutions, modifying the objects, taking advantage of the networks. It is nonrevolutionary yet always active, mobile, and seeking miniature control points. It is worth quoting Serres at length here on his (startlingly timely, in the final sentence) "theory of transformations":

> Far from transforming a system, changing its nature, its form, its elements, its relations and its pathways (but who accomplishes this act, what set, what force succeeds? What does 'transform the world' mean concretely? What is work, really?), the parasite makes it change states differentially. It inclines it. It makes the equilibrium of the energetic distribution fluctuate. It dopes it. It irritates it. It inflames it. Often this inclination has no effect. But it can produce gigantic ones by chain reactions or reproduction. Immunity of epidemic crisis. (191)

I am bending toward the prescriptive what Serres intends as a systems-level description, what simply *does* happen. Like mail art, I am looking for ways one might *do* parasitism. I am drawn to a notion of "parasitic sabotage" because it brings together the kinds of creative hacking and repurposing that is already happening in the world – from Bayat's urban disenfranchised establishing alternative street economies to jugaad practices in India[14] to global online communities and the early Internet's "emergence of working anarchies as functioning organizations with substantial social and economic impact" (Benkler 30) – with aesthetic experiments that similarly draft off of already-existing structures for their own alternative, self-supporting communities. Telecommunications systems provide a common meeting point between necessary survival and creative resistance: I turn to the history of radio activism as it is not only essentiality parasitic, occurring on frequencies often controlled by governments, but also a meaningful mirror for considering Internet parasitism today.

Radio activism — or pirate radio stations — combine cheap materials and quick education that can be self-taught. Radios are so easily hacked together that amateur, or ham, radio has been a mainstay hobby across the world, with DIY kits on offer in hobby stores, online, and by individuals – Stephen Dunifer, the founder of Free Radio Berkeley and a leading figure of free, "microradio" in the US, has long offered kits to individuals.[15] Its ease of construction, low costs of maintenance, and abilities to reach distant listeners has made the radio a player in the crafting and consolidating of publics, which has in turn made it a contested technology of power and influence.[16] Since its inception, governments have sought to control broadcast frequencies

[14] See Amit Rai's 2019 *Jugaad Time: Ecologies of Everyday Hacking in India*.
[15] Dunifer sells these kits initially under his program called International Radio Action Training Education, or, significantly, IRATE (Ferrell 165).
[16] Radio "does not require producers or listeners to be literate; it can reach a small, local community or area; production and broadcast technologies are relatively inexpensive and easy to use; radio is very inexpensive to receive; and it is easier and cheaper to provide programming in an aural-only medium than in a televisual one" (Dunbar-Hester 4).

just as individuals and communities have sought to wrestle them back – both through institutional legitimacy and via more illegitimate, "pirate" means – to give voice to anti- or simply non-institutional actors. Governmental counter-sabotage tactics have involved everything from increasingly bureaucratic mechanisms for granting licenses, to jamming, to destroying equipment, acts that demonstrate the importance of this terrain.[17]

This history is truly global, diverse in its manifestations, and simply fascinating. From Radio Hauraki, a 1960s pirate station in New Zealand that fought the government control of frequencies by setting up a transmitter on a ship that would sail out to international waters to broadcast rock music (Blackburn), to anti-government Radio Venceremos broadcast from the hills by the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front during the Salvadoran Civil War who "south to restore the voice of *los sin voz*" (Mowitt 99), to the micropower movement in the US,[18] pirate radio has spurred new engagements with the state.[19] I want to tune here to *The Voice of Fighting Algeria*, the FLN station that is also the subject of a Fanon's "Ici la voix de l'Algérie," an essay published in his 1959 collection *L'An V de la révolution algérienne*. This analysis will also feature an interlude by Mbanna Kantako's micro radio program before returning to the Mapuche.

[17] Mowitt writes that the "decisively closed character of [radio] information traffic … has placed a high premium on controlling the production and transmission of broadcast signals, a premium that has been realized in the accelerated fostering of alternative or even pirate stations" (84).

[18] See Andy Opel, *Micro Radio and the FCC* (2004). "Micropower" and "micro radio" emphasize the overt activist projects of broadcasting and often involve tighter, more local communities, as will be seen with Mbanna Kantako, whereas "pirate" or "free" radio can signify anything from activism to rock to amateur stations broadcasting whatever they chose on already claimed frequencies. Jeff Ferrell writes that such stations, even if not expressly political, are still examples of community-oriented interventions in public space that "create new cultural spaces, new arrangements of public meaning" (176).

[19] It has also affected the corporate sphere: in her dissertation, Zita Joyce writes that while radio in Northern Europe posed themselves "as a response to the state control of broadcasting," "In the US, by contrast, the focus of radio piracy has tended to be a sense of over commercialization and privatization of the 'airwaves'" (96).

Fanon's analysis of the role of the radio in colonial Algeria charts the entrance of the radio through *Radio-Alger* – a French controlled station which formed part of the ideological resistance for the pied-noir community to the native culture[20] – before showing how this role shifted. Once coopted by the revolution, the radio recursively changes the Algerian people into a revolutionary community, teaching them new behaviors alongside the consciousness of a new mode of being. In other words, the radio is a networked conditioning device: in its "official" and state-sanctioned capacity, it unites the settler community and protects against the breakdown of French nationalism threatened by Arab influence. That the native Algerian population not only sees the radio as a product and disseminator of French culture (thereby avoiding it wholesale), but then in a revolutionary reconfiguration see it as a "weapon of liberation" (Arnall 124), shows what Mowitt refers to as "a confrontation between two resistances, a confrontation that, in challenging us to consider whether they are identical, provokes us to recognize the potential importance of resisting resistance, of sensing that something within resistance endangers it" (92).

I take the "something within resistance [that] endangers it" as the initial communal response to the radio by the Algerian population, that of avoidance and noninterest — "No explicit, organized, and motivated resistance was to be observed, but rather a dull absence of interest in that piece of French presence," writes Fanon (72). The importance of resisting resistance is the importance of parasitism, of viewing the enemy object/culture/influence not as a poison but rather as a host, a body that can be turned to one's own aims and benefits. There is a larger conversation this point, and parasitic sabotage, enter, for I see these tactics as linking productively with Audre Lorde's famous admonition that "the master's tools will never

[20] Fanon writes how Radio-Alger "sustains the occupants culture, marks it off from the non-culture, form the nature of the occupied," and ventriloquizes the settlers who claim, "Without wine and the radio, we should already have become Arabized" (71-2).

dismantle the master's house." Namely, parasitic sabotage accords with the less quoted follow-up: "They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never bring about genuine change." Perhaps not – this dissertation is an attempt to track, think about, and suggest tactics that are not always at the level of institutional change — but there are still actions one can, or a community can, partake in before, alongside, while waiting for, in preparation for these larger movements that may or may not come. Achievable mini utopias, say. Realizations of subtly different tomorrows, or the opening of hours of alterity (like a radio program), or as Serres writes above, ways to "incline" the system.

Fanon recounts this development, the beginning of the incline, in how the radio became popular among Algerian populations after 1956, when the station Voice of Fighting Algeria was announced. The absence of electricity in large parts of Algeria led to battery-operated receivers, an "improved form of the standard receiver" whose modernity, Fanon claims, must be seen as the result of a need (83). As he explains in a footnote, need can push for what outside of this context might be called "progress," just as it has for military communications where "in less than fifteen months the National Army of Liberation's 'liaison and telecommunications system' became equal to the best that is to be found in a modern army" (83). The Algerian people in marking off a space within colonialism for a resistant community adopted, and then hacked, a colonialist technology. Similar acts have echoed throughout decolonial history: the Invisible Committee write, "The metropolis also produces the means of its own destruction," specifically noting, "The US invasion didn't so much import democracy to Iraq as it did cybernetic networks… The proliferation of mobile phones and internet access points gave the guerrillas newfound ways to self-organize, and allowed them to become such elusive targets" (61).

Of course, almost immediately the Algerian's battery hack was countered ("the history of sabotage is itself a history of countermeasure"): battery sets were prohibited except with a military-given voucher and the French began seeking the broadcasting frequencies to jam the Voice of Fighting Algeria (84-5). Less combative but still aggressive counter strategies arrived in the US when micro-operators would broadcast on FM frequencies – which, as opposed to AM frequencies more commonly used by amateurs and hobbyists, "are more likely to cause interference with commercial operators" (Joyce 98) – leading to heavy fines and confiscation of equipment.[21] One of the heroes of the American micro-operator world is Mbanna Kantako, "a blind African-American man living on welfare in a neglected and troubled housing project in Springfield, Illinois" who began broadcasting from his apartment in 1987 using a low power one watt transmitter (Spencer 310). Not only did Kantako broadcast without a license, but his one-watt transmitter was significantly under the minimum 6000-watt requirement (meaning that the FCC only legitimized professional stations). Kantako's program, which focused on police brutality and social justice, had a broadcast radius of about 8 city blocks. Spencer writes that Kantako accumulated fines from the FCC he did not pay, and that for the first 13 years of the broadcast the FCC was careful to avoid more significant punishments for fear of protests in response. Kantako refused throughout to file for a license, claiming in an interview, "Air was here before the U.S. Then they'll say, 'Well, we got to regulate.' I never applied for a license cause I think it is degrading to humanity to suggest that they [the US government] is the ones that can pass them out" (McClarren). Finally, a group of federal marshals, local police, and FCC officers raiding Kantako's apartment in 2000, which Kantako recorded.[22] Though Kantako still

[21] Broadcasting without a license is a Federal crime garnering up to $100,000 in fines and a year in jail (Spencer 307).
[22] This recording is uploaded on Kantko's site: http://www.humanrightsradio.net/FccVisitAug122010/Human%20Rights%20Radio%20gets%20raided%20by%20FCC%20sept%209-2000.mp3

broadcasts today, his story is representative of the struggles of micro radio in the US: Radio Mutiny, a pirate station in Philadelphia, was raided and shut down by the FCC in 1998 (Dunbar-Hester 2) and Radio Free Berkeley was forced to stop broadcasting. Through the jams and fines and interventions, microradio has continued: as Ferrell claims, "The medium of microradio and media hacking is itself the message – a message about autonomy, resistance, sonic community – and also a message by which other messages are sent and received, other cultural spaces carved out" (177).

Back in Algeria, these cultural spaces were also carved out in a participatory way, countering the government's counters: replacement batteries were smuggled in from Tunisia and Morocco, and frequencies were announced on tracts that gave a 2-3 hour wherein *The Voice* might be broadcast: "In the course of a single broadcast, a second station, broadcasting over a different wave-length, would relay the first jammed station" (Fanon 85). Fanon recounts how the program was still "imperfectly heard, obscured by an incessant jamming," but that nonetheless one listened "not just by eagerness to hear the news, but more particularly by the inner need to be at one with the nation in its struggle" (86). That is, the radio was integral, just as microradio in the US has been (though with comparatively less risk for participants), to community-formation. The messages were passed through the technologies and networks parasited by the FLN and allegiant resistors, and then passed further along person-to-person networks as "every morning [the Algerian] would complete for the benefit of his neighbor or his comrade the things not said by the *Voice* and reply to the insidious questions asked by the enemy press" (86), filling in for the lacunae left by the jamming, parasiting the parasite by transforming its static (another parasite) to craft messages of resistance and combat.[23]

[23] "Since very little can be heard from the radio, listeners participate in an active and collaborative process of autonomous creation. In this way, the *Voice*, rather than a centralized vanguard that issues orders to its

Community formation is an enduring aspect of parasitic sabotage, and this extends to its parasitism of language. In *Subterranean Fanon*, Gavin Arnall writes how the radio "frees the French language from the colonizer by transforming it into one of the many languages that are used to communicate and organize the armed struggle" (125). This is how he reads Fanon's acknowledgement that "the same message transmitted in three different languages unified the experience and gave it a universal dimension" (89). French is drained of colonial authority but not, in the process, abandoned wholesale. It is not discarded as a tool of the Master unable to tear down the house, but is repurposed and downgraded, made horizontal: it is simply held alongside other languages, made *a* tool for liberation, rather than *the* tool.

This is how the Mapuche – the indigenous saboteurs in the previous section who developed modes of infiltrating and parasiting government institutions – also use the radio. In his article, "Indigenous Interference," Luis Cárcamo-Huechante discusses how, across Chile and Argentina in the 90s and 00s, the Mapuche used the airwaves to "interfere with or interrupt the entrenched, massive, acoustic colonialism imposed by the Chilean and Argentine nation-states and corporate media that regulate the contemporary broadcast environment" (65). On the Chilean side, this took the form of a broadcast entitled *Wixage anai!* or "Wake up!"/ "Get up!" in the Mapuche language of Mapudungun, which was broadcast in both Spanish and Mapundungun. Starting as a program on Radio Nacional de Chile in Santiago, *Wixage anai!* eventually found a home in independent stations where it countered the misrepresentation of the indigenous people as "either nonexistent or folkloric figures in the imaginary of national subjects that have proudly perceived themselves as European descendants" (56). As such, this program was one of a number of tools used to maintain a Mapuche "linguistic, cultural, and political" voice. Across the

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listeners, becomes the scene for many voices to collectively produce the meaning of the revolution through consensus" (Arnall 127).

border in Argentina, the Mapurbe Community Working Group developed an even more clearly parasitic form of radio intervention in the creation of short radio programs they called "micros," resonating with but very different from microradio. For the Working Group, micros were 3–5-minute programs that the group could ask local radio stations to insert in their regular broadcasting whenever they had available airtime (64). These programs would recount Mapuche history or language or cultural traditions, and were nestled into host programs and stations.

One of the undercurrents of this discussion that the Mapuche help draw out, which Kantako and *The Voice of Fighting Algeria* also make evident, is the importance of proximity for the radio. As opposed to the Internet's fiber optic cables that allow for any distance to be proximate, the physicality of radio waves determine an actual radius of possible listeners. Tetsuo Kogawa, a Japanese microradio activist, claims that the range of a low power station, for example, should map onto the range of a reasonable bicycle trip: "In that way you can be assured of community participation in whatever is being broadcast over the air. If [people] do have an opinion, they can bicycle over to the station and express it in a timely way" (qtd in Ferrell 150). For the Mapuche, the physical radius is a way to establish and carve out a real political space in the air, above the physical lands that themselves are jeopardized, settled upon, disputed, and sapped of resources.

