

RECOGNIZING OTHER SUBJECTS IN FEMINIST PASTORAL THEOLOGY

By

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## INTRODUCTION

As a scholar-practitioner, sometimes there is a perfect confluence of events in one's activities outside the academy (care-giving, social movements, world or family events, friendships) and one's activities in the academy (reading, writing, teaching). Their pairing is unparalleled and incredibly timely. The dense theory and the happenings in one's life illuminate each other in such a way that awful (and awe-filled) insight dawns and one does not know whether to offer thanks or curses for that knowledge. Discovering the set of ideas that elucidate happenings which one feels but of which one does not yet know the subtleties is like finding the right wine to compliment a complex cheese: flavors are distinct and rich, though not always to our liking. Or at least that's what happened in my case when I read about psychological and social theories of recognition.

As I entered my first semester of doctoral work, a long-time family friend, Jane, a white woman in her mid-fifties was reaching the brink of despair. Her upbringing was filled with emotional abuse, and though she had tried to break those patterns, her external choices and interior life emulated her family history. Married for twenty plus years and mother of three adult children, she felt as if her life had been a waste. Her children, my closest friends, told me some of the comments that she made to them in her fits of anger: "I gave up everything for you!" "You've abandoned me!" "I wish that I had never had children!" In her fits of despair she would remark, "My parents never loved me." "I want to die from Alzheimer's so I don't have to remember, so that every day will be fresh and new." "There's no reason to live." Her children felt powerless, angry, and most of



all confused. Weren't parents, especially mothers, supposed to be happy that their grown children were becoming successful, independent, and capable of giving and receiving love? Why couldn't they, or their father, do anything to make it better? But thinking back, they realized that this pattern had been in place for a long time, and that they had participated in it, as well. This was the tragic culmination of years of psychological manipulation and ill-health reinforced by social norms of white, upper-middle-class womanhood.

In that same semester—really, within weeks of hearing these details—I was assigned Jessica Benjamin's *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* in Dr. Bonnie Miller-McLemore's seminar on personality theory. Benjamin explores how the intersubjective process of assertion and recognition is subverted into submission and domination in interpersonal and social relationships. Reading and discussing it was a revelation. Never had a book blown my mind or helped me make sense of reality in such a way. Jane's life made more sense having read Benjamin: the desire for love, recognition, and relationship that shapeshifts into manipulation and coercion and is expressed in self- and other-harming language and emotions. I also found a deep compassion in myself for Jane and her children upon reading. I was hooked on recognition.

As I continued my studies I was introduced to more and more thinkers who had taken up themes of recognition: political philosopher Axel Honneth, justice theorists Nancy Fraser and Iris Young, postcolonial theorist Frantz Fanon, queer theologian Marcella Althaus-Reid, critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw, and political theorist William Connolly. I was most intrigued by philosopher Judith Butler and her theory of

gender performativity which hinges on intersubjective and social recognition as well as performance failure. Like Jessica Benjamin, her theories were revelatory and stimulating.

I continued to hear personal and social stories of misrecognition and non-recognition in my graduate studies in various settings and populations: working-class families participating in food justice movements; young adults receiving transitional housing services; one-on-one pastoral counseling with clients; and hospital chaplains whom I interviewed for a research project. These stories brought tensions of recognition and assertion as secondary concepts within theories of care and theories of justice to the foreground of my research.

Caring and justice-making are interrelated activities in pastoral theology, care, and counseling. In fact, the recent publication of *Injustice and the Care of Souls: Taking Oppression Seriously in Pastoral Care* (2009) in the discipline speaks to the growing conversation about what it means to take oppression seriously in pastoral care. The authors, under the guidance of editors Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook and Karen B. Montagno, answer that oppression-sensitive pastoral care pays attention to marginalized persons in their contexts and communities. As a corollary, caregivers must also pay attention to their own privileges and/or internalized oppressions to witness to a care that does justice. Overall, the tome invites direct pastoral theological engagement with wider and more complicated issues of structural violence and oppression, and challenges easy dichotomies between care and justice.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook and Karen B. Montagno, eds., *Injustice and the Care of Souls: Taking Oppression Seriously in Pastoral Care* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009).

However, holding these two categories of activity together poses challenges. In political theory one hears about the “care/justice debate” which posits the terms and practices of each as oppositional and dichotomous. When the debates between justice and care are played out, they break over fundamental descriptions of the state of human nature. Over and against accounts of morality and social-political interaction that prioritize utilitarianism or a Kantian deontological ethic, a care perspective suggests that a codification of just states of existence coupled with a description of the person as autonomous, rational, and, at some level, proportionately self-interested, will not suffice. Monique Deveaux explains,

The underlying message of the care perspective is as powerful as it is succinct: put briefly, it states that human relatedness and the practices that support it shape us in profound ways. It also states that taking this fact seriously in political terms would precipitate fundamental changes in our social arrangements.<sup>2</sup>

Critics challenge the care perspective for upholding feminine norms of self-sacrifice, impracticality in terms of political implementation, and lack of universality.<sup>3</sup> Again, Deveaux explains that the liberal paradigms of justice are precisely those that care perspectives challenge. As such, there is no “need to match liberalism concept for concept.”<sup>4</sup>

The proper spheres of influence and action are another dichotomy in the debate. The argument goes that care is about personal relationships, the family, friends, and charitable organizations while justice is about the public sphere, the political, economics,

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<sup>2</sup> Monique Deveaux, “Shifting Paradigms: Theorizing Care and Justice in Political Theory,” *Hypatia* 10 (Spring 1995) : 115.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 116-117.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

and capital. The care perspective argues that dividing justice and care in such a way is harmful and denies what feminists have long noted: the personal is political. Virginia Held comments, “Feminist analyses have shown how faulty are traditional divisions between the personal and the political....we can see how unsatisfactory it is to assign justice to public life and care to private....”<sup>5</sup>

In the life of the church and the writings of pastoral theology, care and justice are not nearly as dichotomous, although divisions do exist. The traditions of the social gospel, public theology, and social movements, like the civil rights movement of the 1960s or the sanctuary movement of the 1980s, were fueled by an interstitial approach to care and justice based in theologies of liberation. Pastoral theology’s interface with liberation theology has expanded the focus of pastoral theology from practices that are therapeutic in nature to social-political and policy driven practices of intervention and caring. However, addressing the person and society at the same time is a difficult task. Pastoral theologian Bonnie Miller-McLemore writes, “Current problems in sustaining a public voice for pastoral theology go right back to an effort that, with Walter Rauschenbusch’s immersion in New York soup kitchen ministry, once joined social ethics and pastoral care as two sides of the same coin.”<sup>6</sup> The problem with two sides of a coin is precisely that balancing on an edge requires that the coin be in motion to show

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<sup>5</sup> Virginia Held, “The Meshing of Care and Justice,” *Hypatia* 10 (Spring 1995) : 128.

