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Diaspora: Dislocation and its Resentment, or, the Impossible Dialogue of "Safe Space"

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I'm lost. I'm confused. I'm frustrated, even angered. Sometimes I'm told one thing; otherwise I'm expecting another. I'm at a distance of so much, looking on or over, betwixt and between, under, cross-, multi-, trans-, poly-... What is intra-, if not supra-? Is it solitude? Is that enough? *Enough!* I've had enough. Click. I close the window. My pupils dilate, condensing black—a heavy darkness, heart quiver, cold hands, eyes shut.

The alarm rings. The day breaks.

Fuck it. My politics are clear, even if my body is not. Slam. I'm out-

Coffee is being served. There are muffins to pair. Damn, it might just be true! Blue skies reflect in the water, as do the snow-capped mountains. The waves wash them ashore. My gaze follows. The gentle ebb of calm—now, flow. I think I feel calm? Or maybe, faint? Dizzied. Uneasy. Restless. The sea foam begins to gnaw at the gold. The sand is forced up, pushed away. It bears the weight of the world, not least, the homes beyond the causeway. Speckling the foothills, a city of glass. The Best Place on Earth. Terminus station.

The moderator redirects us to seat. I find my nametag. It reads violence. "Three names more specifically; a given, middle, and family name, well, 'family' name, the last name of my father, bequeathed to him by his father, unto whom it was imposed by a stranger, for that 'ease' of tribal affiliation... demarcation... surveillance... control" (Nabbali, 2015, 5). Insert comma, space, "Vancouver, Canada."

The proceedings open with an acknowledgement of these unceded Coast Salish territories on which we meet. Never surrendered nor acquired, neither through treaty nor war, they are stolen lands. Plundered. Stripped. Raped. Effectively, gang raped. “There is no way of accurately measuring the level of outrage the victim suffers from being subjected to continued forcible intercourse following withdrawal of her consent. We must assume the sense of outrage is substantial” (*People v. John Z.*, 2003). Horrific. Add the denial of 143 years (Jackson, 2014), bound in narratives of struggle and blame—victim blaming—qua pathologization (LeFrançois, 2013); detention (LaPrairie, 2002); segregation (Fournier & Crey, 1997); sterilization (Stote, 2015), which is to say, mutilation, dehumanization; missing and murdered; Status’ed or statistic (Dean, 2015). The elimination, however, lurks incomplete (Denomme, 2013).

Indeed, the birth of an unintended pregnancy. The subsequent rise of identity politics, a misanthropic imperium, with its deep sense of foreboding. In pursuit of modernity draws this Dark Age: the origin of species, bodies that matter (J. Butler, 1993), alien others (Melzer, 2006), definitional centres, commitment, xenogenesis (O. Butler, 1989). For the order of things, what a strange regression (Foucault, 1994)—this precarious present. A peoples’ production, lest it be forgotten; broke but unbroken (Dwyer, 2011). We concede by virtue of mention. Also, it serves to platform the inter- sectional work that has had us gathering over the last few days, with a keynote by Patricia Hill Collins no less... I look back down at my nametag... comma... space... Vancouver, Canada. Period. Period? PERIOD.

The moderator’s voice brims the room. Lively and engaging, I can tell that she has already captured her audience. But her notes reach me a little muffled. It’s not the acoustics. The words ricochet against each other and my inner own. They spin and tumble, bounce, bond, and repel, with familiarity and despair. I understand that she is introducing the colloquium—a

platform to canvass the academic wellbeing of racialized students. Between the lines, there is a call for critical disentanglement of university sites. A few more words on the four panellists, in addition to her self, and a thought-filled digression as to why she chose to wear a sari that day. She closes by asking that "non-racialized" folk please leave the room after the presentations, during what will be a changeover to roundtable discussions. Blink. The lights fade out.

