

FALSEWORK SCHOOL

VOLUME 1: BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF STUDY, THOUGHT, AND PRACTICE

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As a project of the Hic Rosa Collective, the Falsework School is committed to educational experiences as collations of concrete moments of study, thought, expression, and practice that dismantle the walls between teacher and student, artist and audience, participant and observer, and theory and practice. A typical learning day will be conducted like a facilitated community of study and practice. There will be a close study component, as well as guided discussion, ending with the production of a work of art or writing. While hailing from various academic contexts, we maintain that community education is not an extension or dilution of the academic classroom but an occasion to practice education without the various conceits, prerequisites, and instrumentalist and technocratic qualifications that beset institutions. Our approach to community education includes:

- (1) A concern not with methods of teaching and learning wielded by expert teachers and educationalists in a formalized system, but with what we all do every day, how we read, write, speak, and relate; with what it is to teach and learn in any situation, whenever or wherever it may be; and how we might change these toward a more just world.
- (2) An emphasis on relations within spaces we occupy, and communities we build and inhabit. A focus away from possessing knowledge toward how a community recognizes something as known. Activities of reading, studying, and working in each other's company allow the distinctions between doing, meaning-making, and knowing, and between various kinds of physical, mental, and emotional work to collapse.
- (3) A belief that community education is not supposed to perfect the object of knowledge for a community, but educates the community about itself and about the relations of power and inequality within it, making room for it to confront that knowledge. The fundamental premise of equality among learners in the educational space, with no qualifications or expertise placing one above the other, is what allows the inequalities within the wider community to become visible and able to be reflected upon. Hence, we are working not to instruct toward equality but to educate through equality, resisting institutionalizations of inequality and injustice, old or new.
- (4) A hope that, in the Berkshires and wherever else The Falsework School "pops up," this is an effort at collective study and self-reflection around social inequalities and injustices because it seeks to not replicate certain burdens of teaching and learning, presenting and spectating, evidence and ignorance, and their bearers, but to collectively own the task of building an ethos of equality and justice that works outward from the space of education.

"I have considered the poets," says he, "and I look upon them as people whose talents impose both on themselves and on others; they give themselves out for wise men, and are taken for such; but in reality they are anything sooner than that." "From the poets," continues Socrates, "I turned to the artists. Nobody was more ignorant of the arts than myself; nobody was more fully persuaded that the artists were possessed of amazing knowledge. I soon discovered, however, that they were in as bad a way as the poets, and that both had fallen into the same misconception. Because the most skilful of them excel others in their particular jobs, they think themselves wiser than all the rest of mankind. This arrogance spoils all their skill in my eyes, so that, putting myself in the place of the oracle, and asking myself whether I would rather be what I am or what they are, know what they know, or know that I know nothing, I very readily answered, for myself and the god, that I had rather remain as I am. "None of us, neither the sophists, nor the poets, nor the orators, nor the artists, nor I, know what is the nature of the true, the good, or the beautiful. But there is this difference between us; that, though none of these people know anything, they all think they know something; whereas for my part, if I know nothing, I am at least in no doubt of my ignorance. So the superiority of wisdom, imputed to me by the oracle, is reduced merely to my being fully convinced that I am ignorant of what I do not know." From Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*

"Poetic language that knows itself as such doesn't contradict reason. On the contrary, it reminds each speaking subject not to take the narrative of his mind's adventures for the voice of truth. Every speaking subject is the poet of himself and of things. Perversion is produced when the poem is given as something other than a poem, when it wants to be imposed as truth, when it wants to force action." — Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*

"It is thus not the procedure, the course, the manner, that emancipates or stultifies; it's the principle. The principle of inequality, the old principle, stultifies no matter what one does; the principle of equality, the Jacotot principle, emancipates no matter what procedure, book, or fact it is applied to."

The Master and Socrates

These are in fact the master's two fundamental acts. He interrogates, he demands speech, that is to say, the manifestation of an intelligence that wasn't aware of itself or that had given up. And he verifies that the work of the intelligence is done with attention, that the words don't say just anything in order to escape from the constraint. Is a highly skilled, very learned master necessary to perform this? On the contrary, the learned master's science makes it very difficult for him not to spoil the method. He knows the response, and his questions lead the student to it naturally. This is the secret of good masters: through their questions, they discreetly guide the student's intelligence—discreetly enough to make it work, but not to the point of leaving it to itself. There is a Socrates sleeping in every explicator. And it must be very clear how the Jacotot method—that is to say, the student's method—differs radically from the method of the Socratic master. Through his interrogations, Socrates leads Meno's slave to recognize the mathematical truths that lie within himself. This may be the path to learning, but it is in no way a path to emancipation. On the contrary, Socrates must take the slave by

his hand so that the latter can find what is inside himself. The demonstration of his knowledge is just as much the demonstration of his powerlessness: he will never walk by himself, unless it is to illustrate the master's lesson. In this case, Socrates interrogates a slave who is destined to remain one.

The Socratic method is thus a perfected form of stultification. Like all learned masters, Socrates interrogates in order to instruct. But whoever wishes to emancipate someone must interrogate him in the manner of men and not in the manner of scholars, in order to be instructed, not to instruct. And that can only be performed by someone who effectively knows no more than the student, who has never made the voyage before him: the ignorant master. [...]

One must choose to attribute reason to real individuals or to their fictive unity. One must choose between making an unequal society out of equal men and making an equal society out of unequal men... whoever takes this [second] position has only one way of carrying it through to the end, and that is the integral pedagogicization of society—the general infantilization of the individuals that make it up. Later on this will be called continuing education, that is to say, the coextension of the explicatory institution with society." — Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*

But what if equality, instead, were to provide the point of departure? What would it mean to make equality a presupposition rather than a goal, a practice rather than a reward situated firmly in some distant future so as to all the better explain its present infeasibility? This is the lesson provided by Joseph Jacotot's experience—*expérience* in the French Enlightenment sense of both "experiment" and "experience"—and the lesson whose political and philosophical timeliness Rancière affirms by recounting Jacotot's story. All people are equally intelligent.

The Ignorant Schoolmaster forces us to confront what any number of nihilistic, neo-liberal philosophies would have us avoid: the founding term of our political modernity, equality. And in the face of systematic attacks on the very idea, powerful ideologies that would relegate it to the dustbin of history or to some dimly radiant future, Rancière places equality—virtually—in the present. Against the seamless science of the hidden, Jacotot's story reminds us that equality turns on another, very different logic: in division rather than consensus, in a multiplicity of concrete acts and actual moments and situations, situations that erupt into the fiction of inegalitarian society without themselves becoming institutions.—Kristin Ross

The answer is to make equality a presupposition instead, the centre of practice in the present. And this is what provided by Jacotot's story, his experiments and his subsequent experience. The assumption is that everyone is equally intelligent, and it follows that prior knowledge is not necessary, nor is explication of. Explication in fact creates incapacity, supports the equality of the wider society, and infantilises students. It uses metaphors based in terms of velocity, speed or slowness. In our own time, pedagogy and its fictions have been globalised, so that the developing nations will never catch up.

Rancière develops his argument further to critique the idea of progress as additive, of conventional history as additive. Historians need to create an alternative, to capture the unique experience of the past, to serve as an episode of the present [compare with Foucault's archaeology], to be interrogated politically. Rancière seems to offer a simple narrative structure, a recounting, one of the exercises seen as crucial in the book, and one which assumes equality with the reader. But there is also a moment where the identity of the narrator becomes unclear—Rancière's voice merges with Jacotot's, and his commentary extends and dramatizes, continues Jacotot's account[cf 'indirect free discourse' in Deleuze] This links the past with the present, and there is one basis for this in that both writers are experiencing post revolutionary politics. The uncertainty helps the reader locate the account in the present, and evokes questions such as the connections between the commentators of the 18th century and the sociologists of the 20th. It raises satirical possibilities, the

The Errand

By Seamus Heaney

**'On you go now! Run, son, like the devil
And tell your mother to try
To find me a bubble for the spirit level
And a new knot for this tie.'**

**But still he was glad, I know, when I stood my ground,
Putting it up to him
With a smile that trumped his smile and his fool's errand,
Waiting for the next move in the game.**

strange irruption or untimeliness of the piece is an opposition to the seamless tautologies of modern sociology and structuralist linguistics. The book returns the notion of equality to the centre, 'against the seamless science of the hidden' (xxii) that says it is impossible. Promoting equality means celebrating a number of small concrete acts and actual moments, that resist institutionalization—hence the final irony of the title, because Jacotot had no school.