In a contemporary moment of utopic, anarchic online communities jostling with increasing corporate control of throttled access, governmental espionage, and both corporate and governmental data harvesting, older technologies and the histories of their resistance and negotiation with larger powers still have much to suggest. One of these is the importance of language, translation, and diversity: this is a much larger conversation, but radio resistance can teach specific ways to both utilize global English while pushing against its dominance,

emphasizing multi-lingual projects like the mixed Spanish and Mapudungun of *Wixage anai!* or the alternating and consistently retranslated emissions of *The Voice of Fighting Algeria*. Simply even hearing this diversity in single programs, single listening events, on single pages, makes present the diversity abstractly understood as present but perhaps less often manifested. More pragmatically, radio can direct attention to the material substrate of what is so often elided from the general imaginary of the Internet, while opening this substrate to possible intervention and interference. Paglen, for one, notes this physicality by way of seeing the various access points for governments to spy on citizens – by *literally* connecting the physical network. Responding to the physical network led him to creating alongside activist and hacker Jacob Appelbaum an attempt to envision a network that is nonhostile through *The Autonomy Cube.* This is a physical "sculpture" that is placed in a museum and "sits on the host institution's Internet connection" (Paglen 59). The *Cube* is an artwork that simultaneously opens a free Wi-Fi network while routing all data through the Tor network, "which results in a more secure Internet connection than the institution's Internet connection. The other thing it does: it makes the museum a Tor relay, making it part of the Tor network's infrastructure" (59).

Paglen and Appelbaum's sculpture represents the play of physicality so important to today's media landscape: avoiding local espionage and tracking (some pirate radio stations, like Radio Venceremos, consistently changed locations as governments used goniometers to locate the signal source [Mowitt 100]) can still require local material responses. In other words, the ability for the radio to craft a community is challenged by forces attempting to track and locate dissidents through the very technologies employed to connect this community. Parasitic sabotage means acting in flexible and ever-mobile ways to understand the networks that one cannot escape but that one can live better within and make use of for their own means. It means not asking the

general public to suffer for one's own destructive or critical acts, not making the decision for a wider public, but taking this public seriously and seeking ways to improve life *while* resisting. Parasites after all draw energy from their hosts, and a parasite is less successful if the host dies. While the next world may require rebuilding entire infrastructures and the ways in which they connect individuals, learning from radio activists and artworks like *The Autonomy Cube* can help social movements treat seriously the desires of so many to simply survive and survive better. In this way, one not only tests what exists for its loopholes and alternative spaces but also invites others — the nonactivists, the overworked, the families — to join in creating the better world, for you are showing it to them, right now.

Fold:

The First Rule

Here on the other side of adolescence I am thinking again about *Fight Club* (1999). I was thirteen when it came out, the best age to be for it to came out, too young to actually see it so the mythos of the thing grew inside of me like all the other dark pleasurable shadows of being thirteen. And then the shock of finally seeing it! A movie that lived up to my teenage expectations, a grisly, dirty thrill somehow perfectly weighted for a boy in rural America who was taught to trust in violence and aggression and distrust sexuality and feelings and women. I couldn't get very far when I tried rewatching it a couple decades later, but that line, repeated over in new contexts, a meme before memes, "The first rule of Fight Club is you do not talk about Fight Club" (this is also the second rule) — I am thinking about it again, now, and how that line more than the actual fights or the sabotage plans or the anti-corporate messaging is what has lasted, is what has the real promise of something different.

It's the secrecy, the refusal to talk about what is important in order to keep it, that becomes attractive. It does in the movie: despite not speaking about it, the fight club grows and spawns more fight clubs and eventually a whole networked organization. (Strangely linked in my upbringing, it's also the story of Jesus early in the Gospels, tasking each healed person to not speak of what happened — though they always did). As a teen watching, and admittedly even now thinking about belonging and participation, I wanted to be a part of something real that only a few others knew about, sharing that intimacy made more intimate by its borders. But from the outside, *You don't talk about it* is a problem: a problem for the academic, for me, last summer,

wanting to see and hear those in informal settlements that were at risk of shutdown and dispersal. What do you do?

One answer is anonymity, and most people in squats whom I spoke with asked only for this. This is one way to hide, keeping the specifics from view but allowing the general, or the tactics, or the particulars only deformed slightly, to be represented. Now you can discuss the issues and strategies of, say, squatting, without putting any specific squats at risk. The knowledge can be disseminated and the subject rounded out with example, interview, visit, and research. An anonymous primary source is still a primary source. The research, writing, and academic production that comes out of it is still all of those things and can retain its intention to document and even teach — it's not even, after all, a completely impersonal anonymity. You can add true or true enough details that fill out the unnamed person or community, like Kierkegaard using pseudonyms, you can align the content with the character. The academic scene is unchanged.

But that's not really what the quote advises. It doesn't say, "Only talk about Fight Club if you call it Battle Boys." This is because the consequence to be avoided is not the singular entity of Battle Boys being shut down, but the opposite: the concern, especially in an anti-consumerism film, is that a popular new happening will be taken up, sponsored, given official colors and uniforms, spawn action figures and betting and commercials. That it will be coopted by the exact structures it came into being to deny. That it will no longer belong to those who belonged to it, but now will be vulnerable for jockeying politics and powers to claim. The same concern, I think, in the Gospels, that an act of difference will just become another tool of assimilation, control, and power. The touch of the corporate or political contaminates in a way that infects the

whole being at once, the blood drains out and all that is left is a zombie version of what once had real life.

In effect this what a member of one anarchist squatting group told me. It was the midpoint break of their general assembly, open to everyone, and I had emailed in advance to ask if I could ask a few questions, to say who I was and what my interests were. We didn't get to the questions in the first half, I sat and listened. I won't write more about the meeting itself, a premonition of how the questions went. At the halfway break one member asked me who I was and why I was there. It was not aggressive, they seemed curious. I said I was interested in squats and wanted to hear more about them, that I was working on a project and had some questions, that I think I was on-deck for even being given the floor. They asked what the project was and for whom. They said that the university was a tool of the state, that I was on the other side. They said I was taking knowledge they produced and reproducing it for the wrong readers. That I shouldn't be there.

It was a stunning series of comments to hear and I was off-balance. Partly because being told one shouldn't be in a place — especially when one already feels one shouldn't — is never not difficult, especially when it is said directly, and especially when said calmly. When the meeting reconvened, I asked my questions to the group awkwardly, promised to not record responses as they had to discuss if they wanted to discuss my questions after I asked them. Eventually, after the meeting moved on to other topics, I left. But I was also stunned by the member's comments because I couldn't understand how I hadn't already considered and processed these criticisms. There was a clarity that came through and made me feel dumb: how hadn't I been prepared for this? And what did I think about academic reproduction anyway?

I had had the chance, after all. In an initial early plan for the chapter, I wanted to write about maps, and in an article by geographers Sebastián Cobarrubias and John Pickles, an unnamed activist is cited saying, "Some of us are calling for the production of 'anti-technologies of resistance', arguing for methods that can't be replicated elsewhere, so evanescent that they can't be produced with a guideline to understand it" (42). The line impacted me enough for a checkmark beside it, but not enough that I took it as an object lesson: what does it mean to *study* and *write about* evanescent methods? Should I be grabbing at these passing clouds with my grubby academic fingers just to pull them down and turn them to stones? Isn't one of my most absolute convictions that a teacher should be able to give to their students? But what about methods or possibilities that not only challenge deeply ingrained norms of possession and living together, but also might become necessary survival practices in a world hurtling through climate migration, increasing wealth gaps, and the breakdown of possible thriving — do I communicate them or keep them private?

This isn't a paranoid fear, after all. While studying maps I came across the case of OpenStreetMaps (OSM), one of the most successful crowd-sourced, volunteer-maintained, open and free pieces of software. Founded in 2004, OSM "takes raw data submitted by volunteers in the form of GPS tracks or traced aerial imagery, and synthesizes it into complex geographic data through collaborative filtering and editing of volunteered information," and unlike Google Maps, OSM "represents a practice that is much more internally collaborative, but autonomous from any other existing geoweb project" (McConchie 885-6). OSM is highly accurate, especially in rural and less-developed parts of the world, and its usefulness has been noticed by entities like the World Bank and Portland's Traffic Authority (Anderson et al. 4-5). But its usefulness has also been noticed by corporations, who, unlike governmental or developmental organizations (as

ambivalent as one may feel about them), have entered OSM as editors. Anderson et al. track the increased and increasing growth of corporate editors in their 2019 paper, concluding that while it is too early to draw out consequences, "corporations appear to have their own map editing agendas that are probably aligned with corporate interests" (14).

This is the fear in an otherwise patient paper that attempts simply to map the mappers. In his piece for *Bloomberg*, geographer Corey Dickinson writes, "By the end of 2018, nearly a quarter of all road edits were made by company-linked accounts, including Facebook, Microsoft and Amazon." Their road-centric approach is meaningful: Dickinson quotes another geographer, Dipto Sarkar, who makes the point that "a good road network is key to a lot of future developments, such as navigation for autonomous vehicles." What is participatory mapping if what you are participating in is a better delivery system for some of the richest corporations on the planet?

OSM represents some of the possible risks of cooptation, that companies can not only zombiefy your fight clubs into primetime commercial events, but that they can also turn your belonging into unwitting labor. This alterity you've sketched out, the crevices in the desert of the real where you can tend a flowering cactus, is now made amusement park. Or, worse, a government gets hold of your way of doing things and sees in it a better way, and a replicable way, something that can be used for military expeditions or soft power, and how can you stop it then? If every act of sabotage encodes its counter, might every act of otherness suggest innovation?

I haven't reconciled my thoughts on the value of silence (he wrote). I can't discount the squatter's criticisms or the acknowledgement of structures so powerful and savvy that they can source their labor, stores, and means in even unlikely, unread places, like a tiny squat at the edge

of Paris, like a literature dissertation. But neither can I dismiss academic production and the university as the inauguration of state agents or corporate salesmen, nor turn away from the "promise of the public university as commons," as Casey Shoop writes. I don't know what to do with the methods, histories, and presents that I should not talk about, but that need to be heard.

Chapter Four

Living with the Great Number: Squatters, Participants, and the Fold

What did you do in the outside world today? — *Mysterious Object at Noon* (2000)

Fold: Squash

I asked how they decided what to eat, who would cook. These mundane, repeated, inescapably real practices fascinated me most, more than the archives room or the concert hall or the network of organizers and other squats. I wanted to know about the dumb brute fact of living together, the things that when I travel with friends or visit family take up so much mental space: what groceries should we get, how should we plan the week, how might we schedule the work? I was in the kitchen of Les Ouvriers,[1] which had maintained an unexpectedly long 20-year tenure, and one resident was softening great blocks of squash into onions and garlic in a large pot while we listened to music. One joked about the fresh squash brought from a nearby co-op farm that marked the "beginning of squash season," which this evening was starring in a hearty soup. There were eight squatters who lived there, in the well-established squat in eastern France where I was visiting. Sometimes there were more and sometimes less, and mealtimes often saw more people anyway, but eight currently maintained the space, lived in the squat, kept the lights on — literally, as I witnessed earlier that day when one had to check and fix some of the electric wiring. At my question the chef shrugged and turned to me. "There is no schedule," they said, "Cooking just happens."

I chose to visit squats in France for two reasons. First, the country hosts a diversity of squats — from intentional communities called ZADs ("zones à défendre," the most famous of which is the Notre-Dames-des-Landes ZAD that still exists today, split between a region

[1] In efforts to retain as much anonymity as possible when referring to contemporary squats, identifying details and names have been changed.

legitimized by the state and a region of illegitimate squatters) to smaller, individual anarchist squats, to state-sanctioned art squats that pose as part-workshop, part-gallery, part-museum (like 59 Rivoli, which refers to itself as an "aftersquat") to refugee-occupied warehouses and empty office buildings. Sociologists many different, overlapping typologies, of which I find Hans Pruijt's the clearest. Pruijt distinguishes five "configurations" of squats: deprivation-based, alternative housing strategy, entrepreneurial, conservational, and political (21). Sometimes, as I found, these configurations can overlap – I visited an old brick factory that housed an anarchist group, simultaneously conservational and political – but they provide an adequate language to differentiate an anarchist space stressing "la lutte," or the struggle, and using squatting as one means of struggling against capitalism and the state versus, for example, alternative housing squats, where a group seeks its own, separate mode of life, where "the basic desire is to be left alone and in peace" (26). The range in motivations for occupying a place, from need to political action to artistic space, implies as well a range of ways of living together. Anarchist squats were at times highly intentional and at other times, like Les Ouvriers, more open. Refugee squats could be individualistic and ungoverned and housing only men: one I visited was almost exclusively full of young men trying to gain access to France's arcane and bureaucratic system of visas, and their aspiring temporariness in the squat was evident (the gender exclusivity was a product of the intention for a visa, as women and children are more quickly and comprehensively housed in France, at least for the short term). But refugee squats could also be communal and organized, like one with long-term aspirations that developed a governance structure to meet and decide on residence issues (and included women and families).

Similar diversity exists in other cities and nations across Europe, such as in Germany and the Netherlands, where longstanding alternative communities have quasi-legal relationships with

the state, but my second reason for focusing on France came as well from recent and increasing legislation to criminalize squatting. This is a trend occurring across Europe, as Alexander Vasudevan points out (11), but with specific neoliberal and technocratic intensity in France: in the last few years especially, the Macron government passed the ELAN law, an acronym for "l'Évolution du Logement, de l'Aménagement et du Numérique" (or the Evolution of Housing, Development, and Digital Technology). Under ELAN's multiple goals to improve housing possibilities in Paris, a number of changes occurred that threatened social housing (the well-regarded Pierre Abbé Foundation lists among its concerns the sale of 40,000 social housing units per year to offset budget cuts ["La Fondation"]) and a change in language that swapped out "domicile" for "local d'habitation." As explained at Paris-Luttes.info, one of a number of politically resistant and anarchist leaning online collectives in France, this switch allows for the already severe punishments that were levied against those who squat private residences – a year in prison and a 15,000 euro fine – to be extended to include "locaux," or locales, which could be brownfields or unoccupied and unused commercial spaces or factories (Le Comité). The already heightened precarity implicit in informal settlements is thus made punitive: not only could squats be evicted, but squatters could now be fined and imprisoned.

Together, these reasons – the diversity and the illegitimacy of squats – coalesce to form a narrative of conflicting interests between the state and the people. As Vasudevan describes it, "The new wave of anti-squatting legislation [is] an attempt to protect the ongoing commodification of housing at a moment when many people are looking to alternatives that reassert the cultural, social and political value of housing as a universal necessity and as a source of social transformation" (12). To seek out alternative, informal forms of housing — a return to the "veritable explosion" of squatting in the 1960s, which itself "spoke to the emergence of an

'autonomous urban movement' that positioned itself in opposition to the state and as an alternative to capitalism" (15) — is to, at some level, resist.[2] For unhoused individuals with no title, simply dwelling anywhere is a way to live otherwise, for at its basic level, squatting is illegal dwelling and human necessity, which means that a squatter is designing their own existence and that this existence is separate from governing structures.