<sup>6</sup> Bonnie Miller-McLemore, “Pastoral Theology as Public Theology: Revolutions in the ‘Fourth Area,’” *Pastoral Care and Counseling: Redefining the Paradigms*, ed. Nancy J. Ramsay (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 53. Additionally, Miller-McLemore describes disputes between major figures in the field over pastoral counseling. Those in favor of private pastoral counseling (Carroll Wise and Howard Clinebell) supported it as a specialized ministry requiring special training and practice in private settings. Pastoral theologians Seward Hiltner and Wayne Oates disagreed and argued that pastoral counseling ought to remain connected to church communities.

both sides. Thus, caring for women requires addressing gender injustice; caring for families requires examination of public policy that contributes to hardship or disintegration of families; caring for persons of color or an ethnicity different than that possessed by the caregiver provokes personal and social critique of oppressive forces and stereotypes, and their subsequent internalization and social repetition. As we pastoral theologians engage issues of systemic injustice, we will need to articulate how justice and care are related in our research, teaching, and pastoral and public practice. We will especially need to develop pastoral theologies that maintain the creative tension between caring for individual persons while attending to social injustices, their effects on the individual, and pastoral theological interventions to enable human flourishing. As a theological hope, I believe that we must assert that good care is also care that does justice, and good justice ensures that transformative care that enables human flourishing is prioritized in the private and public sphere.

As I argue in Chapters One and Two, feminist pastoral theologians are keeping the coin of social ethics and pastoral care in motion, examining problems of individual care as they conduct social and theological analysis. However, as I note in Chapter One, writing and practicing good care and good justice require reflection on the possibilities and limitations of recognition and as well as consideration of how the subject is constructed. In that same chapter, I begin by reflecting on the specifics of a case of my research that focused on decision-making in hospital chaplaincy. From there, I develop questions about recognition and subjectivity in relationship to feminist pastoral theology and its traditions of liberative care for persons who are marginalized and oppressed.

Specifically, I ask what resources are available in psychology, philosophy, and feminist pastoral theology to deepen our understanding of suffering, care, and justice.

In Chapter Two I explore the centrality of the subject in pastoral theology broadly, and in feminist pastoral theology more specifically. I describe the state of the field by telling the history of the subject through the language employed by the discipline: paradigms, functions, and human experience. I also hone into feminist pastoral theological anthropologies and their contributions to theories of subjectivity. Speaking to subjects of difference who have experienced otherness through ecclesial, social, and political exclusion or inattention, Joretta L. Marshall develops a pastoral care attentive to sexuality and lesbian identity, and Carroll A. Watkins Ali develops a pastoral care attentive to racial injustice and the multiple jeopardies of race, gender, and class. Extending her scholarship on the feminist subject and difference as well as her scholarship on pastoral theology as critical reflection on practice, Elaine Graham examines cultural representations of aliens, monsters, cyborgs, and other post/human subjects to deconstruct the idea of the pure human subject. Expanding concepts of selfhood primarily located in pastoral counseling theory and practice, Barbara J. McClure articulates theory, theology, and practice to develop a social selfhood, itself a reflection of the interaction between social structures and individual well-being. Finally, Pamela Cooper-White outlines a positive theological anthropology that accounts for multiplicity of the self. By engaging these authors I develop a critique of the state of subjectivity in feminist pastoral theology. Namely, I argue that complex experiences of individual and social suffering ask feminist pastoral theologians to build theologies of care attentive to

the mutually-informing dynamics of subject formation through psychological and social acts of recognition.

Theories of recognition are crucial to the ongoing work of not only *describing*, but also *determining*, who suffers and how one suffers. Feminist pastoral theology developed as a corrective to the assumed norm of a male-oriented approach to care, and later, womanist pastoral theology developed as a corrective to the assumed norm of a white woman-oriented approach to care. Both developments indicate an opacity, or blindness, which prevents practitioners and scholars from fully seeing patterns of harm at the social level and their presence at the familial and intersubjective level. To say it another way, as practitioners and scholars we are formed, informed, and deformed in relationship to oppressive systems that normalize sexism and racism, as well as heterosexism, classism, ageism, and ableism. Our theologies of care for suffering subjects ought to acknowledge the difficulty of recognizing those who suffer at an intersubjective and social level as well as identify pastoral theological practices that promote a subject's ability to press claims for recognition. Thus, I argue that theories of recognition drawn from psychology, philosophy, and feminist pastoral theology ought to dialogue with each other in order to speak more aptly to the state of the subject, caring interventions, and strategies to attend to subjects who are misrecognized or not recognized at all.

In Chapters Three and Four I turn to psychological and social theories of recognition. Recognition is a paradoxical process and one which is in flux, even in individuals who we view as the most psychologically and socially healthy, as well as those, like Jane, who struggle for a sense of belonging and purposefulness. Drawing on

psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin's intersubjective and psychological account of recognition and assertion, I explain how the insidious cycles of domination and submission work and how they will be broken when both men and women sustain the tension between assertion and recognition. Critiquing and expanding Benjamin's work, I show that structural violence and political repression are cases of social domination in which there is no one agent against whom one can make assertions for recognition. Instead, gazes are averted, indifference is interpreted as tacit consent, or explicit consent is manufactured owing to fear of future harm. At the end of Chapter Three, I argue that bodily and vocal lament is an act of assertion, either for oneself or in solidarity with those who suffer from an injustice. While helpful to process grief, lament is also a first step to resist domination of all sorts and to press claims for recognition at a personal and public level.

Recognition also speaks to subject formation through identity, such as race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality, as well as the formation of one's whole self. In Chapter Four I turn to philosopher Judith Butler and her theory of gender performance as suggestive of the limitations of recognition. Recognition, in this case, is a paradoxical process wherein self-realization is conditioned by social norms which shape the ability to reach self-realization, itself. Judith Butler puts it this way: "Paradoxically, the discursive condition of social recognition *precedes and conditions* the formation of the subject: recognition is not conferred on a subject, but forms the subject."<sup>7</sup> The process of recognition not only enables individuals to choose to become more fully themselves, it is also the process by which individuals are rendered socially intelligible. An ethic based

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<sup>7</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 226. Henceforth *BTM*.



on recognition thus requires a subject's ability to mourn what she will not become. Critics of Butler argue that her theory, particularly of gender, does little to advance feminist liberation projects, and instead normalizes subjection. While I am sympathetic to this line of argumentation, I show Butler's responses to these claims. Lastly, I suggest that one contribution of feminist pastoral theology to a theory of recognition and gender performance is a consideration of the hopes and the resilience of a subject's participation in identity performances.