When they said they 'can't' do anything he argued this meant that they could but did not want to. When they dismissed academic learning as elitist tosh, he pointed out that their own pride in their common sense or their practical expertise was also elitist, and, very often, their contempt for 'ordinary people' was strong."—Dave Harris



Because banking education begins with a false understanding of men as objects, it cannot promote the development of what Fromm calls "biophilia," but instead produces its opposite: "necrophily."

"While life is characterized by growth in a structured, functional manner, the necrophilous person loves all that does not grow, all that is mechanical. The necrophilous person is driven by the desire to transform the organic into the inorganic, to approach life mechanically, as if all living persons were things. . . . Memory, rather than experience; having, rather than being, is what counts. The necrophilous person can relate to an object -a flower or a person - only if he possesses it; hence a threat to his possession is a threat to himself; if he loses possession he loses contact with the world. . . . He loves control, and in the act of controlling he kills life." [quotation from Eric Fromm, *The Heart of Man*, p. 41]

Oppression - overwhelming control - is necrophilic; it is nourished by love of death, not life. The banking concept of education, which serves the interests of oppression, is also necrophilic. Based on a mechanistic, static, naturalistic, spatialized view of consciousness, it transforms students into receiving objects. It attempts to control thinking and action, leads men to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power. When their efforts to act responsibly are frustrated, when they find themselves unable to use their faculties, men suffer. "This suffering due to impotence is rooted in the very fact that the human equilibrium has been disturbed." But the inability to act which causes men's anguish also causes them to reject their impotence, by attempting "...to restore [their] capacity to act. But can [they], and how? One way is to submit to and identify with a person or group having power. By this symbolic participation in another person's life, [men have] the illusion of acting, when in reality [they] only submit to and become a part of those who act." [quotation from Eric Fromm, *The Heart of Man*, p. 31]

Populist manifestations perhaps best exemplify this type of behavior by the oppressed, who, by identifying with charismatic leaders, come to feel that they themselves are active and effective. The rebellion they express as they emerge in the historical process is motivated by that desire to act effectively. The dominant elites consider the remedy to be more domination and repression, carried out in the name of freedom, order, and social peace (that is, the peace of the elites). Thus they can condemn - logically, from their point of view - "the violence of a strike by workers and [can] call upon the state in the same breath to use violence in putting down the strike."

Education as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent (often not perceived by educators) of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression. This accusation is not made in the naive hope that the dominant elites will thereby simply abandon the practice. Its objective is to call the attention of true humanists to the fact that they cannot use banking educational methods in the pursuit of liberation, for they would only negate that very pursuit. Nor may a revolutionary society inherit these methods from an oppressor society. The revolutionary society which practices banking education is either misguided or mistrusting of men. In either event, it is threatened by the specter of reaction. Unfortunately, those who espouse the cause of liberation are themselves surrounded and influenced by the climate which generates the banking concept, and often do not perceive its true significance or its dehumanizing power. Paradoxically, then, they utilize this same instrument of alienation in what they consider an effort to liberate. Indeed, some "revolutionaries" brand as "innocents," "dreamers," or even "reactionaries" those who would challenge this educational practice. But one does not liberate men by alienating them. Authentic liberation - the process of humanization - is

not another deposit to be made in men. Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it. Those truly committed to the cause of liberation can accept neither the mechanistic concept of consciousness as an empty vessel to be filled, nor the use of banking methods of domination (propaganda, slogans-deposits) in the name of liberation.—Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Such being the condition of society, we sought to remember that there is one thing that education can take as a sure guide, and that is the personality of the children who are to be educated.

It is necessary that the human personality should be prepared for the unforeseen, not only for the conditions that can be anticipated by prudence and foresight. Nor should it be strictly conditioned by one rigid specialization, but should develop at the same time the power of adapting itself quickly and easily. In this fierce battle of civil life a man must have a strong character and quick wits as well as courage; he must be strengthened in his principles by moral training and he must also have a practical ability in order to face the difficulties of life. Adaptability — this is the most essential quality; for the progress of the world is continually opening new careers, and at the same times closing of revolutionizing the traditional types of employment. This does not mean that in secondary schools, there should be no preparation for the intellectual professions, and still less that "culture" should be neglected. On the contrary, education must be very wide and very thorough, and not only in the case of professional intellectuals, but for all men who are living at a time that is characterized by the progress of science and technical applications. Now, even the laborers need education. They must understand the complex problems of our times, otherwise

they are just a pair of hands acting without seeing what relation their work had in the pattern of society. Such as they are today, they may be said to have no head. Meanwhile, these intellectuals of today are all cripples as long as their hands remain useless. Their spirit will dry up if the grandeur of the practical reality of our days is completely shut away from them, as if it did not exist. Men with hands and no head, and men with head and no hands are equally out of place in the modern community.

The problem of reforming the secondary schools will not be solved by cutting down "culture," nor by losing sight of the necessity of training for the intellectual professions. But it is essential that this training should not turn out men who have been lulled to sleep by a false sense of security, who are incapable of confronting the unforeseen difficulties of real life, and who are totally ignorant of conditions in the world in which they are destined to live. Not long ago outdoor sports were introduced in order to provide physical exercise for the young people who were leading shut-in, sedentary lives; so, today, there is a need for a more dynamic training of character and the development of a clearer consciousness of social reality.—Maria Montessori, *Erkinder*

Why does one engage in doing something that in reality never comes, and never can come, to an end?

Scientific progress is a fraction, the most important fraction, of the process of intellectualization which we have been undergoing for thousands of years and which nowadays is usually judged in such an extremely negative way. Let us first clarify what this intellectualist rationalization, created by science and by scientifically oriented technology, means practically.

I've always been interested in history, but they never taught Negro history in the public schools. . . . I don't see how a history of the United States can be written honestly without including the Negro. I didn't do it just as a historical thing, but because I believe these things tie up with the Negro today. We don't have a physical slavery, but an economic slavery. If these people, who were so much worse off than the people today, could conquer their slavery, we certainly can do the same thing. They had to liberate themselves without any education. Today we can't go about it in the same way. Any leadership would have to be the type of Frederick Douglass. . . . How will it come about? I don't know. I'm not a politician. I'm an artist, just trying to do my part to bring this thing about. I had several reasons for doing this work, and these are some of them. . . . Another reason is that I have great admiration for the lives of such people. It's the same thing Douglass meant when he said, "Judge me not by the heights to which I have risen but by the depths from which I have come." There's so much to do, there's never any trouble to find subjects.

Jacob Lawrence, 1940

Does it mean that we, today, for instance, everyone sitting in this hall, have a greater knowledge of the conditions of life under which we exist than has an American Indian or a Hottentot? Hardly. Unless he is a physicist, one who rides on the streetcar has no idea how the car happened to get into motion. And he does not need to know. He is satisfied that he may 'count' on the behavior of the streetcar, and he orients his conduct according to this expectation; but he knows nothing about what it takes to produce such a car so that it can move. The savage knows incomparably more about his tools. When we spend money today I bet that even if there are colleagues of political economy here in the hall, almost every one of them will hold a different answer in readiness to the question: How does it happen that one can buy something for money-- sometimes more and sometimes less? The savage knows what he does in order to get his daily food and which institutions serve him in this pursuit. The increasing intellectualization and

rationalization do not, therefore, indicate an increased and general knowledge of the conditions under which one lives.

It means something else, namely, the knowledge or belief that if one but wished one could learn it at any time. Hence, it means that principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted. One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as

did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service. This above all is what intellectualization means.

Now, this process of disenchantment, which has continued to exist in Occidental culture for millennia, and, in general, this 'progress,' to which science belongs as a link and motive force, do they have any meanings that go beyond the purely practical and technical? You will find this question raised in the most principled form in the works of Leo Tolstoy. He came to raise the question in a peculiar way. All his broodings increasingly revolved around the problem of whether or not death is a meaningful phenomenon. And his answer was: for civilized man death has no meaning. It has none because the individual life of civilized man, placed into an infinite 'progress,' according to its own imminent meaning should never come to an end; for there is always a further step ahead of one who stands in the march of progress. And no man who comes to die stands upon the peak which lies in infinity.