But there is a high degree of ambivalence here, in thinking about squats as resistant, in visiting squats to study them, the places I visited that welcomed me and the others where I was told how wrong it was for the university to co-opt the knowledge the squat produced, that I was on the other side and should leave (criticisms I only partially deny). There is ambivalence in coding as resistant the squatter colonies where the poorest of the world live, in reading leftist scholars condemn the immiseration caused by private property and other leftist scholars praise the ingenuity and creativity of the landless poor.[3] It's the ambivalence I witnessed when I returned to an art squat that over a decade ago, freshly graduated from college into the arms of the recession, I had emailed to join through Craigslist. I had read a nearly mythical account of S., the space's manager/maybe owner (this was never clarified, even later), an artist himself, and the chains he would use to bind himself to a canvas, to his assistants, to other artists. I read of a writer who refused to eat until he accomplished a daily quota of words. An aspiring writer myself, I couldn't escape the post's draw and emailed, receiving a quick response informing me a little more about the space and asking me to visit to get a sense of "vibe & personal chemistry."

[2] Pruijt admits that "political squatting" subtends his other configurations and is generically political – his "political" configuration is meant to include squats whose strategies do not fit within the other types and where "involvement in squatting is driven by an ulterior anti-systemic political motive" (44).

[3] I have tried to use "squat" and "squatter colony" as much as possible. There are a few reasons for this. The first is to avoid "slum," which, while it has its purposes for condemning state inaction — certainly why Mike Davis prefers it in *Planet of Slums* — can also be a "totalizing word" that prevents agency for those who live in these settlements (Neuwirth 17). I am also intentionally reading together the various scales of squats, from individual to whole settlements, as well as the various types, from intentional to need-based, in order to question informality from as many perspectives as I can in limited space.

I visited the space last year, finally, and it was remarkable for how unsurprising it was. The collapse of rooms like upturned Legos, the strewn and diverse artworks insecurely decorating every space, the scramble of paintbrushes, tints, coffee mugs, undecipherable scraps that could be wrappers or sketches or both seemed like it had been mined from memories I didn't in fact have. It felt like a living space, like a studio, like it was real.

Or, it seemed real. Over the course of our two-hour long conversation, S., who agreed to my notetaking, avoided questions about ownership and legality and who paid and how, bringing us back to speaking about art, creativity, the sociality that "just happens" when different people live together. This autopoietic community formation is common in how squatters talk and write, but also common is how practically and directly a squatter speaks about legal and property matters. They have to. They have to know the rules, what they are breaking, what they can do. This is evident in squatting guides such as those published by *ASS* (the ludic abbreviation for the "Advisory Service for Squatters," which has been printing handbooks in the UK since 1976): the most recent "Notes for New Squatters," for example, weaves its practical advice with explanations of relevant laws, like "Section 6 of the Criminal Law Act 1977" and "Section 144 of the LASPO" (the "Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012"). Later, contacting former squatters of the art squat, I learned a more predatory, unfortunately normal truth, that the average resident paid, that many felt tricked into living and staying, that yes a sociality appeared but in spite of S., who didn't live on the premises but came when he wanted and owned the place. A "money making scam" one called it. This was the art side of the rentier, another iteration of Mike Davis' claim that "renters, indeed, are usually the most invisible and powerless of slum-dwellers," left behind in the romanticization of the squatter (44).

Les Ouvriers, which like other squats I visited simply asked for anonymity, invited me to stay and see and eat and drink with them. It was a converted warehouse, a building split into three sections — a concert hall, a modular events and workshop space, and the living quarters and kitchen. My informal host, W., had moved in shortly before the Covid-19 pandemic and France's various lockdown orders. Though he had lived in a traditional apartment with roommates previously, he had been a participant in the squat's events, and eventually decided to join. When I visited, the events space was being used by a coalition of queer and nonbinary organizers in the city — local organizers, musicians, artists, and others knew the space was open and available for use — and W. and I chatted over glasses of water in the garden. He talked about how the space gave him time to learn electronics, how another member was in the process of setting up a home brewing site. Some squatters came with the desire to be connected to the city's organizations and movements; others came because of the freedom (lots) and the cost (little — though Les Ouvriers now has a more legal standing than other squats, agreeing to lease their land for 1E/year from the city). One joined us, having finished a boxing workout. That evening a couple had returned from a nearby co-op farm they had a bartering relationship with, bringing with them the squash. I didn't understand how cooking "just happens," having been disillusioned by S. and his similar claim for the spontaneous community he in fact seemed to dupe into survival mode. But it was true, the chef that night was hungry so they started to cook and that meant making enough for many. You cook for a group, a lot at a time, and it didn't matter who and it wasn't split by gender, everyone gets hungry, everyone cooks. The soup wasn't difficult. I peeled the squash and chopped it into cubes. Another diced onions. Eventually it all cooked down.

Fold: Participation

My intention is to think about forms of communal life through the illegitimate — because at least nonnormative, if not also illegal — act of squatting and through artistic practices that stress participation, specifically the exquisite corpse.[4] Squatting happens, it's real and material, this sometimes radical and always adaptive act of living with others. Participatory art is experimental, meaning that it tries new ways of doing things, and my gambit is that these new ways, these practices, have something more to offer than simply imagining another world, that they can, like squatting, make the new world, or instances of it, also. Or rather, I want this connection of artistic and political practice to sketch other worlds with one hand while the other stirs the soup of this world's already-present alterities. This is why I visited squats, spoke with squatters, and did amateur-ethnography which will appear here and again: seeing that other people live differently is one way to question how one is living already and might otherwise.[5] In an attempt to cross the gap from the symbolic and interpretative — from seeing, imagining, etc. — to the material, I propose one tool and two concepts derived from how squatting and art (specifically the "exquisite corpse"), at their best, deal with participation. The tool is the fold, and the concepts are institutional blindness and the ethnographic remainder.

Participation is a large, complex, occasionally weary concept: its seemingly built-in progressive politics has led to its popularity in housing policy and international development.

[4] There are a few discourses at play here, which makes difficult a synthesis of "participation in housing" ("participation in art" is below, in "Corpses"). Esra Akcan's *Open Architecture* (2018) begins with an immensely useful history of architects dealing with user-participation but does not mention the more anarchist trends of self-building that tend to be dated to John F.C. Turner, and specifically his 1972 collection *Freedom to Build: Dweller Control of the Housing Process*. Nabeel Hamdi sketches these trends in both *Housing Without Houses: Participation, Flexibility, Engagement* (1995) and, more directly related to housing development, *The Placemaker's Guide to Building Community* (2010). For a broader view of "participation" in and out of development and housing, see Christopher M. Kelty's *The Participant* (2019).

[5] This is to draft off of Ghassan Hage's definition of critical anthropology as a discourse that "invites us to become aware of and to animate certain social forces and potentials that are lying dormant in our midst" (55).

Governments and global institutions have tried since the 1970s to incorporate participation into their policies and plans. The anarchist architect John F.C. Turner provides a useful historical starting point for these trends. Turner's work from the late 60s and early 70s, drawn from his development experiences in Peru, shifted entire architectural and developmental discourses: rather than seeing architecture as a solution to housing needs, Turner saw the basic necessity of housing as an arena where direct participation is possible by the users themselves, suggesting models of "open services" whereby "the builder, buyer, or householder is free to combine the discrete services in any way his own resources and the norms governing their use allow" (155). That is, the user must be trusted to have a higher degree of local knowledge than outside experts, and to plan, find, and design their housing according to their own needs and desires (even if, crucially, that desire is to *not* design housing on their own), implying that what the global poor need is not more government housing, but money and freedom from government intervention.[6] Appropriately, Turner's essay is titled, "Housing as a Verb."

The shifts that Turner's revolutionary thinking created were and are surprising and contradictory: though a self-proclaimed anarchist seeking to describe how individuals and communities answer their housing needs outside of government and structural support, Turner became an emblem of the World Bank and IMF's transition to site and services projects. "Housing as a Verb" appeared in 1972, the same year that the World Bank first experimented with sites and services projects in Senegal, and in 1977, claims Nabeel Hamdi, the UN-Habitat Conference in Vancouver acknowledged for the first time "the informal sector as a legitimate

[6] An architect in the Turner tradition, Nabeel Hamdi's 1995 book is titled *Housing Without Houses: Participation, Flexibility, Enablement*, and it opens with his "hypothesis": "Building lots of houses for people and places one does not know, where money is scarce and statistical information is unreliable, is neither an efficient nor an equitable way of solving housing problems, nor is it good design practice" (*Housing* xi).

provider of housing and other services" (*Placemaker's* 3).[7] Though Turner saw open service projects as a way to empower the powerless and avoid the homogenizing, ineffective, and patronizing work of standardized housing, "sites and services" quickly became a way to bring squatter colonies more fully into global capitalism while allowing nations an excuse for inaction. As Mike Davis unsparingly puts it, "Praising the praxis of the poor became a smokescreen for reneging upon historic state commitments to relieve poverty and homelessness" (72).[8]

The full debate between standardized and self-help housing extends beyond the scope of this analysis, but I appreciate the ambivalence and shiftiness Neuwirth ascribes to it, what he calls an "ideological dyslexia" (295). By this he means that those who are considered on the political right, like Turner (implicitly) or Hernando de Soto (explicitly, an avowed believer in the free market, de Soto proposes tenure provision as the means giving squatters access to wealth via land possession) are also those who support the rights, agency, and creativity of the poor. Meanwhile, leftists like Davis, Turner-critic Rod Burgess, and progressive urbanist Peter Marcuse are more suspicious of self-help housing for their links to neoliberalism and individualism (Neuwirth 295), ability to "deradicalize urban social movements" (Davis 76), and failure to demand "fundamental changes in the social, economic and political system" (Burgess 1118). On one hand, the dignity of the poor who should be given as much control and autonomy as possible to reckon with a world that deals them a bad and worsening hand. On the other, the

[7] "The principle that emerged was simple. Don't invest in building houses that people can do in any case for themselves and could do better with a bit of help, but rather invest in the collective good that people can't provide for themselves: in land regularization, infrastructure planning, security of tenure, self-build opportunity and credit provision. These themes came together around 'sites and services' and the many forms they would take: open sites, core housing, roof loan schemes" (*Placemaker's* 3).

[8] In his extensive review of Turner's influence and œuvre, Richard Harris uncovers vital differences between Turner's originality and how his work was taken up by international development generally and the World Bank specifically, so much so that, in his correspondence with Harris, Turner bemoans that "like a cat with a tin tied to its tail, I long to shake off the 'self-help housing' label" (qtd Harris 248).

dealer itself, who should be taken to task and disciplined, if not wholly transformed, for more equitable structures.

I admit to flitting between these perspectives depending on the morning. "Autonomy" is a tricky thing to believe in, tricky to see how it accords with participation. bell hooks, for example, writes how the Southern rural shacks of Black populations that existed in her childhood featured an autonomy that existed despite, perhaps even because of, economic limitation: "No matter how poor you were in the shack, no matter if you owned the shack or not, there you could allow your needs and desires to articulate interior design and exterior surroundings" (150). Just as hooks sees in the shack a possibility for individual creativity and engagement with space, she also points out what is lost when the necessity of housing is provided and standardized by the government. Standardized housing "brought with it a sense that to be poor meant that one was powerless, unable to intervene in or transform, in any way, one's relationship to space" (150). hooks is drawing here from the concept of "vernacular architecture," which has come to imply "building traditions that lie outside canonical largely Western building exemplars created generally by formally trained architects" (Blier 230), but less pejoratively can mean "how the physical environment reflects the uniqueness of a culture," as hooks quotes architecture scholar Laverne Wells-Bowie (149).[9] Once housing is designed, built, and assigned by governments, the argument goes, what was vernacular becomes standard and uniform, where one was once a participant and had freedom to meet their needs now one is a recipient, passively living in a language they are less fluent in, and consequently have less power to wield.

But autonomy, as diagnosed by Davis and others, has a shadow: the other side of autonomy is not so much an alter-politics or a counter-norm but a doubling down, an emphasis.

[9] In his 1964 *Architecture Without Architects*. Rudofsky adds to vernacular the terms "anonymous, spontaneous, indigenous, rural" (1).

"Autonomy" can reify and privilege the individual in an extreme version of how American neoliberal capitalism already trims us single and solo: the health insurance tied to you and your job, the "American Dream" of your house, your kids, your impenetrable fence(/wall), your ingenuity and hard work that leads to success, your failures that lead to failure. The autonomy of squatting — specifically those forms engaged in by middle-class participants expressly seeking alternative spaces — rubs shoulders with this same individualism, one Murray Bookchin critiques among anarchist collectives by calling it "lifestyle anarchism" (9) and what in America we call libertarianism, noting its reliance on private property.[10] Already caught up in what the Squatting Europe Kollective (SQEK) calls its "masculine ideological rhetoric about struggle, claiming the 'right to the city', creating 'temporary autonomous zones' and so forth" (15), squatting can easily broach an autonomy where freedom is bound to the individual now raised up as "transcendentally sacrosanct" (Bookchin 17). But even to the side of these alignments of autonomy and individualism, efforts to increase autonomy — like de Soto's lifelong work to give tenure to squatters, thereby making their squatted land a valuable possession — bring with all sorts of unseen, or unwilling involvements. One becomes a different participant now: participating in capitalism, in gentrification, in land grabs, in disinvestment of public services. Christopher Kelty focuses on these sticky belongings in his critique of what he calls "contributory participation," the kind of participation all of us are always doing when we agree, for example, to the user agreement that lets a company mine our personal information. Early in

[10] Neuwirth notes the deep history of aligning property with freedom by quoting 18th century English jurist William Blackstone describing the right of property as "that sole despotic dominion which one man claims and exercises over the external things of the world, in total exclusion of the right of any other individual in the universe" (Neuwirth 19). Ananya Roy extends the right of property to, in the US, the status of being a citizen: "the American paradigm of propertied citizenship makes few concessions for the poor, turning the propertyless into the shelterless" (473). But though Roy notes that the Third World paradigm gives "legitimacy to the shelter claims of the propertyless," she recognizes the "Faustian bargain" of squatting and its reliance on "fickle-minded political parties and… volatile cycles of land grabs and eviction" (474). As noted, the issue of property rights and titles for squatters is also a litmus test for opposing philosophies of international development and aid.

The Participant, he puts forward important, difficult questions I hope will accompany this analysis. Writing about the experience of participation he voices concerns participants in a given program or group formation might have: "Am I part of this collective? Is that what I wanted? Did I just participate, or have I instead been taken advantage of?" (10).