While lament, resilient performances, and hopeful participations are three ideas I briefly explore to more adequately account for the processes of intersubjective and social recognition in subject formation, in Chapter Five I describe key components of a feminist pastoral theology of recognition. Following those remarks, I describe a feminist pastoral praxis of encounter using the image of the street journalist to capture the tensions of recognition and subjectivity as situated practices.

I hope that for subjects like Jane and her children a feminist pastoral theology and praxis of recognition affords them the things that they seek, consciously and unconsciously: the sense of being known and heard, even imperfectly; the capability to advocate for themselves in light of harmful internalized stigma; learned self-reflexivity for the sake of flourishing; and the building up of a sense of self through mirroring. When persons or social institutions cannot see dis-ease for what it is, like Jane who can think of no other path forward, encounters are opportunities to think anew, to interrupt the processes of pathogenic belief and action, to grow despite limitations. As we encounter, circumstances, incidents, and accidents provide opportunities to recognize other subjects. Like Jacob, one of the patriarchs in the Hebrew Scriptures who did not

know with whom he wrestled, encounters are demanding, leave us breathless, and possibly hurting at the hip joint.<sup>8</sup> If Jacob received his blessing (and a new name!) by not letting go all night and by demanding a blessing, then we too should expect that wrestles to receive the blessing of recognition might be prolonged but also fruitful. Further, we might even come to understand that the wrestling has brought to us to Peniel, the place where we see the face of God and each other, and live.

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<sup>8</sup> Genesis 32:22-32, (NRSV).

## CHAPTER I

### PROBLEMS IN PASTORAL CARE, PROBLEMS FOR PASTORAL THEOLOGY: SUBJECTIVITY, IDENTITY AND RECOGNITION

Pastoral theology as a reflection on pastoral care begins in concrete, real-life problems. Pastoral theologians tend to choose big problems that are experienced by the individual but which implicate familial, ecclesial, social, and/or political institutions. Sometimes pastoral theologians speak directly to theological traditions and their concepts, challenging normative beliefs with wisdom culled from the vastness of human experience. Always, pastoral theologians are interdisciplinary in multiple ways: they move between academic disciplines in attempts to diagnose problems and prescribe a course of treatment; they move between theory, practice, and reflection in attempts to get at the heart of the matter; lastly, they move across various spheres, writing and educating in the public sphere, academic sphere, and ecclesial sphere.

Recognizing, naming, articulating, and nuancing problems are central tasks of pastoral theologians. Pastoral theologians know the importance of asking questions that lie close to the well-ground of experience to enable the flourishing of the people of God. In that same spirit of pastoral theology, I recognize, name, articulate, and nuance the problem in pastoral ministry that catalyzed my interest to study the construction of subjectivity in feminist pastoral theology. I examine my own case of research in order to situate the problem of subjectivity and explain its connections to the psychological and social-political concept of recognition. Additionally, I describe my research method and situate myself as researcher informed by certain epistemologies and theological loci.

## Practices of Ministry Provide the Starting Points of Theoretical Reconsiderations

### An Overview

In fall 2008 I began research on the use of ritual in pastoral care. I was enrolled in an innovative doctoral course that brought students and practitioners of ministry together to reflect on issues in ministry in a sustained and intellectually challenging manner. During the course I became deeply intrigued by several overlapping questions: How do ministers use ritual as pastoral care? How do ministers negotiate between the administration of sacramental rituals and the desire for sacramental ritual, especially chaplains working in traditions that highly value apostolic authority and ritual, like Roman Catholicism? Why do people ask for ritual care? What kinds of people?

In my studies I listened to “Stephen,” our minister-theologian, and chaplains I interviewed, talk about best practices of care for women experiencing stillbirth or fetal demise. Additionally, I read pastoral theologians and theologians who use experience to understand how they responded to pastoral situations that cried out for some kind of ritualized care and what they thought the parent(s) desired. I found some answers to the question I asked my sources, namely, how does one provide ritualized pastoral care that remains aware of the traditional theology of the sacraments while also responding to grief, pain, and suffering?

Yet, I also was deeply disturbed by what I did not find: terribly complex selves. That is, at some level I had expected to hear comments on the differences that make the human experience diverse: race/ethnicity, sexuality, class, gender, ability, religious orientation. I had expected to hear commentary related to health justice, prenatal care,

age, and citizenship status. I had hoped to hear about the divergent cases where there might have been a twinge of relief on the part of the female or her partner or a general emotional numbness. To be fair, I did not specifically ask for these stories. I asked for any experiences that stood out in decision-making processes in ritual caregiving.

Yet that lacuna in the research nagged at me. Was there something to the fact that the minister-theologians did not socially or politically contextualize their subjects when telling their stories? Was there something to the fact that the subjects seemed to be possessed by intense grief, perhaps even hysteria, especially when their stories were told by others, namely pastoral caregivers or pastoral theologians? Was there something to the fact that the stories were told as a moment frozen in time, an unconnected memory given the life trajectories which came before and after the moment? I unpack the research and my ensuing questions below.

### Through Ritual Identity Emerges

“Stephen” was a minister-theologian in my doctoral seminar. He shared with us numerous stories about the challenges of ministry, but I became intrigued by one part of his story that stirred me to think about the moral decision-making required in ritual pastoral care situations: A woman gave birth to a stillborn fetus. She asked for her daughter to be named and baptized in the Christian tradition. Stephen, ordained in the Episcopalian tradition, was conflicted. In one ear he heard his sacramental theology professor saying, ‘Baptism is for the living, not for the dead.’ In the other he heard his pastoral care professor saying, ‘The sacraments are not ours to withhold.’ He was confronted with a moral decision. How should he proceed in order to stay faithful to the

tradition which recognized him as a minister and, at the same time, care for a woman who asked him to act as an agent of God?

Stephen's quandary is not unusual. When I sought guidance on this problem from practitioners and theologians through pastoral literature, church teaching, and professional associations, the answers largely fell into two camps. The professional literatures answered that a chaplain ought to give the bereaved parent exactly what she requested or a chaplain ought to hold a hard line to protect the doctrine and refuse any request for baptism. Believing that chaplains in hospital ministries have vast wisdom about the everyday contours of ritual and pastoral care, authority and innovative ministry, and doctrine and practice, I submitted a proposal to and received approval from Vanderbilt University's Institutional Review Board to undertake a pilot study of hospital chaplains asking them about their experiences through a semi-structured face-to-face interview format, common in ethnographic research.

The conversations with chaplains were rich in reflection and they provided contextual answers for my required minor area paper in Theology and Practice. I heard them speak about three distinct moments in moral-decision making as a minister. I list them below.