Abraham, or some peasant of the past, died 'old and satiated with life' because he stood in the organic cycle of life; because his life, in terms of its meaning and on the eve of his days, had given to him what life had to offer; because for him there remained no puzzles he might wish to solve; and therefore he could have had 'enough' of life. Whereas civilized man, placed in the midst of the continuous enrichment of culture by ideas, knowledge, and problems, may become 'tired of life' but not 'satiated with life.' He catches only the most minute part of what the life of the spirit brings forth ever anew, and what he seizes is always something provisional and not definitive, and therefore death for him is a meaningless occurrence. And because death is meaningless, civilized life as such is meaningless; by its very 'progressiveness' it gives death the imprint of meaninglessness. Throughout his late novels one meets with this thought as the keynote of the Tolstoyan art.

What stand should one take? Has 'progress' as such a recognizable meaning that goes beyond the technical, so that to serve it is a meaningful vocation? The question must be raised. But this is no longer merely the question of man's calling for science, hence, the problem of what science as a vocation means to its devoted disciples. To raise this question is to ask for the vocation of science within the total life of humanity. What is the value of science?"—Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*

Abolishing high school could mean many things. It could mean compressing the time teenagers have to sort out their hierarchies and pillory outsiders, by turning schools into minimalist places in which people only study and learn. All the elaborate rites of dances and games could take place under other auspices. (Many Europeans and Asians I've spoken to went to classes each

day and then left school to do other things with other people, forgoing the elaborate excess of extracurricular activities that is found at American schools.) It could mean schools in which age segregation is not so strict, where a twelve-year-old might mentor a seven-year-old and be mentored by a seventeen-year-old; schools in which internships, apprenticeships, and other programs would let older students transition into the adult world before senior year. (Again, there are plenty of precedents from around the world.)

Or it could mean something yet unimagined. I've learned from doctors that you don't have to have a cure before you make a diagnosis. Talk of abolishing high school is just my way of wondering whether so many teenagers have to suffer so much. How much of that suffering is built into a system that is, however ubiquitous, not inevitable? "Every time I drive past a high school, I can feel the oppression. I can feel all those trapped souls who just want to be outside," a woman recalling her own experience wrote to me recently. "I always say aloud, 'You poor souls.'"—Rebecca Solnit

I don't subscribe to the fashionable notion these days that all our schools are failing. I don't buy the argument that it isn't just the poor kids, it's all our kids; that suburban kids have it bad, too, and we need to make these changes for everybody. I don't really think that's true. It's a wonderfully consoling notion, because so long as it prevails, we have a perfect justification for postponing any efforts toward equality. After all, if these kids in Great Neck are suffering as much as the kids in the South Bronx, if all our schools are bad, if there's no way of discriminating between lesser and greater forms of injustice, then we can perpetuate the present inequalities for another century. I find that a very disturbing notion.

Certainly, even at a top-rated, highly funded suburban high school, there are a lot of things that I would like to change. There are kids at such schools whose individuality is not adequately respected. There are kids who suffer emotionally or don't get the challenging courses of which they are capable. But let's put things in perspective. These children are not by and large being destroyed for life. These children by and large are not going to end up in homeless shelters.

When people tell me that the schools in affluent suburbs are not doing the job that they could do, I ask, "Well, what do you mean by that?" Typically, they say, "Well, our daughter, Susan, went to our local school and she was bitterly short-changed academically. It did her real harm." And, I say, "What harm did it do her? Is she on welfare now?" "No," they say, "but she's having the devil of a time at Sarah Lawrence."

We've got to distinguish between injustice and inconvenience. Before we deal with an affluent child's existential angst, let's deal with the kid in Chicago who has not had a permanent teacher for the past five years.

It's a funny thing. After I give speeches, people will come up to me and say, "Good job." They seem to like me, but then a moment comes when they step away and I can tell something different is coming. That's the point where the question comes and the question is always the same. They ask, "Can you really solve this kind of problem with money? Is money really the answer?" I always think it's an amazing question. As though it's bizarre to suggest that money would be the solution to poverty. As though it's a bizarre idea that it would really take dollars to put a new roof on Morris High School in the Bronx and get the sewage out of the schools in East St. Louis; that it would take real money to hire and keep good teachers so they would stay for a lifetime in the schools that need them most; that it would take real money to buy computers. But that's what I

always hear. They say, “Can you really solve this kind of problem by throwing money at it?” Conservatives love that word *throwing*. They never speak of throwing money at the Pentagon. We allocate money for the Pentagon. We throw money at anything that has to do with human pain. When they say that to me, I look them right in the eyes and say, “Sure. That’s a great way to do it. Throw it. Dump it from a helicopter. Put it in my pocket and I’ll bring it to the school myself.” I don’t know a better way to fix the root problem.—Jonathan Kozol and Marge Scherer

The wonders of technology have also forced Americans to come to grips with the common-sense fact that schooling and education are not, and never have been, the same thing. The amount of time that a student spends in school is ultimately trivial. We educate and learn mostly outside of classrooms, in part through child rearing. By placing too great a burden on schools as the sole source of education and shedding our own responsibility as parents, families, and neighbors for the education of children and young adults day in and day out, we distort what can be reasonably expected of institutions. We ask too much. Schools have never been the exclusive source of education; they are of but a very minor influence when compared to other factors in a child’s life. That perception, however true, is not an argument for home schooling—quite the opposite, since schools can and should teach dialogue, collaboration, empathy, and tolerance, vital aspects of life in a democracy, particularly one dominated by cities and worldwide commerce..

Indeed, in the way we now construe the 24-hour day and seven-day week, education comes from a greater multiplicity of sources than in the past. With technology that multiplicity has grown, but the context of growth has been one of a declining dynamic in terms of self-criticism

and dialogue. Technology, when applied to learning, encourages isolation and contact that is not face-to-face. Schools are designed at their best to make group learning a virtue, and to transmit knowledge and skills and foster dialogue regarding well-defined subject areas; they are not set up to act as surrogates for parents and communities. But as these structures become weaker and more fragmented, the shared common school experience, defined as a laboratory for citizenship, looms as more crucial than ever. The Progressives, in this sense, had it right.

Even within the narrow confines of academic learning, rightfully the province of schools, there are downsides to technology. Consider Wikipedia. In the “good old days” (which never existed), if you wrote a paper on Martin Luther King Jr. and cited an encyclopedia article, you got a C because the teacher knew you did not do much work. Today, at least in our personal lives, Google, Wikipedia, and the algorithms by which knowledge is searched for and located on the Web have given people access to what appears to be sufficient information. We now accept the illusion that what we find online is all we need to know. This illusion has wiped out any need for scholarship and expertise.

[...]The original idea of the Web was that it would democratize expertise. Its unanticipated consequence is that it deflects from curiosity and research and has made the real expert irrelevant; it has also wiped away the need for and substance of scholarly controversy. [...] I can now gather material, data, and even like-minded colleagues and presumed experts to defend a point of view that may be, in the end, indefensible. What Wikipedia does not provide me—which schooling can—are the tools of interrogation and criticism.—Leon Botstein

Thus it is that luxury, profligacy and slavery, have been, in all ages, the

scourge of the efforts of our pride to emerge from that happy state of ignorance, in which the wisdom of providence had placed us. That thick veil with which it has covered all its operations seems to be a sufficient proof that it never designed us for such fruitless researches. But is there, indeed, one lesson it has taught us, by which we have rightly profited, or which we have neglected with impunity? Let men learn for once that nature would have preserved them from science, as a mother snatches a dangerous weapon from the hands of her child. Let them know that all the secrets she hides are so many evils from which she protects them, and that the very difficulty they find in acquiring knowledge is not the least of her bounty towards them. Men are perverse; but they would have been far worse, if they had had the misfortune to be born learned.