Fold: Corpses

In "A Note on This Issue," the concluding remarks to the second issue of English-language literary journal *Locus Solus*, which itself ran for four only 4 issues between 1961-2, co-editor Kenneth Koch writes, "The strangeness of the collaborating situation, many have felt, might lead them to the unknown, or at least to some dazzling insights at which they could never have arrived consciously or alone" (193). This second issue is subtitled, "A Special Issue of Collaborations" and features a range of texts that include 8th century light Chinese verse, 10th century braided Japanese poems, antagonistic troubadour challenges, Futurist and Surrealist experiments, poems by a hoax poet crafted by two Australian writers, Williams Burroughs' cut-up poems, and work by fellow co-editors John Ashbery, James Schuyler, and Harry Mathews.[11]

Modest in its assertion, Koch's claim is backed by the issue's representation of a deep history of participation and the many forms this participation takes. In *renga* ("chain poem" or "linked poem"), for example, Japanese poets traded verses while accounting for specific formal and thematic requirements and so that in any three-stanza sequence, two complete poems must be possible: the linking of the stanzas must work to enclose both behind and in front. For example, "Three Poets at Minase," written by Sogi, Shohaku, and Socho in 1488 and translated for the issue by Donald Keene, begins:

[11] David Shapiro claims that *Locus Solus* should be regarded as "one of the basic texts in considering a theory of collaboration" (qtd Denlinger 82).

Snow yet remaining
The mountain slopes are misty —
An evening in spring.

Far away the water flows
Past the plum-scented village.

In the river breeze
The willow trees are clustered
Spring is appearing.

The poem continues for another 47 stanzas — *Locus Solus* publishes only an excerpt of its 100+ — and the poem notes at the end of the issue describe the "extremely demanding" art of this collaborative form. In this example, the middle couplet must act as both the terminal lines of a poem formed from the first stanza and the beginning lines of a poem that ends with the third stanza. It is, nearly five hundred years before Raymond Queneau's "Cent mille milliards de poèmes," what Queneau himself would describe as "a kind of poem-making machine," at once a repository of poems and a work itself.

In a form like the *renga*, each participant is equally a creator, never ancillary or optional. One idiosyncratic result of such horizontal autonomy is its unrestrained possibility: the number of participants here is only as restricted as means allow. That is, *renga* theoretically has n+1 participants, where each author is granted an equal status in reading and responding in verse to what has come before. Its freedom is both individual, each writer may write as he desires, and social, each refers to what has already been written, as the form demands internal coherency within its links. This social freedom admits the existence and even necessity of constraints: *renga* are difficult to write! Not only for a host of specific requirements and conventions, but also and more essentially because of the requirement to write to and from others. One's autonomy is cordoned and the resources one builds from are limited: there are words, a narrative

stream, connections, a basic logic that already exists. One is entering into a partially made scene and making from within.

As a social form, *renga* writers become a multiply voiced author by disappearing into the single poem, into the space where terms like "creativity" and "freedom" waver in their significations, where "participation" is an exchange and negotiation between the individual and the group.[12] Together, the numerous voices, dissolution of identity, and creation of a single work through elements of connected-difference relates *renga* anachronistically to the Surrealist game of the *cadavre exquis*, the exquisite corpse. Though made famous by its visual collaborations, the exquisite corpse first took shape as a linguistic parlor game in the 1920s where participants supplied a word to fit a grammatical structure — the classic consisting of a noun, adjective (or adjectival phrase), verb, another noun, and another adjective/adjectival phrase. The game received its name from one of the earliest instantiations: *Le cadavre exquis boira le vin nouveau*, "The exquisite corpse will drink the new wine." 30+ years after these exquisite corpses appeared in *La Révolution surréaliste* (alongside exquisite corpse drawings), *Locus Solus* republished three of these poems, translated by Kenneth Koch and attributed to "Paul Eluard & others."

While beginning with *renga* helps document the constraints implicit in the scene of participation, the exquisite corpse is, at least I argue, something like an ür-form of artistic participation. By focusing on it, I am taking a detour around or away from the debate about participatory art often summed up as Claire Bishop v. Grant Kester. Bishop, for example, critiques as the "social turn" in art where participatory art "is perceived to channel art's symbolic

[12] A 1969, multilingual poem titled *Renga*, co-written in Spanish, English, French, and Italian by, respectively, Octavio Paz, Charles Tomlinson, Jacques Roubaud, and Edoardo Sanguineti, proves by exception the power of this disappearance. Like the original Japanese version it draws from, this poem gives each author an equal status in reading and responding in verse to what has come before. However, the untranslated languages, while crafting a uniquely intended ignorance in the reader and drawing in readers from multiple languages to gather and partially connect, also serve to identify each author, obviating the anonymity in traditional *renga*. Thank you to Alison James for bringing this poem to my attention.

capital towards constructive social change" (12). Her skepticism of this ability slant rhymes with the critiques levied by Davis, Marcuse, and Burgess noted above: even if there *is* some kind of change, it isn't actual change, or the kind of change needed, and in fact might be complicit rather than counter. After decades of symbolic capital that has not appeared to effect a redistribution of literal capital, Bishop's objective of an "honest" account that denies the "false polarity of 'bad' singular authorship and 'good' collective authorship" (9) can feel like a tonic. (That is, until its own implicit polarity that aligns aesthetics with challenge and participation with cooptation maintains a vision of art (and the artist) as privileged, removed, and almost heroic in its difficulty). Kester, on the other hand, reads collaborative and participatory work as symptomatic of an already changing sociopolitical world. He quotes curator Okwui Enwezor who argues that authorship and the status of art become open questions during periods of political and social crisis (4).[13]

While there is a lot one can gather and process in this debate, I don't actually want to make a case for or against participation, preferring to leave its ambivalence an open, difficult question. It's simply too big and wobbly, too easy to praise as collaborative or critique as collaborative. I want to describe *this form* of participation, the way the exquisite corpse moves and makes open and restricts, while retaining the various pressures that might challenge it at least in mind. Maybe it works. I want to see.

[13] This debate has a number of moves to it, arguably beginning with Kester's 2004 *Conversation Pieces: Community and Conversation in Modern Art* and Bishop's response, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents," which appeared in *Artforum* in 2006, to which Kester responded, to which Bishop responded, and both then wrote new books — Bishop's *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2012) and Kester's *The One and the Many* (2011). Neither critic cared much for Nicolas Bourriad's earlier work, *Relational Aesthetics* (1998). A good sketch of participatory art outside of this debate is the edited volume *Collectivism After Modernism* (2007) as well as the *Participation* Whitechapel documents edited, in fact, by Claire Bishop in 2006, which provides a survey of how theorists, critics, and artists have spoken about participation.

In the introduction to his edited volume on *The Exquisite Corpse*, Tom Denlinger gives a specifically progressive spin to the form, writing that "the Exquisite Corpse exemplifies one manner in which difference is produced as a means of disrupting the normalizing of the hegemonic power of the current cultural regime." For Denlinger, this possibility, what makes the game "political to its core," is "the folding together of multiple realities and bodies" (xxii), while for others, it is the dismissal of the singular author's authority. *Locus Solus* understood this latter power, attaching as the Collaboration volume's epigraph a line from Lautréamont: "La poésie doit être faite par tous. Non par un," "Poetry must be made by all. Not by one." Many realities, horizontally organized, where "elements arrived at independently in an intersubjective context — in ignorance of the contributions of others —… invested the result with a miraculous potency for all" (Denlinger 95). Oliver Harris' above phrasing, in his contribution to the edited volume, is perhaps a bit breathless, but there *is* a truth to it, one you can test yourself by roping a couple of others into playing the game. No matter what class where I have introduced and assigned the exquisite corpse as a group activity, the result is thought-provoking, funny, and unexpectedly generous.

I want to linger on two of the preceding descriptions. "Generous" marks what I think might be a more coherent way to think about the sociality that "just happens" in certain instances of participation and communal life: the form of the exquisite corpse requires one to think about what comes next and what comes before; the links are immediate and visible; the fold is manifest. But even a half-hearted participation in the corpse keeps it going, and the lack of editing or revising means divergent, strange, even grotesque additions remain in the work — or

even become prominent, as the corpse traditionally encodes a kind of transgression by leaping outside of the normative body.[14] The only way, really, to ruin the exquisite corpse is to not play.

Secondly, Harris mentions the "ignorance of the contributions of others," which is the formal strategy of the exquisite corpse that most sets it apart from the *renga* that begins this Fold and why I want to position the corpse as the generic form other participatory methods (even anachronistically) derive from. Linked to the form's generosity, its blindness, that the writer knows neither what or who created before nor what or who will create after, implies a radical anyone-ness to the participants. Whoever wants, can, is invited to join. I'm wary writing this: "blindness" has a conceptual history of materially reinforcing already existing structures, used to pressure against policies of redistribution and reparation. But at the same time there is something worth saving here, a moral or a principle that allows for a person irrespective of their person to enter the scene of making and build the body together, which might only be a corpse when it's finished anyway.

Fold: Squats

In urban movement squatting, a close connection exists between, according to urban sociologist Miguel Angel Martínez López, "a broad range of political activities (meetings, demonstrations, direct actions, campaigning, etc.) and a practical development of collective self-management on many dimensions of life" (870). In this Vasudevan is clear: "The squat may have been a place that challenged housing precarity, rampant property speculation and the negative effects of urban redevelopment and regeneration. But it was also a place where one could (quite

[14] In her *Surrealist Collage in Text and Image*, Elsa Adamowicz writes, "The pleasure of transgression is associated with the social function of games, the pleasure of adhering to rules (grammatical and syntactical) while breaking the laws (of association and logic)" (57).

literally) *build* an alternative world" (15, emphasis his). While attitudes and ideals like these can be expected by the middle-class anarchists and activists intentionally leaving the mainstream to sketch out other ways to inhabit space and craft dwellings together, they aren't only there. One of my more surprising visits was a 200+ person refugee and migrant squat where squatters had taken over a large, abandoned transport office building in an industrial throw of Paris populated by loading docks and warehouses. Offices had been converted to living quarters with single burner electric stovetops in the rooms and in the common space on the ground floor a retrofitted gas range was shared between families. Unlike other refugee squats where inhabitants stayed temporarily while they navigated the asylum system, coming and going between empty structures, sleeping bags beneath bridges, and encampments, the office building squat had long-term intentions. The families and groups of men sharing the space wanted to stay, to stay *there*, in the building, in France, "squatting" as a layering of lived-in places where one has no legal purchase. This was political squatting, and squatting as alternative housing, and also deprivation squatting. The members of the squat had only a passing interest in the refugee process (all already knew others in the system) and had set up a representative-based governing structure based on nation of origin — a Chadian representative for example, and an Eritrean representative. You were not there long before the consistent invitations for tea and coffee, the hospitality that marks a home and a host more quickly than tenure and possession does.

This building accords with approaches to need-based squatter colonies, from Turner in the 1970s to Robert Neuwirth, who emphasize the innovative, creative lifestyles within these widespread informal settlements that are often viewed exclusively as a concentration of human misery. An example of the latter is Mike Davis's description in *Planet of Slums*, as poetic as it is dismal:

> Thus, the cities of the future, rather than being made out of glass and steel as envisioned by earlier generations of urbanists, are instead largely constructed out of crude brick, straw, recycled plastic, cement blocks, and scrap wood. Instead of cities of light soaring toward heaven, much of the twenty-first-century urban world squats in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement, and decay. (19)

I am neither attempting to color the impoverished with a brush of nobility, covering over real precarity, nor denying the multiple global factors, from colonial history to austerity politics to state failure, that have spurred and catalyzed the rapid growth of megaslums since the 1960s. But the existence of squatting can challenge the norms of private property on tenured land, of rents rising faster than salaries, of siloed individuals passively navigating cities they have lost or given up their rights to. It is, most centrally, a social fact that requires at least some humility and listening. Turner, for example, notes that government housing plans often overlook the "varying priorities of a family's existential or vital needs" (168), needs that asylum and social housing did not seem to meet for the families in the squat above.

One of the challenges squatting poses is against traditional conceptions of family as the locus of community. In his observational account *Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters*, Robert Neuwirth calls squatting a "family value" for the overwhelming majority of squatters who "are simply people who came to the city, needed a place to live that they and their families could afford, and, not being able to find it on the private market, built it for themselves on land that wasn't theirs" (9). But the informality of squatting, that one lives next to and with and mixed with others one is not related to, turns this family value into what Rana Jaleel calls the "queer

politics of home." Writing about Occupy Wall Street encampments, Jaleel describes "a site of care and kinship that…is not bound to bloodlines or the economies of privately owned and operated households." This is not a family set apart by forms of privacy but rather open and assembled: squatters build together, share resources, work to improve the infrastructure — water, electricity, waste removal — that benefits not just the self and its emotional intimates but also its proximate intimates, those who are close by virtue of being right there in the same space.

This is to say that a queer politics of home is one where family is best defined as the n+1, where others, space allowing, are invited. Squats like Les Ouvriers or the ones in Paris tended to be uncertain and ambiguous when asked how many lived there, because it changed so constantly. People came and went, stayed for nights or weeks. At Les Ouvriers, one member told me he learned about the squat while living at another squat, in Switzerland, that it was not uncommon for squatters to move between sites and their informal networks. In the refugee squats, turnover and new inhabitants was so common that larger rooms of squatted buildings were more flexible spaces where a dozen men might set up their sleeping bags. In some of these, transience precluded a kind of community except on the extremely local level of whom you shared a room with. At the refugee squat that was intended to *be* a home, however, representatives kept track of empty rooms, the space they had available, where newcomers might stay. There was less turnover, evident especially in objects that marked a kind of permanence: the communal oven instead of only privately kept hotplates, a childcare room with toys.

It doesn't always work, the squat's queer politics of home. There is suspicion, gatekeeping, strife between different groups living in the same place. The large refugee squat with a representative structure only developed that structure because of long running disputes and conflicts in the building: an intentional development of community formation that strikes

against more romantic claims of the social "just happening." Moreover, the anarchist squats I visited, for example, featured a gender and sexuality diversity not matched with racial diversity (this was different in alternative housing squats like Les Ouvriers). Though my observations are minor and anecdotal, race has long been an issue for anarchist squatting: in a 1974 issue of *Race Today* on squatting in Brixton, London, the writers mark 1968 as the birth of the "modern squatting movement" in London with the formation of the London Squatter's campaign, noting "there were very few if any black participants in the squatting movement" (140). However, the article also notes that despite the fact that "the young blacks have been informed by the white squatting movement," the Black squatting movement "has broken new ground" — specifically in its "organic relation" to the community in which they squat, as opposed to white squatters whom they describe as "floating bedsitters" (141). A radical, welcoming domesticity is a feature of squats, but it is not an automatic one, requiring intentionality and insight in order to establish a community that is connected to the one that exists already and to avoid reproducing the norms of the society one is countering.