1. Gain Clarity. Chaplains ought to know departmental hospital policy regarding baptism of non-viable fetuses and infant death, particularly if serving in a hospital with a clear religious affiliation. Chaplains ought to also know intimately their own tradition which recognizes them as a minister as well as have a base knowledge of other traditions' views of ritual.
2. Maintain Clarity. Chaplains ought to have a clear understanding of ritual acts and their purpose. That is, they should be able to articulate clearly their theology of baptism or theology of ritual, gesturing toward sources of authority, whether culled from the Bible, theo-intellectual, ecclesial-institutional, or practical tradition.

3. Enact Clarity. Chaplains ought to be clear in conveying to bereaved parents what ritual they are willing to enact. Chaplains ought never lie or fib. Do not tell grieving parents that the child is receiving the sacrament of baptism when a naming and blessing of remains is offered. Ritual dishonesty breeds neither compassion nor genuine care.

In my interviews, I focused on the decision-making process for chaplains giving care in a Catholic milieu, a milieu which at first glance appears rigid and rule-based. For example, if a chaplain works in a Catholic hospital system—a hospital that is owned or sponsored by a religious community, like the Franciscans—or if a chaplain is credentialed by the National Association of Catholic Chaplains, then ritual care, which is one dominant form of pastoral care in the Catholic tradition, is reserved for persons who are living. The sacramental tradition holds that baptism is for the living, not for the dead. Thus, on the books at least, a request for baptism of a fetus or stillborn infant must be refused. How do chaplains in these Catholic milieus respond to this request? How do they reason through--do they 'reason' through--the request? Is reason even the best word to use in describing the ways in which chaplains proceed to give care in stressful situations where made and revealed doctrine rubs up against human pathos, suffering and tragedy when a great expectation is foreclosed?<sup>1</sup>

I remain deeply grateful for the wisdom shared by the chaplains. Yet, I was troubled by how I constructed well-intentioned guidelines from their reports that nonetheless failed to account for difference or identity. Though not nearly as highly

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of the word 'reason' is critiqued by feminist ethicists of care, and feminist theorists more broadly, for its insistence on a male-influenced, singular self acting without emotion and wholly through logical rationale. See Carol Gilligan, *In A Different Voice* (1982) and Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984), as well as conversations in pastoral theology by Bonnie Miller-McLemore, postcolonial theory by Uma Narayan, analytical philosophy by Marilyn Friedman, and political theory by Iris Marion Young.

detailed as the moral handbooks written at the turn of the 20th century for U.S. priests and candidates for priesthood to guide them through ritualistic pastoral care in the Catholic tradition, my suggested best practices still contained the inner logic of the handbooks. Namely, the subject of care's particularity in context is lost in moments of crisis, and thus care appeared to be reductionistic in relationship to fullness of personhood especially in crisis. Religious identity came to the foreground, and other identities drifted to the background. As the chaplains reported, the most effective care for women who experienced fetal demise or stillbirth was empathic and nurturing. This strategy of care is consistent with momentary crisis care in traumatic and stressful situations. By momentary crisis care, I am referring to the proximity of the care offered to the occurrence of the traumatic event.

Crisis care is supportive care. Hospital chaplains are no strangers to crisis care as they occupy unique positions as ministers. Emotionally and spiritually developed ministers are ready to witness with empathy and nurturing care. Pastoral theologian Howard Clinebell describes how the role and responsibilities of a traditional minister as congregational pastor naturally opens space for crisis ministries. He writes,

Pastors are *natural crisis counselors* because of the inherent advantages of their position and role--their network of ongoing relationships with their people; their entree to many family systems; the trust that many people have in ministers; their accessibility; and their presence during many of the developmental and accidental (unexpected) crises in people's lives, including illness, death, and bereavement. In the eyes of many who are experiencing crises and loss, the minister's image and identity have a supportive and nurturing meaning. It is within these natural advantages that pastors do crisis work, including the rituals with which our religious heritage has surrounded the major human crises of birth and growth, living and dying.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 183.



Like traditional congregation-based pastors, hospital chaplains are invested with pastoral authority and provide religious and spiritual leadership to those who hunger for meaning. Unlike traditional congregation-based pastors, the relationship with the care recipient is fleeting.

The chaplains I interviewed reported that they have few recurring patients, especially in the case of those who requested baptism. Because there is not a well-established rapport between the chaplain and the patient, and most likely there will not be deep rapport between the two in the future, crisis care in hospital chaplaincy is about stabilization. Chaplains are like emergency medical technicians who arrive at the scene of an accident. While EMTs work to stabilize a person in order to transport him to the hospital, chaplains doing crisis care stabilize the patient in order to transport him or her to loving communities and persons of care, whether it be a congregation, a pastor or other representative of faith, hope, and care, like a rabbi or imam, or a secular professional like a psychotherapist. In the case of requests for baptism after stillbirth or fetal demise, the hospital chaplain works to stabilize the person who, in addition to experiencing bodily trauma, is also undergoing emotional and spiritual trauma. Emotional and spiritual trauma is upsetting. When a woman who thought that she'd be rejoicing at a new life that she helped create finds that life is death, her "womb a grave,"<sup>3</sup> lament, grief, and sorrow are natural.

Ritual serves many purposes in emotional and spiritual care. First, ritual helps make meaning for individuals and communities within known frameworks. Rites of

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<sup>3</sup> Serene Jones, "Rupture," *Hope Deferred: Heart-Healing Reflections on Reproductive Loss*, eds. Nadine Pence Frantz and Mary T. Stimming (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2005), 48. Jones also uses the phrase "tomb for the never-to-be" to describe the uterus (59).

initiation, for example, are known quantities, especially in (Christian-Catholic) religious traditions: they offer recognition of personhood by a physical and spiritual community and then welcome the person into that same community. Second, ritual in the highly sacramental traditions, like Catholicism, relies on the wise exercise of pastoral leadership, a unique set of skills which correlates with the development of a minister's sense of religious authority as a shepherd to the flock. The gentle exercise of religious authority—offering prayers and blessings—shows care, especially in tragic situations, like fetal demise or child loss. One ordained Catholic priest and former chaplain explained that it in his formation period, he often relied on a book of prayers to help him speak words of healing when his own words would not come easily.

However, while ritual binds, it can also be blind. Differences that make a person unique, such as race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability, etc., may be less important to the caregiver and the care recipient in order to convey a fundamental reality through ritual: that the Divine has not abandoned the care recipient, even in the worst of crises. In echoes of pastoral theologian Emmanuel Lartey who, following anthropologists, reminds us that every person is like all others, like some others, and like no others,<sup>4</sup> ritual emphasizes the likeness of individuals through group cohesion.<sup>5</sup> Thus, difference and

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<sup>4</sup> Emmanuel Lartey, *In Living Color: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley, 2003), 34.