How humiliating are these reflections to humanity, and how mortified by them our pride should be! What! it will be asked, is uprightness the child of ignorance? Is virtue inconsistent with learning? What consequences might not be drawn from such suppositions? But to reconcile these apparent contradictions, we need only examine closely the emptiness and vanity of those pompous titles, which are so liberally bestowed on human knowledge, and which so blind our judgment. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Arts and the Sciences*

It is perhaps a coincidence, and perhaps not, that many directly political-organizational uses of social media (the Cairo uprisings that deposed Mubarak and post-Ferguson resistance to anti-black state violence in the US, to give two important examples) have appeared at roughly the same time as the effective disappearance of the Singularity-yearning, anonymized, avatar-led, and self-consciously libertarian Web that was once the dream of US tech. It is the corrupted and corporate Internet we

have now, and not the fantasy-free Internet that never was, that has brought about startling and moving uses of the form. Now the Internet has come to look more like the non-Internet world: structured by the demands of profit, violent, strange, funny, awful, beautiful, full of desire and the alienation of desire ... everything that the world is. There is no technology, and there never will be a technology, that does anything more than mirror, reproduce and at most concentrate and intensify the social relations in which it was produced.

Many still persist in valorizing anonymity and privacy online, as if, with these conditions intact, the Internet will remain or become a safe space for acts of politics or survival. This idea relies on an under-interrogated conception of the political as arising from autonomy and agency. Perhaps consideration of the histories of anti-colonial struggle and slave uprisings, to give two cases where acts of transformative resistance happened without any meaningful top-down recognition of autonomy, privacy, or even personhood, might complicate this understanding of enclosure. People's willingness to share intimate details of their lives in collective online spaces means that the dominant critiques of social media, often centered around issues of privacy, simply end up scolding the messy, over-disclosing users for being bad political subjects. Instead it might be more interesting to register the ways in which the existing politics expressed on these platforms already go beyond and complicate ideas about privacy, the commons, and so on. [...]

Social media aggregates existing capacities for relationship, and in this way it mechanizes or industrializes or subsumes relationship. Some technologists are still attempting to develop robots capable of relating to people. Because relating is labour-intensive, dangerous, and full of mysterious inputs, these robots are not very good. They are given the form of

women, the form of pets, the form of servants, the form of writing. This may or may not mean that these categories have something in common. Both the machines made from an aggregate of social life and the machines made from its synthesis are tools to address and also monetize alienation.

With and against innovation, we develop new forms of proximity to make up for those we have lost or to sustain those that are constantly under threat. Intimacy remains necessary and hard to mechanize. That is either because it is irreducibly human or because the work of women or people who are like women is cheap or free at the point of service. Although each new platform is a new terrain, there is as yet no machine that can accurately synthesize whatever it is that animates the social. That remains the job of women, or of people who are like women. [...]

I scroll through Twitter and email at 4 a. m. because I have a feeling that I call "feeling alone." I throw this feeling out into the world by typing it on my phone in the hope that it will die of exposure to others.

When I wake the next day, I have forgotten what I thought I needed, but the record that I needed something remains.

Being read or misread is not the central problem. Reading and misreading, in an expanded sense, are among the first operations of love. The problem is the dominance of violence. The rich are guilty of our poverty. This is axiomatic. Natural language is guilty of the robot's dumbness. There are no technologies of the social, though the social appears technologically, because attachment is non-technological, non-purposive. It's impossible to really feel loved by something or someone that only gives me what I have already asked for. Social life is fragmented by value. Badly translated between one kind of life and another, at times I try to make myself understandable to my enemies, and at times I become incomprehensible to my friends. A few days ago I said goodbye to someone I love and don't know when I will see again. Then too I felt up against the hard limit of relations between people, which are also relations between things. Money is still the first and last definite thing."—Hannah Black, *Social Life*

end up nothing but common opportunists, playing the role of some dreamed-up African Queen, like we "gonna" rule some black country somewhere with some "dashiki cat" acting haughty and ending up a "tripped out" black king. It does not matter to us that it is a historical fact that our own feudal period in Africa was cruelly oppressive to black women and peasants; that in Africa this warring and exploitive period was only interrupted by the landing of the European colonialist and slave trader. The African chiefs and their cliques were selling troublesome relatives and rival tribesmen to Europeans then, just as now three-fourths of the so-called African states-

men are wheeling and dealing to sell the riches of their land and the labor of their people under neo-colonialism.

We want desperately to feel black but we also need to feel superior to whitey. We want to take his place. We really want to take over his system and rule over and exploit everyone. We want to be black masters and missies and have white maids and big white houses. We go to college to get good jobs and bring our learning back to the people in the streets. We're "jiving"—we're going to college to be social workers, NAACP'ers, teachers, doctors, lawyers to keep the minds of the poor messed up and confused. We're going to college to be a part of the system.

All of us caught in this white male-jive, that was meant to keep us hooked, exploited and oppressed, groove on this big white world of male supremacy, this way-out white capitalism. We hold tight to that little capital, clothes, furniture and bank account, because if we lose it we'd have to go back to that old feeling of "I ain't nothing, I ain't nowhere!" We are scared to death of that "big dick," the military-industrial complex. But how we give all praise to its power and tell all our friends how you can't beat the man and his system.

A Historical and Critical Essay for Black Women"
Patricia Haden, Donna Middleton, and Patricia Robinson - (1969-70)
PART II

Worry about the university. This is the injunction today in the United States, one with a long history. Call for its restoration like Harold Bloom or Stanley Fish or Gerald Graff. Call for its reform like Derek Bok or Bill Readings or Cary Nelson. Call out to it as it calls to you. But for the subversive intellectual, all of this goes on upstairs, in polite company, among the rational men. After all, the subversive intellectual came under false pretenses, with bad documents, out of love. Her labor is as necessary as it is unwelcome. The university needs what she bears but cannot bear what she brings. And on top of all that, she disappears. She disappears into the underground, the downlow lowdown maroon community of the university, into the undercommons of enlightenment, where the work gets done, where the work gets subverted, where the revolution is still black, still strong.

What is that work and what is its social capacity for both reproducing the university and producing fugitivity? If one were to say teaching, one would be performing the work of the university. Teaching is merely a profession and an operation of that onto- /auto-encyclopedic circle of the state that Jacques Derrida calls the *Universitas*. But it is useful to invoke this operation to glimpse the hole in the fence where labor enters, to glimpse its hiring hall, its night quarters. The university needs teaching labor, despite itself, or as itself, self-identical with and thereby erased by it. It is not teaching that holds this social capacity, but something that produces the not visible other side of teaching, a thinking through the skin of teaching toward a collective orientation to the knowledge object as future project, and a commitment to what we want to call the prophetic organization....

To enter [the undercommons] is to inhabit the ruptural and enraptured disclosure of the commons that fugitive enlightenment enacts, the criminal, matricidal, queer, in the cistern, on the

stroll of the stolen life, the life stolen by enlightenment and stolen back, where the commons give refuge, where the refuge gives commons. What the beyond of teaching is really about is not finishing oneself, not passing, not completing; it's about allowing subjectivity to be unlawfully overcome by others, a radical passion and passivity such that one becomes unfit for subjection, because one does not possess the kind of agency that can hold the regulatory forces of subjecthood, and one cannot initiate the auto-interpellative torque that biopower subjection requires and rewards. It is not some much the teaching as it is the prophecy in the organization of the act of teaching. The prophecy that predicts its own organization has therefore passed, as commons, and the prophecy that exceeds its own organization and therefore as yet can only be organized. Against the prophetic organization of the undercommons is arrayed its own deadening labor for the university, and beyond that, the negligence of professionalization, and the professionalization of the critical academic. The undercommons is therefore always an unsafe neighborhood.

...Like the colonial police force recruited unwittingly from guerrilla neighborhoods, university labor may harbor refugees, fugitives, renegades, and castaways. But there are good reasons for the university to be confident that such elements will be exposed or forced underground. Precautions have been taken, book lists have been drawn up, teaching observations conducted, invitations to contribute made. Yet against these precautions stands the immanence of transcendence, the necessary deregulation and the possibility of criminality and fugitivity that labor upon labor requires. Maroon communities of composition teachers, mentorless graduate students, adjunct Marxist historians, out or queer management professors, state college

ethnic studies departments, closed-down film programs, visa expired Yemeni student newspaper editors, historically black college sociologists, and feminist engineers. And what will the university say of them? It will say they are unprofessional. This is not an arbitrary charge. It is the charge against the more than professional. How do those who exceed the profession, who exceed and by exceeding escape, how do those maroons problematize themselves, problematize the university, force the university to consider them a problem, a danger? The undercommons is not, in short, the kind of fanciful communities of whimsy invoked by Bill Readings at the end of his book. The undercommons, its maroons, are always at war, always in hiding."—Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*

An important part of the process of writing is to devise both ways to write outside our habits and structures that help us to extend our learning, our experiments, our practices. At a very basic level, one of the most important elements of writing -- perhaps the most important element of writing -- is simply writing. Not to be daunted and silenced by the blank page or screen. Not to believe in the myth of "writer's block." Not to talk ourselves out of writing before we've even begun. The strategies we're exploring here are designed to be flexible enough to be relevant to any existing/ongoing writing project, or to provide sparks for new projects, or ways to play and experiment with language outside the context of any project in particular.