My stomach knots with apprehension. My discomfort is clear. A visceral reaction despite the otherwise provocative speeches being made by fellow delegates and much else the moderator has contributed. Failed inertia. The dealing of hope with the logic of differentiation—the theme of binary society, a rhetorical force of exclusion, nay, of selection, or culturalist arguments of various ilks (Crosson, 2014). It functions effectively as antisocial. A prescriptive project monolithically, always after essentialized stories (Badwall, 2016). Better, if they are "proper" objects to mourn, strip, or desire (Butler, 1994, 1). The irony in dis/ordering is the mirror agnosia of power without remorse—a social danger par excellence. We should write a letter to Dr. Freud (Briggs, 2014).

Of course, Freudian "reality-testing" embodied the demand for tangibility. At the fault line: our organic experiences, importantly fluid and reflexive, lithe, for resilience. The workings of language, withal poetic transcriptions, present as "an unsettling process, when not an outright destruction, of the identity of meaning and speaking subject, and consequently, of transcendence" (Kristeva, 1980, 125). Implicit is a saliency to belie structures, records, institutional domestication—colonial madness (Keller, 2007). Through bursts of memories, over multiple temporalities, with no fixed listeners or sounds, "there is nothing either gradual or linear here" (Briggs, 2014, 318). Ergo, "an anachronism antithetical to progress" (Milani, 1992, 44),

and by derivation, to race-thinking, nation-building, imperialism, eugenics, public health, hygiene, security.

“Accounts of ‘real’ world do not, then, depend on a logic of ‘discovery’ but on a power-charged social relation of ‘conversation’” (Haraway, 1988, 593). “The presence of the exit alternative can therefore tend to atrophy the development of the art of voice. *This is a central point*” (Hirschman, 1970, 43, emphasis added). Many of us have just learnt to leave than risk aversion. It is “the difficulty of inhabiting a body that is not at home in the world” (Ahmed, 2014). Off the map. Maybe, uprooted. Persecuted. Exiled. Illegal. Surviving by suppression, in passing, or code-switching. Each their own horror, each their own scar. Worse, the painful decision about what to abstract can be gilded between lovers, fastened to one’s child, continued in the after life—an ethnographic novel (Hecht, 2006).

All of a sudden, the colleague sitting next to me screeches, “Where are you going? You’re totally racialized enough, you should stay.” Hot second. My years flash before me. I quiet my creaking migraine, check my privileges, “a kind of balance-sheet reckoning” (Weiss, 2016, 633)—and “break in my own consciousness” (Smith, 2004, 3). I am trying to make sense of the vertigo at a conference where the going rate is in the hundreds. Prism. I clench my eyes as the explosion of lights fill back in the room. “Where are YOU going? If I’m racialized ‘enough,’ you most certainly are too!” (Nabbali, 2016, 95)

Through those theatre doors waits the practice of performance, the intelligibility of violence hinging on the technologies of normalization (Foucault, 1997). The problematic nature of belonging and not belonging incarcerated in the portrait. Generative. Kinetics. Imbued with personal conflicts that have been warped by extant poverty, laws aimed at disbanding tribes and

organizing the appropriation of lands (Dunwoodie, 1998; Gallois, 2013; Lawrence, 2004)—a “Great” civilizing mission, after all, to deal with barbarians (Ahluwalia, 2010, 25).

Out of the straightjacket, historical moments race alongside this contentious contemporary one. They tangle disparate scenes, imagined geographies, and unruly topographies (Said, 1994). Surface tensions scab resource exploitation. Rip and they bleed questions of representation. “Shit, we’re all consequences of something. Stained with another’s past as well as our own ... My veins are centuries meeting” (Jones, 1975, 45). I can stare as hard as I want, *The Words Don’t Fit the Picture* (Terada, 2010).

MENA. 2020.

Acuity charting?

Census.

Palpable.

Check! *Boxed—in*.

(Beydoun, 2016)

I shall prepare my eulogy for formal whiteness...