<sup>5</sup> Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman (New York: Oxford UP, 2001), 221ff. See also Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 54-68.

unique identity fades into the background to bring to the fore an individual identity closely linked to the communal identity.<sup>6</sup>

Though each person may be like all others, like some others, and like no others, some attributes of one's person ought to be considered through the paradigm of 'difference' rather than diversity or multiculturalism. The word difference refers to the inequalities that one experiences as a part of one's diversity. Summarizing post-colonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha, pastoral theologian Pamela Cooper-White writes that diversity is a liberal value distinct from difference. She explains,

The former [diversity] perpetuates an idea of consensus in which difference is tacitly contained and controlled by the dominant culture; the latter [difference] is "based on unequal, uneven, multiple, and potentially antagonistic political identities," multiple identities that "articulate in challenging ways, either in progressive or regressive ways, often conflictually, sometimes even incommensurably—not some flowering of individual talents and capacities."<sup>7</sup>

In this case, identity is inseparable from difference. The interplay of differences allows for the production of one's own identity as set apart from that of another person's identity. As a process, recognizing difference does not guarantee that all identities are tolerated, much less celebrated. At the extreme, identity converts difference into irreconcilable otherness, making a person an alien, a monster, or a demon. At the scale of

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<sup>6</sup> For my purposes I am emphasizing the likeness and cohesion that ritual builds without accounting for the agency of the actors, as this was how I heard the data conveyed to me. Since the 1960s, ritual theorists have argued that the human actor as a creative agent must also be accounted for in ritual, or performance, theory. For a concise and well-developed account of ritual and performance theory, see Catherine Bell, "Performance," *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998), 205-224.

<sup>7</sup> Pamela Cooper-White, *Many Voices: Pastoral Psychotherapy in Relational Theological Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 45. Henceforth *MV*.

politics, the challenges of identity and difference raise concerns for the practices of democracy<sup>8</sup> and justice-making.<sup>9</sup>

What difference does it make to attend to the politics of identity and difference in offering compassionate and just pastoral care? While researching the use of baptismal or initiation rituals as a form of pastoral care in cases of fetal demise and stillbirth, I noticed patterns in the types of women seeking ritual care. As told through the stories of the chaplains, they appeared to be largely working-class or impoverished, self-identified female-bodied, heterosexual, non-U.S. citizens or legal immigrants from the global south and Eastern Europe, and identified with a highly sacramental religious sensibility. Chaplains reported that some spoke no English or limited English. In reviewing this data I was struck by the ways in which the chaplains used identity markers to do the work of describing the person while at the same time offering little analysis of the ways in which these identities and differences affected the reception of care or helped the chaplain

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<sup>8</sup> William E. Connolly, *Identity\Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1991). Connolly argues that attending to the relationship between identity and difference in democratic theory necessitates a move toward “agonistic democracy” which “affirms the indispensability of identity to life, disturbs the dogmatization of identity, and folds care for the protean diversity of human life into the strife and interdependence of identity\difference” (x).

<sup>9</sup> Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990). Arguing against a theory of justice as universal and comprehensive (for example, that of political theorist John Rawls), Young develops a critical theory that accounts for difference in light of injustice. She explains that everyday discourse about justice makes claims that exceed the boundaries of a universal, self-enclosed justice theory. She writes, “They are instead calls, pleas, claims *upon* some people by others. Rational reflection on justice begins in a hearing, a heeding a call, rather than in asserting and mastering a state of affairs, however ideal” (5). As such, a theory of justice which denies difference (e.g. a Rawlsian veil of ignorance) or which presupposes mastery of process leads to justice (e.g. the distributive paradigm) ignores how social structures or institutional contexts influence which social groups receive privilege and which social groups continue to experience domination and oppression (3).

determine the best way to proceed in offering care. Moreover, the chaplains did not describe the ways in which an identity is not the whole and sum of a person, nor allude to the possibility that a person—a subject—might not be fully knowable, particularly when suffering and trauma are deep within. My research had led me beyond the scopes of the moral decision-making processes in hospital chaplaincy and into a consideration of psychological and social subject formation and construction.

I looked for writing in feminist pastoral theology to help me make sense of what I observed. I searched specifically on how pastoral caregivers might attend to nagging places where global politics (immigration, alien or refugee status), health justice (barriers to access of equitable prenatal or perinatal health care, e.g. language accessibility and translation, women's visibility in society, financial considerations, transportation), and religious-spiritual-pastoral care intersected. What methods or practices or paradigms are most helpful to do the initial pastoral work of contextualizing and understanding the complex and situated person—especially those who are most vulnerable in society or who have historically experienced oppression?<sup>10</sup>

I found a pattern when I examined the feminist pastoral theological literature over the past twenty years. We have offered single-authored books and multi-authored

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<sup>10</sup> Young, 48-63. Young identifies five faces of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. She pluralizes the categories of oppression so that they do not pivot upon the 'one group' phenomenon. She explains, "Social theories that construct oppression as a unified phenomenon usually either leave out groups that even the theorists think are oppressed, or leave out important ways in which groups are oppressed. Black liberation theorists and feminist theorists have argued persuasively, for example, that Marxism's reduction of all oppressions to class oppression leaves out much about the specific oppression of Blacks and women" (63). For use of Young by feminist practical theology, see Nancy L Eiesland's essay, "Things Not Seen: Women with Physical Disabilities, Oppression, and Practical Theology," in *Liberating Faith Practices: Feminist Practical Theologies in Context*, eds. Denise M. Ackermann and Riet Bons-Storm (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 106-120.

collections which largely describe care by starting in identity. This work remains important at a pragmatic level. However, the fact that we have a multiplicity of literatures which engage care from a primary viewpoint of identity markers indicates that we are organizing our knowledge of the subject primarily through these markers of identity, even as we strive to attend to the intra- and interpersonal dimension of care and the unique experiences of individuals while calling attention to the social structures which maintain relationships of oppression. Caring about persons, difference, and social inequities asks us to evaluate whether identity, as that which organizes our reflections on care, promotes human flourishing as fully as we can imagine.<sup>11</sup> While caring about identity has raised significant awareness of difference in our discipline, it does not capture the fullness of a person's subjectivity. As such, we ought to examine how social identities and experiences of difference correlate to personal experiences of suffering within our literature.

#### From Attending to Identity to Constructing Subjectivity in Feminist Pastoral Theology

By attending to gender, feminist pastoral theologians have made rich contributions that enhance the understanding of the human person through reflection on women's experience and pastoral care. Feminist pastoral theology has focused on bringing women's voices to the halls of the academy, church, and society, and has done so by foregrounding gender identity, critiquing uninformed and inadequate care that fails

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<sup>11</sup> Feminist pastoral theology as a discipline encompasses a remarkably wide array of concerns and theoretical engagements. As such, it can be difficult to frame the ongoing conversations without unnecessarily limiting what we are about. Drawing from coursework with Barbara J. McClure and as reflected in her book *Moving Beyond Individualism in Pastoral Care and Counseling* (2010), I understand feminist pastoral theology as theologies and practices oriented toward human flourishing.

to account for gender differences, and describing a more adequate care which is attentive to gender. Moreover, feminist pastoral theology has done so by attending to a wide arena of women's experiences, making tentative connections between systemic social injustices and gender, while remaining focused on describing and developing responsive care strategies and feminist pastoral theologies that re-envision human flourishing.