Appropriation is a ticket out of "writer's block." No more blank sheet of paper. No more empty word document staring out at us with its evil blinking cursor. The text is already there: ours is the job of arranger, editor, intervener, disrupter, provocateur. More is more! Start with someone else's words and start writing as rewriting!

** Cento: Write a collage made up of lines from selected source poems.*

** Construct a text made from administrative language you encounter in your everyday life. You might use the fine print from credit card bills, tax forms, a cell phone contract - any kind of "impersonal" and "objective" language.*

** Serial sentences: Select one sentence each from a variety of different books or other sources. Add sentences of your own composition. Combine into*

one Paragraph, reordering to produce the most interesting results.

* Write a poem or prose piece that culls from a speech or text that uses rhetoric or content you find entirely reprehensible. Consider the different ways to encounter your source material so as to construct a response or resistance to that source. For example, write from the text of an anti-immigrant law or a homophobic rant.

* Write a poem or prose text that takes an line or phrase from a book you have readily at hand as its title, first line, last line, or any combination of the above.

Writing -- and its corollaries, live reading and performance -- belongs on the page, off the page, in the office, in the streets, in the woods, on the mountains, in subways, in motion, in stillness, in bodies, in the ether. That is, writing belongs anywhere and everywhere, and there's no reason we need to see writing as sealed off from the world or as a purely intellectual activity involving only ink on paper and possibly a single person standing somberly (or not somberly) at a microphone. How might we lure writing off the page and into the world? Where are the worlds we might envision our writing moving, and how might we move with it?

* Collaborate with someone who works in a different discipline (dance, film, music, biology, cooking, architecture, etc.). See what techniques they use to make what they make; try to use those same techniques to make writing.

* Devise a poetry walk or a poetry bike ride or a story scavenger hunt or a poetry potluck or a novel dance

party or an all-night poetry marathon. Find ways to bring your work in the world that imagine something beyond the traditional model of the poetry reading (though readings are great too!).

* Experiment with ways to collectivize public writing practice. Organize a reading in a bookstore, park, or empty building. Start a "flash" literary journal that will only have three issues. Make a DIY anthology with work by people in your local community.

* How might you enact a poem in the form of a mosaic? As graffiti? As a trek in the woods? As a climate?

* Make a bunch of copies of a little chapbook or zine of some recent work. Make them pretty -- whatever "pretty" means to you. Then give them away to friends and people you meet at readings and other events. Voila -- the gift economy!"—From the "How To Write (More)" Zine by Antena.

Verily, I may have done this and that for sufferers; but always I seemed to have done better when I learned to feel better joys. As long as there have been men, man has felt too little joy: that alone, my brothers is our original sin. And learning better to feel joy, we learn best not to hurt others or to plan hurts for them.

Therefore I wash my hand when it has helped the sufferer; therefore I wipe even my soul. Having seen the sufferer suffer, I was ashamed for the sake of his shame; and when I helped him, I transgressed grievously against his pride.

Great indebtedness does not make men grateful, but vengeful; and if a little charity is not forgotten, it turns into a gnawing worm.

'Be reserved in accepting! Distinguish by accepting!' Thus I advise those who have nothing to give.

But I am a giver of gifts: I like to give, as a friend to friends. Strangers, however, and the poor may themselves pluck the fruit from my tree: that will cause them less shame.

But beggars should be abolished entirely! Verily, it is annoying to give to them and it is annoying not to give to them.

And also sinners and bad consciences! Believe me, my friends: the bite of conscience teaches men to bite.

Worst of all, however, are petty thoughts. Verily, even evil deeds are better than petty thoughts.

To be sure, you say: 'the pleasure in a lot of petty nastiness saves us from many a big evil deed.' But here one should not wish to save.

From *The Tempest*, ACT I, Scene II

Caliban I must eat my dinner.

This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou tak'st from me. When thou camest first,
Thou strok'st me, and mad'st much of me; wouldst give me

Water with berries in 't; and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less,
That burn by day and night: and then I lov'd thee
And show'd thee all the qualities o' th' isle,
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place, and fertile.

Cursed be I that did so!—All the charms
Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!
For I am all the subjects that you have,
Which first was mine own king; and here you sty me
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
The rest o' th' island.

Prospero Thou most lying slave,
Whom stripes may move, not kindness! I have us'd thee,
Filth as thou art, with human care; and lodg'd thee

In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate
The honour of my child.

Cal. Oh ho! Oh ho!—would it had been done!
Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else
This isle with Calibans.

Prospero Abhorred slave,
Which any print of goodness will not take,
Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other: when thou didst not, savage,
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes
With words that made them known: but thy vile race,
Though thou didst learn, had that in 't which good natures
Could not abide to be with; therefore wast thou
Deservedly confin'd into this rock,
Who hadst deserv'd more than a prison.

Caliban You taught me language; and my profit on 't
Is, I know how to curse: the red plague rid you,
For learning me your language!

Marita O. Bonner

On Being Young—a Woman—and Colored

You start out after you have gone from kindergarten to sheepskin covered with sundry Latin phrases.

At least you know what you want life to give you. A career as fixed and as calmly brilliant as the North Star. The one real thing that money buys. Time. Time to do things. A house that can be delectably out of order and as easily put in order as the doll-house of "playing-house" days. And of course, a husband you can look up to without looking down on yourself.

Somehow you feel like a kitten in a sunny catnip field that sees sleek, plump brown field mice and yellow baby chicks sitting coyly, side by side, under each leaf. A desire to dash three or four ways seizes you.

That's Youth.

But you know that things learned need testing—acid testing—to see if they are really, after all, an interwoven part of you. All your life you have heard of the debt you owe "Your People" because you have managed to have the things they have not largely had.

So you find a spot where there are hordes of them—of course below the Line¹—to be your catnip field while you close your eyes to mice and chickens alike.

If you have never lived among your own, you feel prodigal. Some warm untouched current flows through them—through you—and drags you out into the deep waters of a new sea of human foibles and mannerisms; of a peculiar psychology and prejudices. And one day you find yourself entangled—enmeshed—pinioned in the seaweed of a Black Ghetto.

Not a Ghetto, placid like the Strasse that flows, outwardly unperturbed and calm in a stream of religious belief, but a peculiar group. Cut off, flung together, shoved aside in a bundle because of color with no more in common.

1. This is a reference to the Mason-Dixon line, which divided slave states from free states. *The Crisis*, December 1925.

109

An evil deed is like a boil: it itches and irritates and breaks open - it speaks honestly. 'Behold, I am disease' - thus speaks the evil deed; that is its honesty.

But a petty thought is like a fungus: it creeps and stoops and does not want to be anywhere - until the whole body is rotten and withered with little fungi.

But to him who is possessed by the devil I whisper this word: 'better for you to rear up your devil! Even for you there is still a way to greatness!'

My brothers, one knows a little too much about everybody. And we can see through some men and yet we can by no means *pass* through them.

It is difficult to live with people because it is so difficult to be silent. And not against him who is repugnant to us are we most unfair, but against him who is no concern of ours.

But if you have a suffering friend, be a resting place for his suffering, but a hard bed as it were, a field cot: thus you will profit him best.

And if a friend does you evil, then say: 'I forgive you what you did to me; but that you have done it to *yourself* - how could I forgive that?' Thus speaks all great love: it overcomes even forgiveness and pity.

--Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*

I use myself – my stereotypes of myself – as examples so that I invite the listener or reader to look at it as a text for reading. I don't quite think of the personal as the political, because in my time I have seen a situation where *only* the personal becomes political, and I think that's a problem. And I also find that it is better for me to be concerned with more abstract structures and also people other than myself. So, I am not exercised on behalf of myself – you will notice that I mostly, whenever I speak about someone who might be myself, it is a stereotype which is an illustration of an idea that must be read or listened to as a text. [...] I have suggested that pedagogic performance is not deliberately fictive for me. And I also suggested that the definition of "performativity" you offered seems very close to "purposive without purpose" which is [Immanuel] Kant's famous definition of the aesthetic, but for me did not suggest a deliberate way of performing. That, for Kant, is a description of what happens in the aesthetic, not what we "do." Before I picked up [J.L.] Austin's definition [of the "performative"], I suggested that, colloquially understood, it could be a useful thing for undermining mere identitarianism, but then I suggested that when we forgot that it was the idea of "South Asia" either through area studies or through the way in which Vijay Prasad has suggested it was picked up, they are quite solidly based in the United States and so the idea of identitarianism that comes from changing civil society, which is involved in immigration and then as the generations go on – that cannot really combat identitarianism altogether because a sense of being something other is there in being in another civil society. This is an idea that I have been talking about for a very long time in terms of the difference between "ethnos" and "ethnikos." Then I picked up J.L. Austin's definition of the performative, which is words that do things rather than describe things. I took this into consideration in the way my thinking has developed, and I talked about shifting the performative into performance taking, as my example, the Warlpiris of Western Australia and then the rhetoric of the epigraphs in "The Souls of Black Folk" by W.E.B. Du Bois, connecting it with his larger project as outlined in the *Black Reconstruction* and in his life. Finally, I ended with the definition of the classical author as performer in Roland Barthes' *S/Z* and suggested the concept-metaphor of the conductor of a musical performance, as in European musical performance, as a good description of our task, responsibility towards another's text – almost constructing ourselves physically, as do conductors – as representing the rhetoric of that other's text so we can become a conduit for its performance through another group of performers, for another changeable group which makes up the

audience. And that is where I ended. I should mention that this was based on a deliberate mistranslation — an intended mistake, part of my methodology. In French, a musical conductor is a *chef d'orchestre*.—Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Occupy Education"

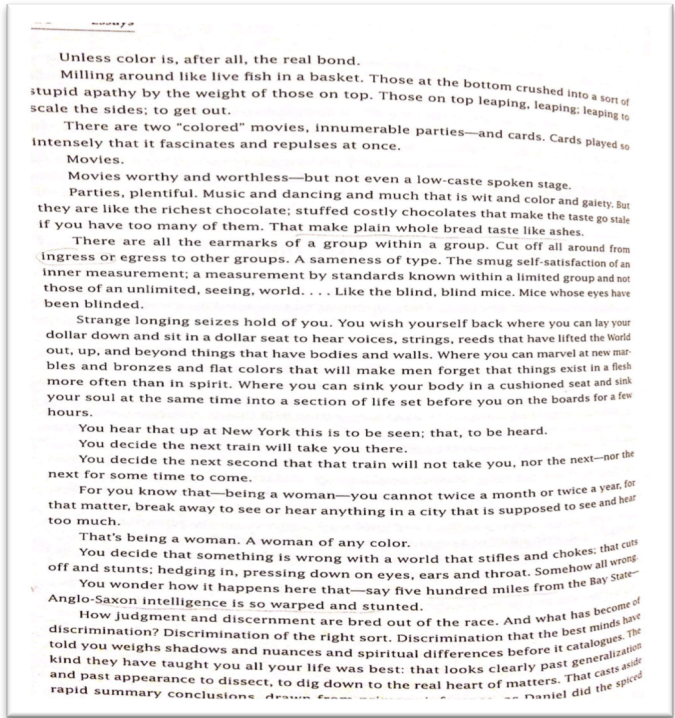
That literature and the arts can support an advanced nationalism is no secret. They join them in the task of a massive rememoration project, saying "we all suffered this way, you remember, this is what happened, you remember", so that history is turned into cultural memory. Literature can then join in the task of a massive counterrememoration project suggesting that we have all passed through the same glorious past, the same grand national liberation battles, the same religious tolerance or whatever. I am going to suggest by the end of this [...] that the literary imagination can impact on de-transcendentalized nationalism. That is not what I am discussing here. I am supporting the cliché that imagination feeds nationalism, and going forward toward the literary imagination and teaching the humanities, through the teaching of the humanities to prepare the readerly imagination to receive the literary and thus go beyond the self-identity of nationalism toward the complex textuality of the international. [...]

Nationalism is the product of a collective imagination constructed through rememoration. It is the comparativist imagination that undoes that possessive spell. The imagination must be trained to take pleasure in such strenuous play. Yet social priorities today are not such that higher education in the humanities can prosper, certainly not in India as it is rising to take its place as a competitor in a "developed" world, and certainly not in the United States. The humanities are progressively trivialized and/or self-trivialized into *belles-lettristic* or quantitative work. If I have learned anything in my forty-five years of full-time teaching, it is the tragedy of the trivialization of the humanities, a kind of cultural death. So unless the polity values the teaching of literature in this way rather than just literary history and content and a fake scientism, the imagination will not be nourished. [...]

As for me, I am altogether utopian. I look toward a re-imagined world that is a cluster in the Global South, a cluster of regions. Of course it can only happen gradually. But as we make small structural adjustments, we should keep this goal in mind. It may produce

imaginative folk who are not only going on about cultural identity (read "nationalism"), but turning around the adverse effects of the adjustment of economic structures. The state, as Hannah Arendt says, is an abstract structure. And you may have noticed that everything I have

written turns around learning and teaching. One of the many tasks of the teacher of the humanities is to keep the abstract and reasonable civic structures of the state free of the burden of cultural nationalism. To repeat: an imagination trained in the play of language(s) may undo the truth-claims of national identity, thus unmooring the cultural nationalism that disguises the workings of the state —disguises the loss of civil liberties, for example, in the name of the American "nation" threatened by terror. Again, "may". I will never be foolish enough to claim that a humanities education alone (especially given the state of humanities education today) can save the world! Or that anything can, once and for all. Or, even, that such a phrase or idea as "save the world" can be meaningful. —Gayatri Spivak, "Nationalism & Imagination"

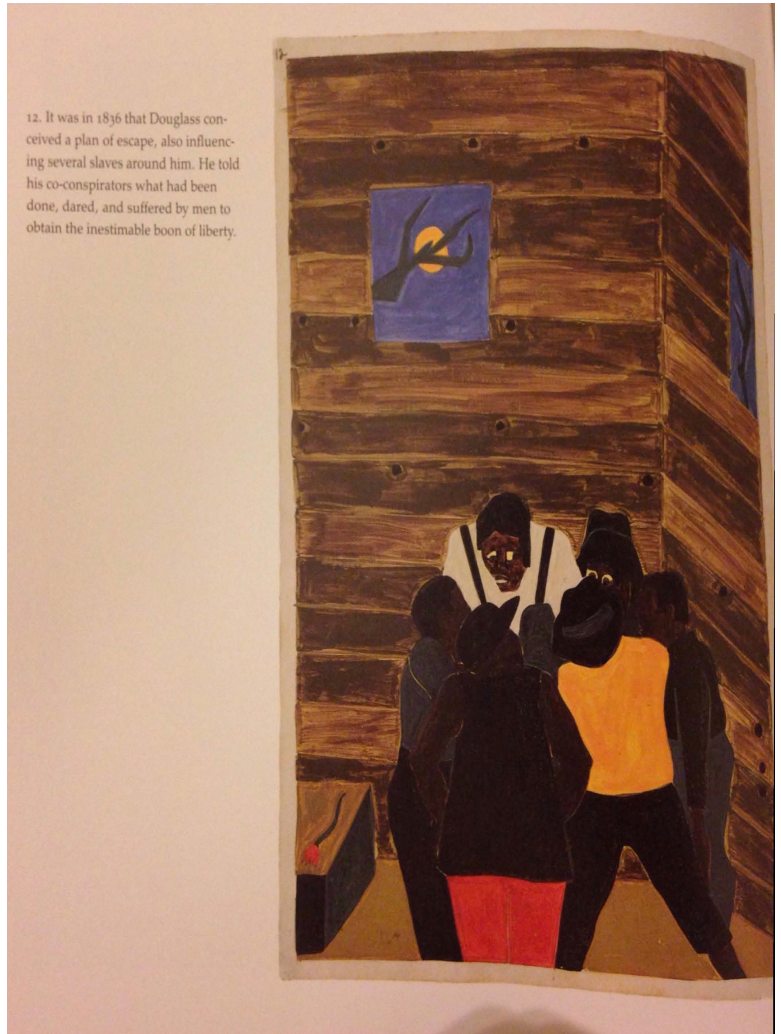


The abolition of the political is thus the negation of human life, not just as naked existence but as collective, communitarian, dialogical, communicative freedom. Without others, without the other, there is neither ethics nor politics. Without others, without the other, there is no politics as the horizon of the possible—the possibility of continued existence. It is this continued existence as coexistence, as surviving and flourishing with others, that is the source of the political. It is this politics that is being abolished by the profiteers of global war and neoliberal pillage. Against this necropolitics of neoliberal globalization, a politics of liberation—a politics of life with others and for others—is proclaimed from below. It is this politics of life, and for life, that proclaims that politics is the proper vocation of the human being. It is this proclamation from below, from the victims of capitalism, imperialism, ecocide, and genocide, that gives us reason to pause and to affirm that ours will be the age of global politics, the age of the politics of alterity.—Eduardo Mendieta, "The Liberation of Politics"

The premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again.
[...]