Finally, squats challenge possession and consumption by reinterpreting the home — and, larger, the community — as modular, its resources as reusable. Like bell hooks' shacks, squats emphasize salvage, reuse, and repair, a logic of making do with what is around. This may mean cheaper building materials and the vernacular architecture of idiosyncratic construction just as it may mean reusing empty or condemned spaces, from abandoned storehouses to brownfields. While ZADs and squatter colonies can feature newly constructed homes with their own repurposing and their own politics of occupation — in Turkey, for example, *gecekondu* inhabitants build quickly, as finished settlements cannot be torn down, only those in construction (the term literally means "built overnight") (Anders 99) — urban squats parasite existing

buildings, often searching for those that are either abandoned or empty and owned by banks. No matter new construction or occupied space, squatters retrofit their residences, a give and go of free design against the limitations and constraints of the built space, neighbors, and larger community. As hooks writes of her grandparents' home, the shack was "a place where rooms were continuously added in odd places, tacked on, usually to accommodate the desires of the individual who was destined to inhabit that space" (148). Space in the shack is filled with excitement, change, "a sense of possibility." Because the space has not yet been determined, and is unplanned, it can become anything, can truly fit the wants and needs of inhabitants. And in a community of shacks, that which could be built expands out: hooks refers to Toni Morrison's *Sula* where matriarch Eva Peace builds a grand home and "kept on adding things: more stairways — there were three sets to the second floor — more rooms, doors and stoops. There were rooms that had three doors, others that opened out on the porch only and were inaccessible from any other part of the house; others that you could get to only by going through somebody's bedroom" (30). Eva's home is not only a lively, mutating backdrop to the family drama that unravels, but an opening to the town and the others, familiars and strangers who wend themselves in and out of it, the economies and emotions that course and pulse as if the house's stitched-together, serial construction imbues it with life, vibrates its matter.

Fold: Fold

Integral to the participatory form of the exquisite corpse is the fold. The complete words of the sentence are covered by the folded page, or what has been already finished is hidden except for the few seemingly disconnected lines that one then begins with. For the Surrealists, writes Denlinger, "to fold was to hide and to reveal at once—to hide the body of work that the

next participant might automatically wish for, and to reveal, in the few lines pressing over the fold, the possibilities of a ludic experience that becomes simultaneously both singular and collective" (xxiii). The collective drawn by the fold is thus in process, held in the space of an active present between a blind past and a blind future. That is, when you draw, you do not know what has already been draw — but neither do you know what *will* be drawn on the hanging lines you leave when your turn is over.

Folding is an act of separation and inclusion at the same time. You discriminate this element from that one — difference that remains different, rather than blurred into homogeneity — but both are still held, the *and* of metonymy. Susan Laxton writes how the Surrealists would pleat newspaper headlines, literally folding the pages to create new, amusing reformations (Denlinger 31), and the fold is the operative mechanism of montage, collage, and assemblage, those modernist tactics that even skeptics of the avant-garde like Peter Bürger wish to retain. The fold is the assertion of an argument or many possible in the collection of pieces without transitions. The hard cut, not the long take.

In a string of folds the specialist —architect, artist, academic — is not crossed out but simply humbled, becoming one of a chain of other interventions and creations. The perfectly drawn arm may be attached to a child's crayon drawing of a torso. I've wanted to know what this means for academic research, how to fold it. It's a hesitation and an interest at the center of my attempts and mistakes at ethnographic practice, because while, yes, of course, anthropology comes from historical conditions of colonialism, there are times "where reflexivity has become a substitute rather than a complement to what is by far the discipline's most important achievement: instilling in ourselves and in our readers the desire and the capacity to *know otherness seriously*" (Hage 94, emphasis his). I am searching for models of both research, which

means studying others, and reflexivity, which means incorporating into the study its own historical conditions. One such model is a film by Apichatpong Weerasethakul, *Mysterious Object at Noon*, which I end by discussing, and not only because of his invitation of others to speak and create, but also his responsibility to curate. To fold is also to curate difference, to let the hanging terms and lines of one piece create a new, only partially connected other thing. To see connection not necessarily as argument or thesis but as proximity. The extra move; the next comment; the digression and disjunction.

At the same time, I want to move beyond just research and models for it in order to think about how the fold and its twin operator of blindness might affect real planning, real housing. Exquisite corpse poems, and *renga*, and collages or assemblages — despite what I've referred to as their n+1 promise, these are finite forms and objects. In my largest class we created an exquisite corpse poem of 30 lines from 30 contributors, but at some point the number is too large and unwieldy. This is the same limitation and struggle when speaking about squatting: what happens from the perspective of the multitude? One of the challenges of working from the many is to guard and retain the humanity of those enumerated, to avoid generalization, and this also requires, at some level, ethnography. After all, the larger the number, the more internally diverse the group: how can the fold scale up from the individual squat, the intimate parlor game, to something larger and, possibly, hopefully, utopically, more effective?

Fold: Scale

A squat can be a metaphor for a community, for a city, even for a social system. The positive attributes of a squat — general housing needs met amidst individual *and* social creativity, an efficient use of otherwise unused or abandoned space and buildings, and the space

for personal, human autonomy and dignity[15] — are *very* positive. This is the essential and continual draw squatting has for those who adopt squatting as a means of alternative life, a draw Vasudevan describes as the "widespread desire to reimagine and live the city differently and to reclaim an alternative 'right to the city,'" (40). Often, however, attempts to spur and encourage these attributes reduce to anti-state proposals that promote private housing markets (Davis 81) or a general quiescence toward growing wealth disparity and deeper immiseration of the poor and the failure to recognize the struggles of renters.

But the problems Davis diagnoses, such as crony- and rentier capitalism, have not been resolved through state-funded social housing, which has also often proven unable to meet the actual needs of the poor while being easily coopted by the middle-class.[16] Alongside hooks, Turner and others have described the failures of social housing and the basic fact of available housing stock: solutions that begin at the largest scale deny the real and steady encroachment of markets at every level while disregarding the actual needs of inhabitants. Turner, for example, explains how social housing fails to understand the prioritization of "opportunity" by the poor over other housing qualities like "identity" and "security" (164-5) while Davis himself writes, "The incompatibility of peripheral, highrise housing with the social structures and informal economies of poor communities is, of course, ancient history: it's an original sin repeated over decades by urban reformers and city czars everywhere" (64).

Architects have tried to respond to these issues through design, often through proposals that Esra Akcan calls "open architecture," where the residents are integral and incorporated in

[15] Turner calls housing one of a number of activities that "can act as vehicles for personal fulfillment," alongside "the cultivation and preparation of food, the clothing of ourselves, the care of our bodies, the procreation and nurture of children" (153).

[16] Examples abound, but Neuwirth mentions the Nyayo Highrise in Kibera, Kenya, where four- and five-story buildings replaced a portion of the squatter colony, "in return, the local residents who were displaced were supposed to get apartments there. But, political conniving and payoffs, combined with Kibera's leadership being completely unprepared for the sell-out, led to the buildings becoming a middle-class enclave" (248-9).

the design and construction of a built space. Akcan catalogues the history of participatory design through a close reading (and walking) of the urban renewal project of Berlin's immigrant neighborhood of Kreuzberg carried out by IBA-1984/87. Her intent, alongside reviewing this history for its successes and failures, is to define an architect's ethical responsibility to immigrants and users, rather than to clients.[17] Akcan begins by explaining that the "open" in "open architecture" is

> related more to open borders than the open market, collectivity more than individuality, the openness of society more than the free circulation of consumer products, user participation in architecture more than author-architect, and the collaborative more than the single-handed designer (11).

Admirable as this is, the introduction ends tellingly, with Akcan expressing "the importance and urgency of open architecture as the translation of a new ethics of hospitality into design" (38). That phrase, *hospitality into design*, is where not only Akcan's work but much of the history she cites seems to tip its hand: architects as specialists must change how *they design*, and though hospitality may be a valuable ethics, it is the host who is hospitable: hospitable design, however participatory, subtly brings back the individual architect, their authority, and the separation of the participants as those receiving hospitality. This can err on emphasizing individual buildings and constructions, creations that point to their creators and less often address the most challenging issue of participatory planning and housing in general, which is scale.

[17] Akcan quotes Giancarlo de Carlo's 1969 "Architecture's Public," where he writes critically of architect's "submission to power and compliance with the interests of wealthy clients" (25).

What is required is something like scale-able participation that does not become design at scale. One direction I find useful is sketched by the less influential Polish architects Oskar and Zofia Hansen. In a short, three-page manifesto, the Hansens put forward the "Open Form," a mode of architecture and design that "unlike the Closed Form, does not exclude the energy of the client's initiative but on contrary treats it as a basic, organic, and inseparable component element" (Kedziorek 7). This is from the manifesto that the Hansens wrote and presented in 1959, and which is subtitled "The Art of the Great Number." For the Hansens, making the individual "indispensable" within the collective is a matter of "*leaving a margin* for evoking one's own latent essence" where the "all-knowing architect must realize, in the face of the high level of specialization in present times, that he does not know everything himself" (8-9, emphasis mine).

This humility, this admitted ignorance, that accompanies the Open Form differs importantly from Akcan's Open Architecture. The latter refers to specific buildings, a better attention by architects to users, better design — and I don't mean to deny these things their value. When Akcan writes that a theory of open architecture "views the architect as a participant in both the collective memory emerging from the past and the collective will making the future, rather than a genius creator, a tabula rasa mind, or an all-determining author," (24) it seems to align with the sociality and horizontality I am after. However, the intention to explore "a new ethics of hospitality into design" returns to the classical, authoritative architect as the one who can design these designs, who can have and enact these ethics, and limits scalability. To design for what the Hansens call "concrete people" as opposed to "the abstract so-called average" (Kedziorek 8) prevents large-scale projects, and Akcan seems to agree, basing her exploration on case studies of individual buildings in Kreuzberg.

The Hansens' Open Form — a vaguer, vaster sensibility — changes this perspective in two important and linked ways: the *lack* within the specialist and the *necessity* of the margin left for the user.[18] When the squatters in France told me that cooking just happens, these were the characteristics being emphasized: anyone might cook, and there is no planned, directed, designed structure that informs this cooking. In fact, the opposite: that cooking *just happens* implies an ignorance, an intentional not-knowing, a blindness. Whoever cooks can start cooking, can use the resources at hand and add as they desire or not, and the others arrive and eat (not always with joy, and sometimes with real exasperation, as I understood occurs in the latter half of squash season). This is exquisite corpse cooking, a blind n+1 set, a space designed, if at all, to be left alone. It is the existence of the fold.

The Open Form is a philosophy of the fold, encouraging its incorporation *not* just in design, but also, and more importantly, in policy. This recalls one of Turner's most foundational insights for how those in power, such as institutions, can encourage participation without it becoming meaningless or, worse, a kind of cooptation: the necessity of loosening and lessening housing standards. It is the "problem of standards" that begins Turner's "Housing as a Verb" essay, where standards and building codes are established based on what housing *ought* to be rather than what it *can* be (148). Turner could have expanded his critique to include more general housing laws like ELAN above, for just as standards prevent dweller-building and dweller-control, legislation that targets squatters prevent unused, empty properties from providing real

[18] I am reading the Hansens' manifesto for my own purposes: their practice is more aligned rather than at odds with Akcan's history of open architecture. Specifically, Oskar Hansen's goal of "designing for the great number," as Joan Ockman writes, led him to the creation of the Linear Continuous System (LCS) which attempted to reorganize Poland entirely, replacing traditionally circular cities with urban bands to "create an organic framework for the unfolding of modern life and for the future, a temporal and spatial harmony among people, society, physical nature and the amenities of civilization" (qtd López-Marcos 46). Though a large, hypothetical, unfinished project, Marta López-Marcos writes of the LCS: "It was not a utopian proposal, but one designed to be implemented" (51), documenting Hansen's attempts to gain state-support for its realization.

solutions to housing needs. Against standards and legislation, the fold allows for connected alterity through passivity and allowance, in this case by encouraging institutional blindness, a kind of letting go or not looking. How might spaces of legal blindness be established such that squatters and squatter colonies and the informal markets and networks of mutual aid that follow be supported?

To answer this question is to push against the very formations of a biopolitical state no longer only in charge of death, but also of life. However, asking "to tolerate, even promote, informality" must simultaneously avoid "the institutionalization of unsafe and unsanitary living conditions for the poor" (Roy 482). Too often, after all, the state *prefers* to be blind to the needs of the poor. I am positioning the blindness of the fold as an addition, not a replacement, to the responsibilities that must be demanded of the state and its institutions. This paper is not about those responsibilities, but rather the "informal processes of settlement and shelter [that] unfold in a space of negotiability" (Roy 475), and the additional need to respond to these processes. Pragmatically, blind development and negotiation is already in conversation with contemporary trends in housing proposals, from California relaxing rules in 2017 on Accessory Dwelling Units, allowing property-owners to build units for additional family use (SB-229), to a UK thinktank proposal to allow "streets to agree by supermajority on design rules to allow buildings with more storeys that use more of their plots" (Hughes 21). Of course, proposals like these are aimed at those who already have shelter, who even own homes and property. US cities almost exclusively interact with squats and encampments with "clearance and closure" actions (Dunton et al.). According to Ananya Roy, this fits with an American paradigm of "propertied citizenship" where the true participants in a given community are those who are titled, a different scenario than in other parts of the world where squatters are able to more wholly participate in

politics. Nezar AlSayyad, for example, writes in the introduction to *Urban Informality*, that squatters in Latin America "normally engaged organized political affiliation and established a reciprocal relation between squatter groups and the state," while in places like Egypt, squatters sought out state blindness and "political invisibility," this being the "best strategy for illegally subdividing agricultural land and transforming it into informal urban housing." Might trends toward participatory building codes, neighborhoods, and streets be used to extend and expand the notion of who exactly counts as a part of a community, who can create it?

Fold: Mysterious Objects

Dogfahr nai meu marn, or *Mysterious Object at Noon* (2000), is Apichatpong Weerasethakul's first film, experimental in its play with a variety of forms and genres: David Teh calls it a "road-movie cum documentary," and though Weerasethakul has denied its relation to documentary, *Mysterious Object* partakes in enough of the genre that it has been proposed and marketed as one, even winning second prize at the prestigious Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (Teh 597). This quasi-documentary quality is important for the authenticity of its incorporation of amateur- and non-actors, but it is the way Weerasethakul adopts and modifies the exquisite corpse that makes it an object lesson for participation.

The film begins from the perspective of inside an unseen vehicle, in black and white, listening to narration (the translation of the first line is "Once upon a time") and then to music, before the perspective switches and makes evident that the sound is diegetic, a radio playing within the truck. We follow, inside and outside, the truck from the city to less urbanized sideroads when the sound switches again and now what was listened to becomes what is produced: the driver begins to announce the fish and products he and his coworkers are selling.