In the previous section I described how in the midst of my research, I was caught off-guard by the lack of attention to identity by practitioners while at the same time I noticed how identity, beginning first in gender and then expanding to include the diversity of women's voices over the last twenty years, played a substantial role in organizing feminist pastoral theology. By briefly examining the literature of feminist pastoral theology, I show that identity is a central paradigm for feminist pastoral theology, and one that poses challenges, particularly when pastoral theologians try to account for systemic injustices which affect care of women.

Feminist pastoral theology shares topics of concern and methodologies with broader pastoral theology, such as formation of the pastoral person; pastoral functions of healing, guiding, sustaining, reconciling, resisting, empowering, nurturing, and liberating; the pastoral context of the living human web; and critical correlative methods. Feminist pastoral theologian Zoë Bennett Moore has identified violence and abuse, and embodiment as two central themes within the literatures of feminist pastoral theology.<sup>12</sup> These two themes, as well as others, are explored in the multi-authored Fortress Press series on women's care, *Women in Travail and Transition* (1991), *Through the Eyes of Women* (1996), and *In Her Own Time* (2000). For these literatures it is more apt to name

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<sup>12</sup> Zoë Bennett Moore, *Introducing Feminist Perspectives on Pastoral Theology* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2002), 13.

themes of women's bodies, women's emotions, women's trauma, and women's roles and relationships in family, church, and society.

Topics central to women's bodies include care after hysterectomy (Estock 1996) and mastectomy (Henderson 1996), care during first menstruation, perimenopause and menopause (Dell 2000; Greider 2000; Henderson 2000), and care for women with eating disorders (Dasher 1996; Saussy 2000). Emotions and psychological health are reconstructed through a feminist pastoral framework, and depression (Neuger 1991), anger and aggression (Saussy and Clarke 1996; Greider 1996), and love (Gill-Austern 1996) are addressed. Trauma literature attends to rape (Stinson-Wesley 1996), sexual abuse (Ramsay 1991), intimate partner and family violence (Garma 1991; Neuger 2000), and the effects of trauma on development (Cooper-White 2000). Lastly, women's roles and relationships are reconstructed. Topics include work-life and ministry (Miller-McLemore 1991; Glover-Wertherington 1996; Ramsay 2000), family life, mothering, and daughtering (Robbins 1996; Treadway and Miller-McLemore 2000; Dell 2000), and aging (Justes 1996; Glaz 2000; Scheib 2000).

These literatures offer significant insight into the difficulties that women face in all aspects of their lives. However, they take a moderate approach to critique of systemic injustices, leaning toward constructive directives in care. In her 1999 pivotal essay linking feminist theory and pastoral theology, Bonnie Miller-McLemore writes that the last 35 years of writing in feminist pastoral theology falls into three camps: an implicit critique of patriarchal culture, an explicit critique of patriarchy coupled with "advocacy



for women and other marginalized populations,” and topical reconstruction.<sup>13</sup> These projects have given feminist pastoral theology a gynocentric flavor, she argues.

“Although concerned with rights and equality, they have focused on women-centered knowledge and relationships. This leaning toward a gynocentric approach accounts in part for the more oblique feminist critique.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, many essays concentrate on directions in pastoral care without examination or challenge to the ways that systems of care in and through ecclesial and theological practice have colluded with patriarchy, resulting in an implied, but vague critique.

Several problems arise from attending to specificity of suffering, vis a vis gender identity, without explicit critique of systemic injustices. First, it disconnects group identity, whether claimed or bestowed, from historical legacies of oppression and domination. Second, it continues to shape the subject of pastoral care in only one dimension by extrapolating from gendered intersections of race and ethnicity, sexuality, ability, class, and religion.<sup>15</sup> Lastly, it misses the opportunity to further conscientization of gender inequalities, their effects on the individual level, and development of responsive action through personal care and beyond.

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<sup>13</sup> Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, “Feminist Theory in Pastoral Theology,” *Feminist and Womanist Pastoral Theology*, eds. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore and Brita L. Gill-Austern (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 88.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>15</sup> K. Samuel Lee “Engaging Difference in Pastoral Theology: Race and Ethnicity,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 19 (Winter 2009) : 2. Lee calls this attention to one identity marker without intersection of multiplying difference within individuals reductionistic “or what Cornel West (1990) calls ‘one-dimensional functionalism [...] that loses touch with the specificity’ of life (p.106).”

Take, for example, the essay “Hysterectomy and Women’s Identity” by Beth Ann Estock found in *Through the Eyes of Women* (1996). This essay begins in the premise that for most women, identity is closely linked to her relationship to her primary sex organ, namely the uterus. Thus, loss of the uterus indicates a time of major transition, a time of loss as well as time of new possibility.

Estock writes that the uterus is a “symbol of womanhood.”<sup>16</sup> When a male friend remarked to her that having a hysterectomy was just another operation, like an appendectomy, Estock vigorously replied, “How would you like your penis removed?” in the hopes of revealing the undercurrent of sexist bias. Because the uterus is not outwardly visible, its surgical removal is not assumed to carry the same kind of gravitas that removal of, for example a penis or testicles, would carry, she argues. And yet, because it is not visible, a woman’s sense of loss may be doubled because it is not culturally recognized as a loss. Estock writes,

When a woman’s womb is removed, she may call into question her self-image and wonder how to define herself without that which she believes makes her uniquely woman. She may be shamed into silence about these struggles by her church, her family, and her culture as others treat hysterectomy as though it were routine surgery.<sup>17</sup>

Pastoral caregivers are called to encourage women to voice their feelings and listen without judgment. Additionally, a significant part of the pastoral work with women who have or will undergo a hysterectomy is to grapple with what it means to no longer possess

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<sup>16</sup> Beth Ann Estock, “Hysterectomy and Women’s Identity,” *Through the Eyes of Women: Insights for Pastoral Care*, ed. Jeanne Stevenson Moessner (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 192.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

their center of child creation. Pastoral caregivers are urged to encourage and support the woman in stretching her self-definition and normative ideas of feminine identity.<sup>18</sup>

Estock offers sage analysis and advice, but it pivots on a logic which mistakes biological body parts for a gendered group identity. What are we to do with stories of women who experience hysterectomy as neither loss nor possibility, but simply a medical intervention? Do we assume that something is wrong with them for not feeling the loss of their uterus because it is not their “wombs” or centers of creation? Have we then assumed something about what it means to perform one’s womanhood correctly if they do not grieve the loss of their “wombs”? Conversely, what are we to do with stories of women whose racial or ethnic identity in cases of hysterectomy ought to indicate some larger patterns that calls for attention and social-political intervention, not just pastoral triage after the fact?