Since the possibility of changing the objective—namely societal and political— conditions is extremely limited today, attempts to work against the repetition of Auschwitz are necessarily restricted to the subjective dimension. By this I also mean essentially the psychology of people who do such things. I do not believe it would help much to appeal to eternal values, at which the very people who are prone to commit such atrocities would merely shrug their shoulders. I also do not believe that enlightenment about the positive qualities possessed by persecuted minorities would be of much use. The roots must be sought in the persecutors, not in the victims who are murdered under the paltriest of pretenses. What is necessary is what I once in this respect called the turn to the subject. One must come to know the mechanisms that render people capable of such deeds, must reveal these mechanisms to them, and strive, by awakening a general awareness of those mechanisms, to prevent people from becoming so again. It is not the victims who are guilty, not even in the sophistic and caricatured sense in which still today many like to construe it. Only those who unreflectingly vented their hate and aggression upon them are guilty. One must labor against this lack of reflection, must dissuade people from striking outward without reflecting upon themselves. The only education that has any sense at all is an education toward critical self-reflection.
[...]

This entire sphere is animated by an alleged ideal that also plays a considerable role in the traditional education: the ideal of being hard. [...] I remember how the dreadful Boger during the Auschwitz trial had an outburst that culminated in a panegyric to education instilling discipline through hardness. He thought hardness necessary to produce what he considered to be the correct type of person. This educational ideal of hardness, in which many may believe without reflecting about it, is utterly wrong. The idea that virility consists in the maximum degree of endurance long ago became a screen-image for masochism that, as psychology has demonstrated, aligns itself all too easily with sadism. Being hard, the vaunted quality education should inculcate, means absolute indifference toward pain as such. In this the distinction between one's own pain and that of another is not so stringently maintained. Whoever is hard with himself earns the right to be hard with others as well and avenges himself for the pain whose manifestations he was not allowed to show and had to repress. This mechanism must be made conscious, just as an education must be promoted that no longer sets a premium on pain and the ability to endure pain. In other words: education must take seriously an idea in no wise unfamiliar to philosophy: that anxiety must not be repressed. When anxiety is not repressed, when one permits oneself to have, in fact, all the anxiety that this reality warrants, then precisely by doing that, much of the destructive effect of unconscious and displaced anxiety will probably disappear. [...]



[T]here is something exaggerated, irrational, pathogenic in the present-day relationship to technology. This is connected with the "veil of technology." People are inclined to take technology to be the thing itself, as an end in itself, a force of its own, and they forget that it is an extension of human dexterity. The means—and technology is the epitome of the means of self-preservation of the human species—are fetishized, because the ends—a life of human dignity—are concealed and removed from the consciousness of people. As long as one formulates this as generally as I just did, it should provide insight. But such a hypothesis is still much too abstract. It is by no means clear precisely how the fetishization of technology establishes itself within the individual psychology of particular people, or where the threshold lies between a rational relationship to technology and the over-valuation that finally leads to the point where one who cleverly devises a train system that brings the victims to Auschwitz as quickly and smoothly as possible forgets about what happens to them there. With this type, who tends to fetishize technology, we are concerned—baldly put, with people who cannot love. This is not meant to be sentimental or moralistic but rather describes a deficient libidinal relationship to other persons. Those people are thoroughly cold; deep within themselves they must deny the possibility of love, must withdraw their love from other people initially, before it can even unfold. And whatever of the ability to love somehow survives in them they must expend on devices. [...]

Why can't they then perceive that there is a difference in the glance from a pair of eyes that look, mildly docile, at "white ladies" and those that, impersonally and per- ceptively—aware of distinctions—see only women who happen to be white? Why do they see a colored woman only as a gross collectivity? Who happen to be white? Why, unless you talk in staccato squawks—brittle as sea-shells—unless you "chomp" gum, unless you cover two yards square when you laugh, unless your taste runs to vio- lent colors—impossible perfumes and more impossible clothes—are you a feminine Cal- lephant craving to pass for Ariel? An empty imitation of an empty invitation. A mime; a sham; a copy-cat. A hollow re-echo. A froth, a foam. A fleck of the ashes of superficiality? Everything you touch or taste now is like the flesh of an unripe persimmon. . . . Do you need to be told what that is being . . . ? Old ideas, old fundamentals seem worm-eaten, out-grown, worthless, bitter, fit for the scrap-heap of wisdom. What you had thought tangible and practical has turned out to be a collection of "blue- flower" theories. If they have not discovered how to use their accumulation of facts, they are useless to you in Their world. Every part of you becomes bitter. But—"In Heaven's name, do not grow bitter. Be bigger than they are,"—exhort white fritrid insults dragged over them—drawing blood—like pebbled sand on your body where the skin is tenderest. On your body where the skin is thinnest and tenderest. You long to explode and hurt everything white: friendly; unbelieved. But you know that you cannot live with a chip on your shoulder even if you can manage a smile around your eyes—without getting steely and brittle and losing the softness that makes you a woman. For chips make you bend your body to balance them. And once you bend, you lose your poise, your balance, and the chip gets into you. The real you. You get hard. . . . And many things in you can ossify . . . And you know, being a woman, you have to go about it gently and quietly, to find out and discover just what is wrong. Just what can be done. You see clearly that they have acquired things. Money; money. Money to build with, money to destroy. Money to swim in. Money to drown in. Money. An ascendancy of wisdom. An incalculable hoard of wisdom in all fields, in all things collected from all quarters of humanity. A stupendous mass of things. Things. So, too, the Greeks . . . Things. . . . to balance them. And once you be . . . And . . . The real you. You get hard.

112 Essays

And you wonder and wonder why they have not discovered how to handle deftly and skillfully, Wisdom, stored up for them—like the honey for the Gods on Olympus—since time unknown. You wonder and you wonder until you wander out into infinity, where if it is to be found anywhere—Truth really exists. The Greeks had possessions, culture. They were lost because they did not understand. The Romans owned more than anyone else. Trampled under the heel of Vandals and Civilization, because they would not understand. Greeks. Did not understand. Romans. Would not understand. "They." Will not understand. So, you find, they have shut Wisdom up and have forgotten to find the key that will let her out. They have trapped, trammed, lashed her to themselves with thews and thongs and theories. They have ransacked sea and earth and air to bring every treasure to her. But she sulks and will not work for a world with a whitish hue because it has snubbed her twin sister, Understanding. You see clearly—off there is infinity—Understanding. Standing alone, waiting for some one to really want her. But she is so far out there is no way to snatch at her and drag her in. So—being a woman—you can wait. You must sit quietly without a chip. Not sodden—and weighted as if your feet were cast in the iron of your soul. Not wasting strength in enervating gestures as if two hundred years of bonds and whips had really tricked you into nervous uncertainty. But quiet; quiet. Like Buddha—who, brown like I am—sat entirely at ease, entirely sure of himself; motionless and knowing, a thousand years before the white man knew there was so very much difference between feet and hands. Motionless on the outside. But inside? Silent. Still . . . "Perhaps Buddha is a woman." So you too. Still; quiet; with a smile, ever so slight, at the eyes so that Life will flow into and not by you. And you can gather, as it passes, the essences, the overtones, the tints, the shadows; draw understanding into your self. And then you can, when Time is ripe, swoop to your feet—at your full height—at a single gesture. Ready to go where? Why . . . Wherever God motions

Society in its present form—and no doubt as it has been for centuries already—is based not, as was ideologically assumed since Aristotle, on appeal, on attraction, but rather on the pursuit of one's own interests against the interests of everyone else. This has settled into the character of people to their innermost center. What contradicts my observation, the herd drive of the so-called lonely crowd [die einsame Menge], is a reaction to this process, a banding together of people completely cold who cannot endure their own coldness and yet cannot change it. Every person today, without exception, feels too little loved, because every person cannot love enough. The inability to identify with others was unquestionably the most important psychological condition for the fact that something like Auschwitz could have occurred in the midst of more or less civilized and innocent people. What is called fellow traveling was primarily business interest: one pursues one's own advantage before all else and, simply not to endanger oneself, does not talk too much. That is a general law of the status quo. The silence under the terror was only its consequence. The coldness of the societal monad, the isolated competitor, was the precondition, as indifference to the fate of others, for the fact that only very few people reacted. The torturers know this, and they put it to the test ever anew.