When the truck stops, the camera moves to frame a single woman working from the back of the truck, and she tells a tragic story of her upbringing. The story is difficult to hear, involving parents who sell the woman as a child to her aunt and uncle, but when it ends the interviewer, still unseen, pauses and asks another question. “Now, do you have any other stories to tell us? It can be real or fiction” (9:18). It takes a moment for the woman to understand what is being asked, that the story can be from a book or it can be made up, but finally she begins, and as she does the film cuts dramatically: the story the fishmonger is narrating — about a disabled boy and his tutor — is portrayed on the screen and acted out.

This is remarkable in itself: the woman, by all accounts a non-actor actually selling fish, is encouraged not to tell her own story, which is not presented on screen, but some other thing, a created narrative. Her narrative remains over the filmed version and is not edited for clarity nor given suggestions, leaving instead a story whose amateur style makes it feel open, possible, subject to changes and whims. For example, the fishmonger interrupts her story at one point to talk about how the boy’s parents are never home, “but I am happy to see him with a good teacher” (10:59), asserting her own feelings as she gets into the rhythm and movement of her own plot. Rather than being mined for her trauma or directed in a way that retains the artist’s position as sole creator — Weerasethakul is listed as the film’s “editor,” not director — rather than being seen as needing the artist’s help to be creative or empowered, the woman is simply asked to create. Weerasethakul and his team listen to the story and film it as is — in his analysis of Grant Kester’s theories of aesthetic collaboration, Kim Charnley writes that Kester’s challenge to critical art “can be summarized in a call for an art that substitutes ‘listening’ for an addiction to statement” (48). Similarly, in its adamant refusal to direct its participants or plan their contributions, *Mysterious Object* substitutes “blindness” for an addiction to sight. To listen,

to be blind, means that the other's voice and action are unplanned and undirected; it means the other has a space of freedom and the "director's" role is, if anything, simply communicating this freedom where one usually does not expect it ("Do you have any other stories to tell us? It can be real or fiction").

Already this is the space of the exquisite corpse: a story of a road trip that drifts into a story of a boy and his tutor based on the participation of a new storyteller. The film progresses along a similar series of cuts — a collection of folds — where road trips primarily along the historically impoverished north of Thailand and beginning in Weerasethakul's hometown of Khon Kaen give way to interviews with individuals tasked with continuing the story. As they begin speaking, their narratives become the filmed story itself, at times retaining a voice over, at times spliced with intertitle cards, and at times the filmed narrative moving on its own, with its own diegetic dialogue and sound. The result is a morphing, disconnected, excitingly unexpected story of an alien boy, a neighbor who protects Dogfahr, a trip to Bangkok, and a timeline that suddenly flashes back to the end of World War II. Weerasethakul inserts his own found footage into the narrative (Teh 104) — scenes of war, for example, or an interview with the family of a boy who survived an airplane crash — but the thrill of the film is watching the participants take the thread and move it to their own devices, whether the storyteller is an elderly farmer getting drunk while mixing the story with gossip about her town, or an amateur acting troupe that begins piecing their additions together by speaking as the characters until they plan and put on a half-sung scene in a community theater. This cut, the troupe throwing ideas out and acting the parts themselves instead of Weerasethakul's actors (themselves amateurs), highlights the ways in which a social freedom is dug out and preserved throughout the film: Weerasethakul's listening opens the activity of a collective other, one that plays along with the frame of the story but is also

free to extend, change, and add. Listening is a feature of the exquisite corpse form, as Ingrid Shaffner writes in her essay on the 1993 exhibition that she assembled of more than 600 exquisite corpses at The Drawing Center in New York City: “Listening for the collective voice, collaboration reproduces the interpretive and communicative aspects of art at the very level of its creation” (Denlinger116). The ideas and movements and new additions folded onto the overall object are never themselves individual, are always, and always explicitly, the results of a collaborative process, a give and take, a playing with established shapes and — even at times nonsensically — modifying them.

Not only does this lead to the possibilities of nonsense (most notably at the end when a group of schoolchildren incorporate multiple aliens and tigers and deaths and revivals into the story) but also possibilities of disagreement and criticism. Speaking to white-collar workers on break, one comments, “Too much like a game. At least you should have a script” (49:32). The absolute freedom allowed for participants is freedom also for not-freedom, for scripted participation: the acting troupe composes a provisional script and half-improvised songs, and one of the white-collar workers leaves her addition to the story as a voicemail. “I want the next sequence to be a flashback,” she says, before seeming to read from notes, giving a structured backstory that leads to Weerasethakul’s incorporation of found footage. As the “site of yoking disparity,” the fold recalls Turner’s crucial reminder that the freedom to build is also the freedom to not build: the storytellers can retreat to forms they already know, can eschew improvisation for more reflective pieces, have the ability to work counter to the openness they might otherwise take advantage of. Similarly, for Turner, it was less important to stress self-help as the appropriate mode of participation and more important to stress *dweller control* (Harris 252). The dweller/storyteller can still make use of traditional expertise when they desire, and it is no

surprise that the more prepared plot left on the voicemail introduces some of the most active cinematic interventions by Weerasethakul.

The fold's openness (in an interview in *The Guardian*, Weerasethakul refers to his work as "open cinema," where though he has his own take, "sometimes that spoils the audience's imagination" [Rose]) makes *Mysterious Object*, and the exquisite corpse more broadly, a form, even a tool, for showing what an expanded community is like, how to do it, the process and the acceptance of requisite incompletion. In his essay on Weerasethakul's work, Isaac Marrero-Guillamón refers to it as "ethnographic cinema," quoting from sociologist Martin Savransky to call the films "alter-realist": "realism that takes the risk of asserting the reality of what is deemed improbable, implausible, marginalised, suppressed, irrelevant, even scandalous, and seeks to draw out its possible implications for the transformation of what is considered credible, reliable, and serious" (qtd 28). Alter-realism, like Hage's alter-politics, is about *the possibilities that already exist*, not the possibilities that might exist or the utopias beyond the present. Rather, it seeks in ethnography the remainder, that which is outside of the mainstream, which is hidden or invisible or made to be, which we are blind too. The ethnographic remainder is the intentional space given to a system — to a film, to a representation, to a community — so that it might expand, change. So that it might include another, and another again. Weerasethakul dramatizes this remainder by literally inviting those who are rarely our storytellers to add to the story, as David Teh writes, "betray[ing] obvious sympathy for the marginal communities and itinerant working people it engages" (103). Teh also mentions one of the producers of *Mysterious Object* who claims that it was intended to counter the Tourism Authority of Thailand's cliché-ridden advertising campaign "Amazing Thailand," but Weerasethakul himself explains his goal as "simply to engage people whose life experience was furthest from his own" (104). In this spirit,

Mysterious Object is a microcosm of itself, the real film as one that could simply keep going, keep growing.

Whatever the motivation, the result is a depiction of Thailand that exceeds the concept of Thailand: a national imaginary is expanded so far that it strains coherency. Partly this is because, as Marrero-Guillamón writes, the form "avoids hosting fixed subject positions or identities and instead generates the conditions for a process of co-creation" (18). By turning away from the biographies of each storyteller and instead to their stories — and yet, their stories as connected to real, specific, unexplored subject positions — the film engages in a shimmer of shared culture, in an uneven tapestry of what makes a people. Late in *Mysterious Object*, Dogfahr and her neighbor/paramour (who has previously saved Dogfahr twice) bring the disabled boy and the supernatural boy to Bangkok for lunch. The plot is uncertain, ambivalent in what this "bringing" is, as the intertitle cards read (in translation, at least): "Dogfahr and the neighbor kidnapped the boys to Bangkok and had lunch. These simple things the Siamese do" (1:06:30). Before the intertitles, Dogfahr and the boys are peacefully eating. After, the neighbor is shown approaching a shop owner or merchant. The neighbor pleads with the shop owner to take the boys as workers, trying at first to sell them and then to give them away. The merchant refuses, citing the bad economy, and the conversation is interrupted by a radio broadcast announcing the end of the war, but this moment is surreal nonetheless, a return within the exquisite corpse story of the very theme — selling a child — that framed the first storyteller's biography. What are the simple things the Siamese do? What is Siamese about this moment? The "kidnapping"? Traveling great distances for lunch? The bad economy? Selling children as workers? The war and the relief from war?

Mysterious Object resists responding, says yes and no, for there is nothing "simply Siamese" about the collection of individuals presented — not even a completely shared language, as the presence of two deaf girls signing instead of speaking their contribution disrupts even the types of possible narration. Instead of a unified national body, *Mysterious Object* copies the body of the exquisite corpse, whose unity, Laxton describes, "insofar as its heterogeneous fragments are pronounced against the armature of the human figure, runs counter to the concept of unity implied by the 'organic' work of art," and this results in a depiction wherein "there is no essence, no center to the image, there are only parts set in a chain of part production" (31). The figure is not *gone*, but opened, to additional parts, to extra details. Whatever it is that is "Siamese" is metonymic, the n+1 of what creates a shared culture and what creates a shared community.

The ethnographic remainder is not just the possibility but the *necessity* of a figure that will always have another attachment, and another, in consensus and dissensus, in repetition and change, with what has come before. It is the symbolic allowance of a material reality: whatever there is is not really, the concept designating the *is* only binds an undefined amount of an inexhaustible whole. Agamben defines poetry as the "possibility of the enjambment," taking the thought to its limit by claiming the final verse of a poem, because it cannot be enjambed, is not a verse (112). I am suggesting something similar in terms of how community (at any scale of its iteration, from neighborhood to nation) might be considered — if in a grotesque, n+1, warped, only-coherent-because-connected, metonymic Frankenstein's monster sort of way. Believing this, living it, is a moral imperative, first, especially in the interpenetrations of peoples and classes and languages that will only increase, can only increase. But it is also, if secondarily, a call for specialists to adopt another mode of work, which is Weerasethakul's, and which is

curation. The remedy for representation that freezes the given is a compulsion to point at and show and explain and historicize all of the pieces that are outside and extra. Show and tell with a twist: this too is here, with. It might seem, as Weerasethakul is criticized in the film, like "too much of a game" but games can be serious work.[19] Curation becomes an anxiously energetic task for the specialist to expand the bounds of what counts as relevant, and in doing so, gives the symbolic act of changing one's perspective the possibility, or hope, or opportunity to change policies or institutions or actions that impact these exquisite corpse communities. It also resists, always, the end, just as the schoolchildren do, even though by the end of their story everyone has been killed, they pause, and, slowly taking up the task again, reanimate the corpse:

> —Why not continue?
>
> —You can just tell them anything right?
>
> —Once upon a time… (1:16:37-1:17:43)

[19] Play and games are crucial to any discussion of the exquisite corpse, but even Turner refers to chess in housing: "As in chess, any one of the infinite number of games we can play is the product of an implied dialogue between those who set the rules ages ago and today's participants. To round out the analogy, an authoritarian housing system would amount to a pseudo-game in which the pieces are moved for the players. In this situation the intended players become pawns, and the real game is between the commercial and political powers that dominate instead of serve the people for whom they ostensibly exist" (172). In her essay, Ingrid Shaffner refers to mathematician John von Neumann's theory of games, explaining that he did not count chess as a real game, "As it relies on tactics that are short-term 'if' actions, with calculable results, it doesn't resemble those real games we constantly play in life, which are based on strategies or more open-ended 'what-if' abstractions" (113). Together, the possibilities and forms of these games provide an alternative structure for this essay, between the legitimized freedoms of chess and the extreme autonomy of the what-if.

Fold:

Nick's, or Fitting In

There was a bar I liked, "Nick's," that had a 5$ special: a nearly frozen can of Old Style and any well shot. Officially "Nick's on Wilson," the bar was near the Wilson CTA stop which was itself between my apartment and Nick's. Uptown was a real mix of a neighborhood. Go down a few blocks and you would hit Wrigley Field, up a few and find a couple of Vietnamese and Chinese restaurants and then Andersonville, a hipster haunt, or used to be, I don't know the cool parts of that city anymore. Nick's was across from Harry S Truman College, a community college shaped in a big squat rectangle, yet students didn't come in often. There were one or two bullet holes outside and many, many more apocryphal stories about how they arrived.

I don't remember why I first went. There was a well-known jazz club closer to my apartment, "The Green Mill," but the atmosphere wasn't right so I kept walking back when I was learning about the neighborhood. There was a fancy cocktail spot, "Larry's," and I admit that I like the put-on intimacy of places with human first names. "I'm going to Nick's." "I spent the night at Larry's." But Larry's was awkwardly stuck in the lobby of an expensive apartment complex with young professionals buzzing in and out right behind you, like you were sitting in a dark nook of a mall. Eventually I found Nick's, it's slightly battered sign with a picture of a pineapple and the name running across it and underneath "Liquid Luxury."

Nothing about Nick's stood out. The special was cheap and fine, a beer that tasted like Chicago's Protestant ethic and a shot that was a reward for the beer. I tended to get tequila. I would order the special and move to a high table that faced what would have been a dancefloor if people danced at Nick's and maybe they did but not before midnight, by which point on my

latest evenings I had left. Everyone else was at the bar. I didn't know, at first, what would happen, but I wanted a place where I could have a drink and let myself write without thought or plan, so I brought the can and the shot over to the table and began to write and nothing happened. That was when I suspected that this was a place I could come back to. The bar was as full as it usually was, five or six, the heads had turned to look at me when I entered and fumbled with my card — the bouncer's video game habit was only surpassed by his memory, so this didn't happen again — they saw me sit and open a notepad and no one did anything. When I finished my drink I ordered another and moved to the bar. No questions about the notebook, the man nearest to me eventually started to ask me the usual rundown, where I'm from, what I'm doing.

When I returned, and returned again, the same thing. I wrote for half an hour and then joined the bar, began to be recognized, small talk connecting into conversations that spanned visits, was duped into the Surprise Special, which in Chicago is always Malört, a sharp bitter botanical liquor foisted upon newcomers to the city. At times someone new to the bar would wander in and see me writing and begin to head over — I expected those conversations, which would happen elsewhere. I admit it's a silly thing to do, but something about the noise and conversations, of being quiet in a not quiet place and being alone in a social place, made me want to write. It was like a moment of reset in the day, where I let out words in whatever order and however they wanted to come out, a big block of unedited text, and then I could go on to the next moment feeling lighter. I'd call it an exorcism if that didn't give it an air of specialness that it didn't have. It was more like a belch.

Before the person who had picked me out could arrive at my high table, though, someone from the bar, not someone working there, just someone sitting at the bar, would intercept the person and greet them and say hey he's alright come drink with us. I never asked. It just

happened that way. I would finish and join the bar and chat and walk home. It happened more than once; I'll never not remember it.

It was a bar: there were conflicts and drunken shouting and probably worse. I don't mean to idealize it. But there were parts of my experience at Nick's that were so right that I want to put them down for once, not just to remember but also to register as worth replicating. I don't know how one would but when we think of the social at some point it's a bunch of us acting as much as we are being acted on. At some point there are counter-ideological apparatuses, places (like the university at its most ideal) that can teach us explicitly and implicitly how to inhabit a model of humanity that is not the model taught by the state and its own apparatuses (like the university at its least ideal).