In her article “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” critical race theorist and UCLA School of Law and Columbia Law School professor Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw uses the term intersectionality to describe the problem that identity politics “frequently conflates or ignores intra group difference.”<sup>19</sup> In her pivotal essay, she examines how battering and rape of black women are “the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism,” and yet “tend not to be represented within the discourse of feminism or antiracism,” leading

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<sup>18</sup> Estock, 205.

<sup>19</sup> Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991) : 1242.

to further marginalization.<sup>20</sup> “And so,” she writes, “when the practices expound identity as ‘woman’ or ‘person of color’ as an either/or proposition, they relegate the identity of women of color to a location that resists telling.”<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the inattention to intersectionality results in institutional and public policies which harm women of color, even while aiming for the empowerment of women more generally.

When we read Estock’s essay with a commitment to an intersectional analysis, we see that she does not account for the intersection of gendered bodily concerns with any other identity. We do not get a critical presentation or analysis of hysterectomy within any particular identity beyond a gynocentric woman. What might happen if we rewrote this essay as pastoral care for African American women who have undergone a hysterectomy?

First, we would have to relearn our history by taking account of the historically high prevalence of hysterectomies in the African American women’s community. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, poor black women were coerced into sterilization in both the southern United States as well as the north. The practice was so common in the south that black communities referred to the surgery as a “Mississippi appendectomy.”<sup>22</sup> In the north, medical residents practiced hysterectomy on poor black and Puerto Rican women as a part of their training at teaching hospitals. The director of obstetrics and gynecology at a New York municipal hospital reported, “In most major teaching

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 1243.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 1242. See Crenshaw’s analysis of the shelter movement and the organization PODER for concrete examples.

<sup>22</sup> Dorothy Robert, “Black Women and the Pill,” *Family Planning Perspectives* 32 (March/April 2000) : 93.

hospitals in New York City, it is the unwritten policy to do elective hysterectomies on poor black and Puerto Rican women, with minimal indications, to train residents.”<sup>23</sup>

This sordid history of medical practice cannot be undone without examining the role of religious and theological thought and practice, especially patriarchal pastoral practice that colludes with racism, colonialism, and heterosexism.<sup>24</sup> The male friend’s comment to Estock about hysterectomy being as simple as an appendectomy takes on a whole new dimension when we reread her essay with historical knowledge of racially prejudiced and medically unnecessary surgeries. Using intersectionality as a tool for critical analysis is needed to describe complex situations that beg feminist pastoral theologians to take note of marginalization and intragroup differences.

Feminist pastoral theologians noted this need in writing in the 1990s and implicitly argued that multiple intersecting jeopardies of sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, heterosexism, classism, and ableism must receive attention. Feminist pastoral theologians could not always adequately address these intersections but they repeatedly invited previously unheard pastoral caregivers and theologians to contribute their insight in order to address structures of oppression and shape a political-theological care agenda in which all could be included, much as second and third wave feminists across the disciplines had done. For example, Bonnie Miller-McLemore invites the expansion of the living human web, calling for “a richer diversity of perspectives, particularly

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<sup>23</sup> Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Pantheon, 1997), 91.

<sup>24</sup> I find second generation liberation theologian Marcella Althaus-Reid to be a particularly powerful writer who interrogates the ways that racism, colonialism, and heterosexism are sustained in religious ideology and practice, as well as ecclesial-institutional collusion with neo-colonial and patriarchal systems of oppression. See her collection *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology* (2004) for essays.

womanist, Asian, and Hispanic” that may “begin to reshape fundamental presuppositions of pastoral theology.”<sup>25</sup> The first essays that took up this call in the women-care handbooks included “The Legacy of the African American Matriarch” and “Self-Care for the African-American Woman” (Snorton 1996, 2000); “Sexual Identity and Pastoral Concerns: Caring with Women who are Developing Lesbian Identities” (Marshall, 1996); “Socioeconomic Class and the Life Span Development of Women” (Orr, 2000); and “Women with Acquired Disabilities: Constructing New Lives in a Strange Land” (Buford, 2000). These five essays, while not the whole of feminist pastoral theological thought on multiple jeopardies, are representative of a shifting terrain from an all-encompassing perspective of women’s experience to the emergence of a paradigm of difference. While it signaled the start of a shift, it remained a perspective which was not yet fully developed. They were five essays out of 46 that addressed the intersection of gender with, respectively, socio-economic class, lesbian identity, physical disability, and race in the African-American context, and were published over a decade in three handbooks of care for women, *Women in Travail and Transition* (1991), *Through the Eyes of Women* (1996), and *In Her Own Time* (2000).

The most recent publication of *Women Out of Order: Risking Change and Creating Care in a Multicultural World* (eds. Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner and Teresa Snorton) extends feminist pastoral theology and pastoral care practices with the questions of difference and identity at the forefront. The authors argue that the variables of race, class, and even generation generate different experiences of sexism. “The sociopolitical history of any given culture will dictate the level of sexism that is condoned, supported,

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<sup>25</sup> Bonnie Miller-McLemore, “Feminist Theory in Pastoral Theology,” 89.

tolerated, ignored, or challenged within a particular culture,” writes Teresa Snorton.<sup>26</sup>

Thus this collection of essays attends to the ways that these variables come together and describe how they affect women given cultural difference.

The majority of essays focus on pastoral theology, care, and counseling at the intersection of race/ethnicity and gender, including the African-American experience (Wallace 2010; Kelley 2010; Snorton 2010), the African experience (Acolatse 2010), the American Indian experience (Lacock and Eastin 2010), the Puerto Rican experience (Figueroa 2010), the Mediterranean experience (Cavina 2010), the Chinese-American experience (Kwong 2010), and the Korean and Korean-American experience (Pak Son 2010; Lee 2010; Yeon Lee 2010; Park 2010). Other essay topics include care for socioeconomically vulnerable women (Nuzzolese 2010), care where race, gender, and sexual orientation intersect (Cooper and Marshall 2010), and the expansion of the locations of care to include the corporate or business sector (McClure 2010). Religious pluralism and neocolonialism are emerging challenges to pastoral theology, care, and counseling as noted in the essays “Soul Care Amid Religious Plurality: Excavating an Emerging Dimension of Multicultural Challenge and Competence” (Greider 2010) and “Are There Limits to Multicultural Inclusion? Difficult Questions for Feminist Pastoral Theology” (Miller-McLemore and Sharp 2010).