Understand me correctly. I do not want to preach love. I consider it futile to preach it; no one has the right to preach it since the lack of love, as I have already said, is a lack belonging to all people without exception as they exist today. To preach love already presupposes in those to whom one appeals a character structure

different from the one that needs to be changed. For the people whom one should love are themselves such that they cannot love, and therefore in turn are not at all that lovable. One of the greatest impulses of Christianity, not immediately identical with its dogma, was to

This innocent country set you down in a ghetto in which, in fact, it intended that you should perish. Let me spell out precisely what I mean by that, for the heart of the matter is here, and the root of my dispute with my country. You were born where you were born, and faced the future that you faced because you were black and for no other reason. The limits of your ambition were, thus, expected to be set forever. You were born into a society which spelled out with brutal clarity, and in as many ways as possible, that you were a worthless human being. You were not expected to aspire to excellence: you were expected to make peace with mediocrity. Wherever you have turned, James, in your short time on this earth, you have been told where you could go and what you could do (and how you could do it) and where you could do it and whom you could marry. I know that your countrymen do not agree with me about this, and I hear them saying "You exaggerate." They do not know Harlem, and I do. So do you. Take no one's word for anything, including mine—but trust your experience. Know whence you came. If you know whence your came, there is really no limit to where you can go. The details and symbols of your life have been deliberately constructed to make you believe what white people say about you. Please try to remember that what that believe, as well as what they do and cause you to endure, does not testify to your inferiority but to their inhumanity and fear. Please try to be clear, dear James, though the storm which rages about your youthful head today, about the reality which lies behind the words acceptance and integration. There is no reason for you to try to become like white people and there is no basis whatever for their impertinent assumption that they must accept you. The really terrible thing, old buddy, is that you must accept them. And I mean that very seriously. You must accept them and accept them with love. For these innocent people have no other hope. They are, in effect, still trapped in a history which they do not understand; and until they understand it, they cannot be released from it. They have had to believe for so many years, and for innumerable reasons, that black men are inferior to white men. Many of them, indeed, know better, but, as you will discover, people find it very difficult to act on what they know. To act is to be committed, and to be committed is to be in danger. In this case, the danger, in the minds of most white Americans, is the loss of identity. Try to imagine how you would feel if you woke up one morning to find the sun shining and all the stars aflame. You would be frightened because it is out of the order of nature. Any upheaval in the universe is terrifying because it so profoundly attacks one's sense of one's own reality. Well, the black man has functioned in the white man's world as a fixed star, as an immovable pillar: and as he moves out of his place, heaven and earth are shaken to their foundations. You, don't be afraid. I said that it was intended that you should perish in the ghetto, perish by never being allowed to go behind the white man's definitions, by never being allowed to spell your proper name. You have, and many of us have, defeated this intention; and, by a terrible law, a terrible paradox, those innocents who believed that your imprisonment made them safe are losing their grasp of reality. But these men are your brothers—your lost, younger brothers. And if the word integration means anything, this is what it means: that we, with love, shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it. For this is your home, my friend, do not be driven from it; great men have done great things here, and will again, and we can make America what America must become. It will be hard, James, but you come from sturdy, peasant stock, men who picked cotton and dammed rivers and built railroads, and in the teeth of the most terrifying odds, achieved and unassailable and monumental dignity. You come from a long line of poets, some of the greatest poets since Homer. One of them said, *The very time I thought I was lost, My dungeon shook and my chains fell off.* —James Baldwin, *Letter to My Nephew*

eradicate the coldness that permeates everything. But this attempt failed; surely because it did not reach into the societal order that produces and reproduces that coldness. Probably that warmth among people, which everyone longs for, has never been present at all, except during short periods and in very small groups, perhaps even among peaceful savages. The much maligned utopians saw this. Thus Charles Fourier defined attraction as something that first must be produced through a humane societal order; he also recognized that this condition would be possible only when the drives of people are no longer repressed, but fulfilled and released. If anything can help against coldness as the condition for disaster, then it is the insight into the conditions that determine it and the attempt to combat those conditions, initially in the domain of the individual. One might think that the less is denied to children, the better they are treated, the greater would be the chance of success. But here too illusions threaten. Children who have no idea of the cruelty and hardness of life are then truly exposed to barbarism when they must leave their protected environment. Above all, however, it is impossible to awaken warmth in the parents, who are themselves products of this society and who bear its marks. The exhortation to give more warmth to children amounts to pumping out warmth artificially, thereby negating it. Moreover, love cannot be summoned in professionally mediated relations like that of teacher and student, doctor and patient, lawyer and client. Love is something immediate and in essence contradicts mediated relationships. The exhortation to love—even in its imperative form, that one should do

it—is itself part of the ideology coldness perpetuates. It bears the compulsive, oppressive quality that counteracts the ability to love. The first thing therefore is to bring coldness to the consciousness of itself, of the reasons why it arose.—Theodor Adorno, *Education After Auschwitz*

Let America Be America Again

By Langston Hughes

Let America be America again.

Let it be the dream it used to be.

Let it be the pioneer on the plain

Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me.)

(America never was America to me.)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed—

Let it be that great strong land of love

Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme

That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me.)

O, let my land be a land where Liberty

Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,

But opportunity is real, and life is free,

Equality is in the air we breathe.

(There's never been equality for me,

Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")

Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?

And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,

I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.

I am the red man driven from the land,

I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek—

And finding only the same old stupid plan

Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

I am the young man, full of strength and hope,

Tangled in that ancient endless chain

Of profit, power, gain, of grab the land!

Of grab the gold! Of grab the ways of satisfying need!

Of work the men! Of take the pay!

Of owning everything for one's own greed!

I am the farmer, bondsman to the soil.

I am the worker sold to the machine.

I am the Negro, servant to you all.

I am the people, humble, hungry, mean—

Hungry yet today despite the dream.

Beaten yet today—O, Pioneers!

I am the man who never got ahead,

The poorest worker bartered through the years.

Yet I'm the one who dreamt our basic dream

In the Old World while still a serf of kings,

Who dreamt a dream so strong, so brave, so true,

That even yet its mighty daring sings

In every brick and stone, in every furrow turned

That's made America the land it has become.

O, I'm the man who sailed those early seas

In search of what I meant to be my home—

For I'm the one who left dark Ireland's shore,

And Poland's plain, and England's grassy lea,

And torn from Black Africa's strand I came

To build a "homeland of the free."

The free?

Who said the free? Not me?

Surely not me? The millions on relief today?

The millions shot down when we strike?

The millions who have nothing for our pay?

For all the dreams we've dreamed

And all the songs we've sung

And all the hopes we've held

And all the flags we've hung,

The millions who have nothing for our pay—

Except the dream that's almost dead today.

O, let America be America again—

The land that never has been yet—

And yet must be—the land where every man is free.

The land that's mine—the poor man's, Indian's, Negro's, ME—

Who made America,

Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain,

Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain,

Must bring back our mighty dream again.

Sure, call me any ugly name you choose—

The steel of freedom does not stain.

From those who live like leeches on the people's lives,

We must take back our land again,

America!

O, yes,

I say it plain,

America never was America to me,

And yet I swear this oath—

America will be!

Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death,

The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies,

We, the people, must redeem

The land, the mines, the plants, the rivers.

The mountains and the endless plain—

Douglass, forced by his master to
to his learning, continued
a student
in school.

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