The problem is that something like a Counter-Ideological Apparatus sounds at best extremely boring and at worst extremely culty. Like you are in your own free time going to attend a kind of reprogramming seminar. But if this zone is ceded only to the dominant ideology and its hard and soft power instantiations and pedagogical tools, then is the only place for resistance and relearning effectively the individual? What are the social formations that can be constructed that, as Göran Therborn writes of his "counter-apparatuses," "largely express, although in varying degree, the resistance and discourse of the ruled classes"? (86).

Therborn mentions formations that are mixed, like families and neighborhoods and trade unions, but only this last one is something more intentionally constructed. I would suggest the bar, or something like the bar, the café, the cantina — places that can be literally built, that incorporate a social function, but that allow this social function to discover and craft itself. A good bar, like Nick's (and I have wondered how American this social mixture is), features a metonymic and accepting community that does not assert itself, has also space for the individual.

But that individual is not held separate and apart, it's not a Hollywood saloon, everyone on their own with a hand on the holster. At Nick's there was a kind of baseline care that might be as simple as "looking out for." Acceptance, allowance, and care.

The draw that squats had and have for me is this reformulation of Nick's Logics into a lived space, turning it into home. I say that, but a benefit of places like Nick's that are not also homes is the ability to come and leave and the separation of life among different physical regions and personal groups. I never saw someone at Nick's outside of Nick's. Had I lived in Uptown longer perhaps I would have, but it wasn't important. Life was pulled and stretched and felt fuller for it, that there was less weight on my life in my apartment, my life at work. Squats engage with this mapping of the social in their own fashion, the network of coops and other squats, political organizations and community kitchens and, yes, bars.

At the most essential level, I am thinking about places like Nick's because I want to know what can replace the church. How incredible to have a building you entered into for free and sat and listened to someone lecture and then talked with friends and strangers about the lecture, and life, and your problems. You could plan your own thing too, and invite everyone to come to it. You could host protests, reading groups, potlucks. And often and in the best of them there were ground-up systems of mutual aid, the social was spawned in bizarre, uncomfortable, sometimes oppressive ways but still operated like that and does still for so many, the locus of the week. I was so glad to not return to the church of my childhood, to have left. But there is a desire that remains, maybe even a need. I thought the university would be that, but for all a university offers, it cannot offer the intergenerational, inter-class community a church can. This is essential for a counter-ideological practice, the essential conditions for the appearance and development of a social that is contrary to the siloed sociality of capitalism, its hierarchies. I don't know what

else can give that. Maybe a political organization, like DSA, can. Maybe an online social network can.

I know a bar can. This isn't a solution, just a recognition. Nick's is no longer. It closed two or three years ago, I don't know why, and new owners bought it. It is an LGBT friendly bar called 2Bears Tavern. I haven't been, I no longer live in Uptown, and I hope 2Bears can be the Nick's for another. There are many bars out there! Should there be other spaces? Why aren't there?

Conclusion

Maintenance Theory

Maintenance is a drag – it takes all the fucking time. — Mierle Laderman Ukeles

Soon *City* will open. You and I will be able to walk there. We will take a long drive through empty lands into Garden Valley, three hours from Las Vegas, past a former nuclear testing site and a once-proposed, perpetually stalled nuclear waste depository in Yucca Mountain — for a site to permanently store nuclear waste, it must be designed to remain safe for 10,000 years, and in his article "Desert Modernism," Joseph Masco quotes an engineer at the site who remarks, "I'll guarantee this tunnel for 100 years. After that I hope they'll have someplace else to put this stuff" (Masco). We will turn onto a plot of private property that for decades was cut off by a locked gate and No Trespassing signs and the threat of a rifle owned to ward off the coyotes. But soon you will see the gate open, maybe a ticket booth or a guard to verify, and I will drum the dashboard as we enter, finally, *City*, the colossal work Michael Heizer has been toiling away at with a rotating team since 1972.

It is meant to be stood within and unseen as a whole from a single vantage point, like a city, it *is* a city, maybe inhuman but scaled to the human. Built from insights and lessons from Aztec and Olmec and Mayan buildings — to build for longevity, the insight, and to avoid costly materials, the lesson — *City* is meant to swallow. Its great blocks that are like, but are not, buildings are separated by paths in a long yard of scraped earth. They are the size of world wonders, of great ruins, though they are not meant to be seen as the ruins of imaginary monuments nor are meant to become ruins themselves. *City* is meant to endure: despite the artist's former acceptance of weather and world and time as agents of mutation, Heizer has since

changed his thinking to more restorative, lasting ideals.[1] About the crumbling cuts of detonated earth in his 1969 "Double Negative," Heizer now says, "It will have had too short a career if it disappears" (Kimmelman).

Which means that when we are there, among the towering complexes, the great movements of earth, the digs and walls, the future of us is also meant to be there. We will walk our literal steps on paths that if all goes to plan others long after our deaths will also walk and even if the species fades away then birds and coyotes will flit and lope along. Which means that the creation of *City*, nearly 50 years of engineering and construction, a heroic artistic effort of sustained vision, of bodily weariness (accounts of *City* inevitably describe Heizer's broken body), will be nothing, *nothing*, next to the indefinitely long task of maintaining the place. They will have to keep it going, so that in every future tense it is present, recreating it — filling gaps, smoothing edges, straightening lines, whatever the case — in a way that the action is forgotten in its doing. Maintenance is, after all, a practice that "continuously erases the marks of its own labor (including the body of the laborer) rendering itself invisible. It's the kind of work that … is rendered invisible in order to make other things ('real' work?) possible" (Kwon 17).

Maintenance work thrums steady and eternal beneath the work that garners praise, money, titles. Cleaning up and scrubbing down, tearing the weeds and cutting the grass, the vacuum, the dishwasher, the clothes drier, their pulsing, normal noise — I knew when my father woke up every day, because he would say it, 3:30AM, but I never knew when my mother did, just that she was awake when I was, cajoling and preparing my brother and me for the day.

[1] This is a strange development in the artist's thinking, as the sublimity and nearly anti-humanness of the natural world have been integral to works like "Levitated Mass" (2012) where museum goers walked beneath a seemingly-tenuously supported giant boulder. When I had the chance to visit a work of his in Mauvoisin, Switzerland, another 2012 work titled "Tangential Circular Negative Line," my friend and I kept pointing to the incredible Alps surrounding us, wondering if that gash or that one was Heizer's, and none of them were, he had cut a few circles in concrete in the valley before the giant dam that stands at the valley end. The work was miniscule, paltry next to the scene.

Invisibility of the work and the worker. Those who do it are not usually those who write about it, as this kind of work is "carried out in large part by those most likely to be oppressed and excluded by its operations" (17). Not that *City* is directly oppressing and excluding, but the structures and markets that have supported and poured money into its construction,[2] like the Dia and Lannan Foundations with their grand endowments and wealthy trustees, are both consequence and driver of the everyday exclusions and separations that make "maintenance…the province of women" (Molesworth 19) and of immigrants. Or rather, those writing about it do maintenance too, they have to, even if just bathing oneself, maintaining one's own body, but the maintenance I perform is a small percentage of my day, I put it aside and get back to my "real work." It's not the same degree as the minimum-wage job, or the full-time job without pay, the mother — in her 1969 Maintenance Art manifesto, Mierle Laderman Ukeles writes, "The culture confers lousy status on the maintenance jobs = minimum wages, housewives = no pay" (2). For Ukeles, not only does maintenance make invisible its own labor by working against entropy, making the dirty thing clean, "like new," but it is also made invisible by a culture that opts not to see it, that devalues it.

Who will be the ones to maintain *City*? Has Heizer developed protocols to keep it standing? Has the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) begun training staff? And who does what? Art, after all, has another side of maintenance, which is conservation. This is still maintenance, but a specialized sort, keeping the art together and clean and whole, which is also a difference in the value of what is cared for, the walls versus the art object. *City*, however, as Land Art out in the open and under the sky, is its own museum, and the line of value, the

[2] For example, *The New Yorker* reports, "At the peak of the construction, the burn rate was a hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars a month" (Goodyear).

difference between maintenance and conservation, is fuzzy and indistinct. The groundperson might also be the conservationist, might also have to be. Heizer started *City* three years after Ukeles' manifesto, and one year before she would perform her *Maintenance Art Tasks* in the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, CT in 1973. These tasks included washing the steps outside the museum and the floor inside, variously locking and unlocking doors in the museum — a performance that "infuriated the curators, who felt that their office should be exempt" (Molesworth 21) — and a piece called "Transfer: The Maintenance of the Art Object: Mummy Maintenance: With the Maintenance Man, The Maintenance Artist, and the Museum Conservator."

As even the title demonstrates, the performance of maintenance by an artist enters into the non-artistic situation of everyday maintenance and specialist conservation, shuffling the elements and the interpretative possibilities of the object at-hand. As Ukeles' cleans, creating her "dust painting," the glass case (in this instance enclosing a mummy — specifically a female mummy) becomes a work of art, which obviates the maintenance worker's work and denies them access to the glass again. As a work of art, now only the conservator can clean the glass to maintain the work that Ukeles' did. Even though each instance of cleaning is the same action, Ukeles uses the aura of art to distinguish the values of these acts as a form of institutional critique from within the institution. That is, Ukeles' performance necessarily asks if the maintenance worker and the conservator have always already been creating art just as it requires the reincorporation of these "non-specialist, non-artistic" and "specialist but non-artistic" actions into the possibility for the art object to exist at all.

Ukeles' interest in maintenance arose from becoming a mother: responding to an interviewer's question about having a child, she says, "Maintenance has to do with survival, with

continuity over time. You can create something in a second. But whether it's a person, a system, or a city, you have to keep it going" (210). You can create and you can destroy — these are quick actions, heroic ones with authors. Whether they are planned or spontaneous, they fill time as moments in it: *there* is the origin story of the idea. *Then* is the date of birth and death and the anniversaries. It's easy to imagine them on the calendar where you can see how they begin and end, like watching the demolition of a building, almost over once it has begun. But there are two more overarching, general actions possible for our species, at the widest sense: to maintain and to leave alone, to preserve creation or preserve destruction. These are acts that last, acts that don't fill moments but time itself. Survival or anomie.

My dissertation has been in part an attempt to think about the long, enduring time of living before and through the revolutionary, spectacular moments that, like creation, or destruction, are more prominently seen and witnessed. Art is integral to this enduring time because as opposed to the eternal presence of its creation, the instantaneousness that Michael Fried writes about — "as though if only one were infinitely more acute, a single infinitely brief instant would be long enough to see everything, to experience the work in all its depth and fullness, to be forever convinced by it" (167) — when the *practice* of art is studied, then one uncovers a multitude of modes, forms, and experiments in how to reorganize the world differently. I have tried to detail some of these modes of making, from scores to the psychopolitical autopsy to parasitism and the exquisite corpse, while holding art up against political acts that imbricate themselves within life and simultaneously try to change that life and its prospects, communities, and formations. A hunger strike depends upon making evident a body's slow death, turning it into an impending threat. Self-immolation, a clearly spectacular act, is also an act that attempts to redirect focus to the enduring community that remains alive, and

that by keeping one's attention only on the immolation and immolator, one is missing the very intention of the act. Parasitic sabotage, as opposed to object- and network sabotage, aims to take advantage of the structures that support, at least for now, life. And squatting denies legitimate possession while accepting the heteronymous, n+1 possibility of living together, with others. Together, these practices resolve in something like creative maintenance: how to keep going but actively, without giving over to the normative powers and systems that are built by and maintain themselves, without also giving up projections of a better future that can be realized.

But talking about maintenance and keeping going has an inherent, real risk to it, which is quietism, maintaining the order, becoming slightly more comfortable with the oppression that exists, wherever you yourself are in that equation. That is, "maintenance" has a threat to it, one that says a better emotional registry in the face of a given injustice may in fact only better prepare one to submit to its continued existence. Another work of Ukeles, her 1978-1980 project, "Touch Sanitation," perhaps exemplifies this threat. In "Touch Sanitation," Ukeles met as many sanitation workers throughout New York as possible, shaking their hands and saying, "Thank you for keeping New York City alive" (Liss 47). This was a project of solidarity, to make visible the invisible and rid the public of their disgust for those who work with waste and garbage. It's a being-with, a sharing — but it does not change working conditions (not at the outset anyway), nor the class and racial differences implicit in such work, which leads to a necessary, unsettling question: in what way is this politics? To say it is actively political is to argue for a longer, more patient series of consequences where visibility leads to empathy which leads to solidarity and ends, ideally, in ethics, or understanding material differences within this solidarity and desiring that they be changed for greater justice. It is individual and predominately interior, occurring in the mind and feelings first and hoping for a great leap across the gap to outward action. You may

treat the garbage man better by joining with him in solidarity, but the organization of the world that keeps him on the bottom stays untouched: these are reparative politics.[3] In this way, Heizer's pessimism might be easy to accept: no one can live in *City* and no one ever will. It's a part of the world and we will pay stewards through foundations and museums and grants and national funding to take care of it — a microcosm, in its most optimistic reading, of how, perhaps, to steward the dying planet, as an object to preserve, not a subject to seek solidarity with.

Through the preceding dissertation's analysis of artistic experiment and political action there is also a difference — one of target and the directness of impact — that must not be forgotten. Though the title refers to "experimental political *and* artistic practices," I do not intend this conjunction to read as a balance-beam setting the elements as equal and transitive components. Not, that is, as a metaphor, or a substitution — but neither as simply another thing, a metonym or addition. Artistic experiments in form and practice are instead meant to be portals: properly seen through, the wealth of creative, local, contextual political practices meant to challenge normative structures while digging a space of life and living become formal, aesthetic, and transferable. This means that they shed their locality for a generality that one can take on, modify, and make local again to their own contexts and situations. But art also allows for a way to read and critique the problems in these practices, where the fit is off, where the intention is askew. Art practices teach not only how to read and interpret the rhetoric of bottom-up political actions, like the impersonality and community-interpellation of self-immolation, but also possibilities for adapting and transforming the repertoire of possible actions in a given context.

[3] I am primarily using the term "reparative" as a synonym for "survival politics" and "resilience," but there is as well its role in literary theory, namely as the term and methodology opposed to critique, or what Eve Sedgwick calls "Paranoid Reading." I am stepping to the side of this debate, even if Patricia Stuelke's *Ruse of Repair* (2021) helped me frame and process what maintenance and the reparative have meant to my dissertation, though these meanings diverge greatly from her work.

In this sense, artistic experimentation is useful as a kind of redeployment of existing actions — how squatting's alternative spaces, for example, can be recontextualized and fit into new locales and different networks, or how impersonal aesthetics can challenge the individualism inherent in viewing suicide through a psychocentric lens — and a development of new actions, such as the forms of parasitic sabotage I pull out in Chapter Three, or the sketches of institutional blindness in Chapter Four.