Stop. Wait. My friend—I watch her disappear from the room. The resurgence of flight. Forced displacement. Network fragmentation. The co-organization and implications of war. War. Cry. Maladjustment? “She has been warned of the risk she incurs by letting words run off the rails, time and again, tempted to gear herself to the accepted norms ... Difference is not difference to some ears but awkwardness or incompleteness. Aphasia. Unable or unwilling?” (Minh-ha, 1987, 5-6). It does not matter. Affixed to the story of any dis/b/order, transgressions are nail-to-coffin, evidential, symptomatic, intolerable. Intervention.

To submit to the so-called standard of syntax and description, "the humiliation of having to falsify your own reality, your voice" (Minh-ha, 1987, 6), or have it dissed as "improper" (Chrisomalis, 2015), perhaps as "ranting" (Neale, 2008) in the making of a person as "not there" (Fabris, 2011), you are spoken for. "I thought of all the other invisible bodies, with their fists up, tucked away and out of sight ... [R]esistance has been disarmed of its tools systematically" (Hedva, n.d.). "It's imperative now, however overdue, to pay attention to the repertoire" (Taylor, 2003, 27). "It may lead to increased polyphony and a multitude of stories, but equally well serve for achieving hegemony, being used to establish a 'regime of truth' that favours one story at the expense of others" (Näslund & Perner, 2012, 90).

I convince myself to tone it down. "At this particular juncture in gender studies, any scholar who neglects difference runs the risk of having her work viewed as theoretically misguided, politically irrelevant, or simply fantastical" (Davis, 2008, 68). "If we accept that women are differently situated and so have different perspectives," we are obliged to address the confluence of experiences as mediated in one historically created system (Sylvain, 2005, 35). Or we retain not only prioritized growth, that propensity to hierarchy, but also, a trope of "pure" strands.

I am encouraged that another woman, seemingly "non-racial," joined the roundtable. She is quick to Status herself almost as a preface, benchmark, or quality assurance to her first contribution. "The boundaries of inquiry are thus set within the framework of what is already established" (Smith, 1990, 16). And really, how can I argue? We have been invited to the master's house, not to His table but games' room, instructed to share experiences of racialization on campuses—on campus. Stolen land. Plundered. Stripped. Raped. Effectively, gang raped. The injunction becomes explicit, as the next person remains entrapped within the racial logics of

colonialism. One after the other, that struggle to protect goes to tighten the noose of existence; "always congested, drowning in contingency" (Fanon, 2008, 203).

"Self-awareness does not mean closing the door on communication" (Fanon, 2004, 179). My turn is coming and I ought to propose that we invest in exploring "*how newness enters the world*" (Rushdie, 1991, 394, emphasis in original). "There is something worthwhile to be gained from a deliberate renunciation of race as the basis for belonging to one another and acting in concert" (Gilroy, 2000, 12). "We would do less violence to antiracism if we approached social movements in their already existing complexity" (Burkowicz, 2015, 138). By not choosing between mobility and visibility, we unmoor "toward the unknown destinations of radical alterity" (Gandhi, 2006, 7)—a space of radical openness (hooks, 1990, 145). Decentralized. Loose fibers. "The power of the messy connective tissue" (Drichel, 2013, 12); a will of opacity, the revenge of "consent." In a way, it's "Take Back the Night" (Reville, cf. Nabbali, 2010, 28). Duty of care. Ultimate sustainability. Colour *full*. Anarc ha -

Eyes upon me. Combat breathing (Fanon, 1965, 65). Festival of the mind. "Nothing doing. I explode. Here are the fragments put together by another me" (Fanon, 2008, 89). Self-inflicted wounds. Self-other-identification (Cassilde, 2013, 130). A numbing routine and all the destructive strategies of carrying on the racial state. Insecure future. Suffocating reification. Cul-de-sac exercise of artificial b/orders and constitutive space... Safe space? Spaced out. *Asylum!*

So it is.

Cruel optimism. (Berlant, 2010)

Slow death. (Berlant, 2007)

Hollow tree—

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