What does art as a portal — what I've been referring to as the *practice* of artmaking — sketch as its appropriate field of political action, and how might it more respectfully interact with ongoing political practices? Answering these questions is why I have used this conclusion to speak about maintenance and solidarity, which have very different pragmatic manifestations in the realm of social change and provide another way to think about art and action. Specifically, I want to add another term to the list, which is kin to the others: *resilience*. Resilience has become a highly ambivalent, very popular term in international development, derived from ecology literature to signify, "the adaptive capacity of social systems" based on "the ability to absorb shocks" (Joseph 39). Resilience refers to a direct, on-the-ground weaponization of reparative, survival-based ideals for neoliberal expansion. Dated to changes in international development in the 1980s-90s, resilience projects often substitute for state responsibility: instead of relying on the state, one must rely on the self. Survival and maintenance are in these projects operationalized in order to alleviate pressure for state-level reforms: the more resilience people can learn and practice, the greater the level of "local empowerment," the less need for social funding, and the fewer barriers for open markets (Joseph 51). For example, the 2022 USAID Fact Sheet for the East Africa Resilience Learning Activity (RLA) explains how the program intends to "build resilience against future shocks to the [Horn of Africa] region" following large-

scale droughts. These programs do not seek out better governance and large-scale preparation, or awareness and resistance to the austerity politics of IMF's structural adjustment programs (SAPs), but rather aim to "establish and strengthen systems and networks for CLA," which stands for "collaboration, learning, and adapting" (there is something telling about the frequency of abbreviations in the development world, a kind of expression consistently at a remove from its referents).

Programs like this are part of the wider set of participatory development, what Christopher Kelty refers to as a "postcolonial fairy tale" where international development organizations attempt to corral and enhance the agency of local communities and individuals without simultaneously politicizing this agency (193). Artistic experimentation can help us become attuned to these fairy tales, prepared for seeing through their logics and questioning not only their usefulness but their overarching purpose. This is, I argue, is due to the modular, transferable, score-like character of the avant-garde after World War II, a character I have tried to emphasize throughout this dissertation as integral to postwar artmaking. That is, so often these experiments are *doable* by the public that is reading or observing them. Take "Touch Sanitation," for example. As readers of this work, we are immediately implicated in a moral and political scene: what is my own relation to the sanitation work that sustains the city's operations? But Ukeles' performance goes a step further, in that it asks (or perhaps guilts) me about the actual action at-hand. I could replicate this. Or if not as a whole, if not seeking out every worker in my local sanitation department to thank them personally, I could at least do it to the garbage men who come by once a week, or the janitors I pass in university halls. I could stop, shake their hand, and thank them.

Playing it out in my head is horrifying. There must be ways and modes of general warmth we can exchange with each other in a cold world, but this act seems very far from the proper one. It feels immediately drenched with patronizing self-satisfaction, pinning a worker on the job to their place while I reap an internal, emotional reward for having expressed gratitude. It is for me, this act, not for the worker — and this in turn makes evident the impotence of the act, its emptiness. A moment might pass, and perhaps it is a fairly good moment even, perhaps the worker responds by feeling a kind of pleasure themself at being recognized and noticed, this would be the best-case scenario, but after it passes the structural inequalities that establish our positions — me as not cleaning, them as cleaning — and the concomitant wages and futures attached to these positions comes clattering back like a screen door springing shut.

Maybe I could have seen all of this by witnessing the performance, but doing it — even if mentally, for one of the benefits of artistic experiments, as opposed to political acts, is that they still have consequence as imaginary — gives me a critical clarity I believe can only improve political incursions, artistic interpretations, and theoretical understandings. Such clarity easily locates the problems, traps, and crossed lines of intention. That resilience is being *taught*, from one side — aid workers and program officers — to the other side — impoverished locals — recreates the asymmetry of the artist-sanitation worker dynamic. The emphasis on self-reliance mirrors Ukeles' emphasis on recognition, that there is an interpersonal loop of solidarity that forecloses demands made to the state or international institutions like the IMF. In both, the ultimate objects of the relation are individuals already beneath real systemic pressures and who are taught, emotionally or pragmatically, how to withstand the crush.

It is worth noting that the artistic efficacy and clarity I argue for in this example occurs through the failure of an experiment and artwork. In the Introduction I wrote about the "desire

for fallibility and change through enactment," and that by focusing on practice I am also focusing on claims that can be tested, that can be wrong. Art works as a portal precisely because you do it, and in doing it the possibilities of critique and repair are made real. At the same time, this is not to say that *only art* offers this clarity, or that a reader of resilience programming cannot imaginatively take part in those programs and see the same perils, but that art *can* do this also, that it comes less constrained by the implicit assumptions of what one is experiencing — how easy to disassociate from aid work and from those who, as in the East Africa RLA, are pictured smiling together as they collaborate on how to survive famine and drought, how easy to say it is other and therefore different and that one's attachments can only take place in the form of the aid worker, as patronage (of finances and affect).[4] Maybe not easy for everyone, but for enough that I think art objects are useful in allowing for an entrance into similar, rhyming scenes, as a portal, from a place of less distance, of more immediacy with one's own environment and situation. This can become, I think, a kind of critical solidarity, where one does not attach to a scene occurring in a different context to different individuals but rather to similar enough scenes that allow for comparison and complexity of understanding. If globalism has run the disparate threads of the world together such that we are interconnected, then we are connected enough for that.

Throughout the previous chapters, art has acted as this portal for analyzing the form and rhetoric of political acts, but the acts themselves have also reciprocally challenged artmaking. Just as artworks, from literature to film, can bring one into a space of acting differently, the experimental political actions I have used as anchors open possibilities that may be latent within the score, the impersonal narrative/psychopolitical autopsy, parasitism, or the exquisite corpse, and suggest ways in which forms of cultural production can enter one's everyday repertoire of

[4] See Kelty 183-192 for an amusing and poignant parable of participatory development and the ironic distance participants take on, knowing the activities may be silly but the money that follows the activities is not.

action. Similarly here, a form of resilience that is not taught by international development actors but rather grew local and specific can reframe the effects and interpretations of work like Ukeles' while stressing how wide a field reparative action is, how necessary it still is to find ways to speak about enduring time and survival *alongside* critique and resistance. Doing so takes seriously Audre Lorde's moving epilogue to her diary on cancer, an epilogue oft quoted for its alignment of self-preservation and self-care, these reparative acts, with political warfare. In this epilogue, Lorde expresses the "atonal combination of the mundane and the apocalyptic" that living with cancer, under threat, entails. From her personal exploration can be pulled out an expanded consciousness of oppression and survival. She writes, "I visualize daily winning the battles going on inside my body, and this is an important part of fighting for my life. In those visualizations, the cancer at times takes on the face and shape of my most implacable enemies, those I fight and resist most fiercely" (126). Personal survival and thriving becomes here enmeshed with political striving, just as it has been for at least the last eighty years for Palestinians living under occupation.

Sumūd (صمود), translated often as "steadfastness" or "preservation," is a form of living and resistance that developed in Palestine after the 1948 Nakba (or "catastrophe") that led to a mass dispersal of Palestinians from their homelands.[5] Though Meari notes that *sumūd* has been used to refer to Palestinians who initially survived the Nakba, the word as a concept is more traditionally dated to 1978, when "Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) recommended 'Sumud' as a way of helping people to remain steadfast in Palestine" (Marie 28). As Raja Shehadeh notes in his *The Third Way: A Journal of Life in the West Bank*: "Long before Arab politicians outside defined *sumūd* as a pan-Arab objective it had been practised by every man,

[5] In a context broader than Palestine, *sumūd* specifically refers to resilience. الصمود النفسي, for example, is "mental resilience," while الصمود الأكاديمي is "academic resilience."

woman and child here struggling on his or her own to learn to cope with, and resist, the pressures of living as a member of a conquered people" (viii). I mention these different origins to signify both the internal, populist development of the concept — lived before reified — and its eventual incorporation into a national strategy. As such, *sumūd* has spurred artistic representations that features elements like the olive tree, which is another native to the land and symbolizes both self-reliance and the impossibility of this self-reliance, as *fallahin* (peasants, or farmers) have had to become, due to Israeli occupation and its consequences, "wage-labourers dependent on permits, subject to movement restrictions and with little social security" (Simaan 512).

As a concept whose origins are in an assemblage of heterogenous practices that are themselves "not a choice but a necessity" for those in occupied Palestine, *sumūd* has a variety of definitions, but most revolve around everyday acts of what Hammad and Tribe refer to as "strategic perseverance." For these authors, *sumūd* is manifested in two general ways: "1) physical and figurative defense of individual and collective claims to home; and 2) women's reappropriation of homes for nutritional and economic caretaking" (3). For Shehadeh, *sumūd* is an essentially Palestinian practice in the face of occupation — he movingly writes, "*Sumūd* is watching your home turned into a prison. You, *Sāmid*, choose to stay in that prison, because it is your home, and because you fear that if you leave, your jailer will not allow you to return" (viii).[6] *Sumūd* thus refers to the "atonal combination" of mundane, everyday life of continuing to live under occupation and the apocalyptic events of resistance, on one side, and aggression, on the other. Acts that have been considered *sumūd* can range from not leaving Palestine for work in other countries to "smiling when standing in line at checkpoints early in the morning to get to work" (Hammad and Tribe 3) to homemaking. The threading of resistance into everyday acts of

[6]A *sāmid,* and the feminine *sāmdeh,* is an individual who undertakes sumūd.

survival and maintenance reflects the everydayness of the threat and oppression posed by Israeli occupation, for though, as Shehadeh writes, the demolition of houses makes international news, "it is more often the accumulation of the daily petty humiliations that makes a Sāmid or Sāmdeh crack under the strain" (30).

I bring up *sumūd* because it is an explicitly reparative practice — it's not only done for care and survival but includes quotidian acts that do not have a larger, critical meaning, like cooking with indigenous ingredients — that is simultaneously resistant. Each ethnography of *sumūd* points out its resistant quality: for example, in Sousa et al.'s study, one woman is quoted saying, "This is our land and our homes and they occupied us; we're not going to give it to them" (210). Meari nicely depicts *sumūd* as "a political being/becoming and a continuous engagement with the flows and constraints of the colonial situation that endows Palestinians with forces to endure their lives, through and in opposition to, the fixed colonial terms and relations promoted by the colonizers" (551). But *sumūd* is still a strategy of resilience, and the continued existence of Palestinians does not change — has not changed — the fact of occupation. Moreover, one is tempted, as has been done, to call this resilience "passive," especially connecting this passivity with the domestic, gendered terms *sumūd* often involves. While some aspects of *sumūd* are actively resistant — standing up to checkpoint guards, for example — the everyday aspect of both the occupation and the Palestinian response to the occupation means that resistance takes on less heroic, momentary qualities connected to home and hearth. As Ryan points out, "Social norms and gender divisions within Palestinian society mean that it is most often women who are responsible for the day-to-day upkeep of the home, cooking, cleaning and looking after children" (304), and this difference also implies a difference in how one experiences, and engages with, occupation.

Calling *sumūd* "passive resistance" does disservice to the explicitly resistant ideology shared by the women keeping the home and enduring the long time of occupation by establishing the same order of maintenance I sketched above: the invisibility of one kind of work, which is also the invisibility of one kind of worker (here, women), gives way for the "real work" of active resistance. But *sumūd* practitioners do not see this hierarchy and rather level the acts of *sumūd* and of fighting, seen especially in the concept of the *fedayeen*, or guerilla fighters (the term is etymologically linked to self-sacrifice, but is also used more generally for commandos and specifically for Palestinian freedom fighters). Shehadeh, for example, writes how "[The fedayeen] and I are fighting for the same thing," and that he does not join the fedayeen because "I have a job to do here as Sāmid" (57). And the anthropologist Ghassan Hage complicates both the notion of resistance and of *sumūd* by writing that "a dominated people cannot survive simply by resisting," further explaining that a people needs "a space or a dimension of their lives that is free from the very problematic of occupation" (167). Hage calls this space "the unoccupied," one of "heroic normality" (he adds that "it goes without saying that it has a dimension of resistance built into it") because it is not easy to live normally in an abnormal situation (168). There is a back and forth here of resistance and resilience, of action and life, that I don't mean to resolve — it is structuring, and essentially *un*resolvable, for just as Lorde makes clear, one simply cannot live apocalyptically at all moments. Hage quotes a Palestinian man who defines this give and take of consciousness under occupation: "We have families to feed and look after. We cannot spend our time thinking about nothing but the wall. We have to try to forget… We have to forget and we have to never forget… In any case, they [the Israelis] never let us forget" (169). It is important for the expansion of repertoires of resistance and the creative engagement with asymmetrically powerful institutions and states that reparative, survival-based tactics of

maintenance are understood and replicated as active and powerful *alongside*, not beneath, the more traditionally critical modes of protest like marches. Such tactics may not be exclusively resistant, or exclusively bound to the situation at hand, but they concretely excavate the futures one is also tasked with imagining.

I want to learn from *sumūd*, without making it metaphor or pretending that my position is the same as a Palestinian under occupation. That it isn't, that I am writing for a prestigious university in a privileged body with a powerful citizenship, does not cross out a practice like *sumūd* from pedagogical availability — in fact, I might argue it heightens the need for similar studies, such as *Ubuntu* in South Africa. Doing so is taking *sumūd* in as "radical cultural alterity," what Hage defines as "a mode of difference that is so seriously different from us that we cannot simply think it and make sense of it just by relying on our socially and historically constrained imagination" (53). This is a way to be brought outside of ourselves and placed in another possibility, for, as I would mark the spirit of critical anthropology, "if someone else can live this way, I might also, in some way" — it's a "comparative act that constantly exposes us to the possibility of being other than what we are" (55). Specifically in this case, *sumūd* stresses the consideration of time and labor that often go unrecognized, but it does so differently that Ukeles does in "Touch Sanitation." It is rather more akin to "Transfer: The Maintenance of an Art Object": *sumūd* asks one what it means to *do* this work in a given political scene, to act similarly and mundanely. There is little special about *sumūd* practices as practices, but rather in their formation under and against occupation, on one hand, and for unoccupation, on the other. These are, for the most part, replicable actions, gaining effectiveness and meaning through the social sphere in which others share and reform them as well, in which there is a communal participation of *sumūd*. In this *sumūd* operates as the microcosm of the dissertation and my optimistic,

consciously naïve — but also not, because they exist, they are happening — hopes for the aesthetic reorientation of political life around futures at once built and imagined. For *sumūd* is about survival but also, ultimately, return, to go back to the city. To be able to walk there, where one was and then wasn't and might be again. To join others in long drives between homes and fields and to have been able to because of what one did, and how one lived, today.

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