One may conclude that the liberal value of diversity and inclusion is crucial to the feminist pastoral theological project. However, to attend to diversity and strive for inclusion results in an ever-expanding number of essays that detail pastoral care, counseling, and theology in light of identities of difference. The deeper that we probe

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<sup>26</sup> Teresa Snorton, “Introduction,” *Women Out of Order*, eds. Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner and Teresa Snorton (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 1.

intersections of identity in our pastoral theological writing, the more difference is produced, resulting in even more bodies of literature to address care for women in distinct populations. A multicultural proliferation poses challenges, though.

First, attending to difference concretely and specifically requires feminist pastoral theology to grapple with its search for normative frameworks, a legacy of its “modern Western ethos of a progressive Protestant worldview and its liberal feminist offshoots.”<sup>27</sup> In the essay “Are There Limits to Multicultural Inclusion?” co-authors Bonnie Miller-McLemore and Melinda McGarrah Sharp write that pastoral theologians and caregivers have supported the expansion of the theological and practical attention to diversity. However, they note, “Including everyone has not been easy, however,” and as such, “pastoral theology has not yet given sufficient attention to difficult questions that arise when feminism engages multiculturalism.”<sup>28</sup> Difficult questions arise when women across cultures disagree about what constitutes care free of “violation, degradation, exploitation, and suppression.”<sup>29</sup> Attending to identity and difference in feminist pastoral theology challenges assumptions that we hold about what is right, good, just, and liberative care. How pastoral theologians, caregivers, ministers, chaplains, policy makers, and community organizers respond to challenges to a priori assumptions matters. Without deep investigation, difference is made to become an irreconcilable otherness or difference is elided all together.

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<sup>27</sup> Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore and Melinda McGarrah Sharp, “Are There Limits to Multicultural Inclusion?: Difficult Questions for Feminist Pastoral Theology,” *Women Out of Order* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 315.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 314, 315.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 315.



The solidification of identity is a second challenge in care frameworks that attend to diversity. One speaks from a place of identity to others who do not share that identity when one's identity as difference is socially recognized. Establishing an identity, the ability to speak publicly as an African-American woman or as a bisexual woman, is preceded by a recognition of difference in oneself and between selves. There is a tendency for that difference to become a thing itself rather than an expression of a person. Divorced from persons, identity moves from a recognition of difference to the creation of a vilified other. Political theorist William E. Connolly explains that differences become solidified "into fixed forms, thought and lived as if their structure expressed the true order of things."<sup>30</sup> The concretization of identity unifies within social groups and divides between social groups. Connolly explains that the pressure to maintain an identity necessarily marks out those who are not that identity. Instead of persons, identities may essentialize an Other in relation to another, or abstract identity from subjectivity. He writes, "the maintenance of one identity (or field of identities) involves the conversion of some differences into otherness, into evil, or one of its numerous surrogates."<sup>31</sup> Confessing identity and belonging to difference is a tricky and constant game of power, self- and other-definition, recognition, and agency in which human actors play and get played.

Recognition at the psychological and social-political level poses a final challenge to the identity frame of feminist pastoral theology. Difference can be negated within the individual and difference can be elided between individuals and social groups. When

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<sup>30</sup> Connolly, 64.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

difference is negated or elided, it is, in effect, misrecognized or not recognized. Recognition is an intersubjective exchange between a subject and another subject, institution, or system of power/knowledge. It is both a psychological phenomena and a social phenomena. To suffer from misrecognition or non-recognition at the individual level results in challenges to the development of one's self-determination capabilities. At the social level, misrecognition or non-recognition challenges one's ability to fully participate in social and political life. Recognition is thus a critical category of human experience which effects the movement toward a liberative pastoral and social space. Critical theorist Axel Honneth writes, "The justice or well-being of a society is proportionate to its ability to secure conditions of mutual recognition under which personal identity-formation, hence self-realization, can proceed adequately."<sup>32</sup> As such the process of recognition deserves attention as a category that speaks to individual and social and individual suffering. Further, it is a category which must inform feminist pastoral theologies, which, as I argue in chapter two, are grounded theories of subjectivity.

### Linking Recognition and Subjectivity

Misrecognition and non-recognition contribute to oppression and domination. Repeated patterns of misrecognition at the level of individuals leave a counter-residue at the social level. Likewise, repeated patterns of misrecognition at the social level leave a counter-residue at the level of the psyche-soul. Critical theorist Nancy Fraser argues that alongside the tasks of economic redistribution and political representation, social (or

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<sup>32</sup>Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?: A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (New York: Verso, 2003), 174.

cultural) recognition is equally important in the work of justice.<sup>33</sup> She writes, “Overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalized obstacles that prevent some people from participating on par with others, as full partners in social interaction.... People can also be prevented from interacting on terms of parity by institutionalized hierarchies of cultural value that deny them the requisite standing.”<sup>34</sup> Persons denied social recognition based upon group identity are subject to mistreatment or oppression.

Social misrecognition, then, is associated with a particular identity group—gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, religion, ability. At one end of the spectrum, social misrecognition may be an overlooking process by those who possess institutional power; at the other end, social misrecognition may be an othering process whereby groups of people (women, African-Americans, illegal aliens) are expelled from public discourse. In the middle of the spectrum, we may find a “conscious acceptance” alongside an “unconscious aversion” toward persons with certain, identifiable identity markers.<sup>35</sup> For example, we know that xenophobia, racism, sexism, heterosexism and homophobia, ageism, religious intolerance, and ableism are very much alive. Some, like heterosexism, are more explicit and socially-politically legitimated than others, like racism and sexism. Those who care for (or care about) oppressed, marginalized and misrecognized

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<sup>33</sup> Nancy Fraser, *Scales of Justice* (New York: Columbia UP, 2009), 16-17. Fraser argues that justice consists in parity of participation. She writes, “According to this radical-democratic interpretation of the principle of equal moral worth, justice requires social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life.” While it is outside the scope of this dissertation to directly engage and elaborate definitions of justice for pastoral theology (a worthy project, but not this one), I do so indirectly when I consider questions of recognition and subjectivity as they arise in literature from social and political theorists.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Young, 130.

populations are obliged to identify “contemporary manifestations of group oppressions.”<sup>36</sup>

Theories of subjectivity, with special attention to recognition, are one starting point to identify forms of oppression that are similar to and breaks from past iterations. A theory of subjectivity is a theory of the human person in the social-political context set against qualifications of agency, power, psychological formation, and social construction. Theories of recognition are theories of subjectivity; likewise, practices of recognition and misrecognition are practices of subjectivity and subjectivation. Like recognition, approaches to subjectivity fall along a wide spectrum in describing a subject’s ability to effect individual and social change, to resist institutions and practices that oppress, and to intentionally or consciously pursue desires.

Theories of subjectivity are important for pastoral theologizing and caregiving. Recall the earlier dilemma I described where chaplains attended to identity markers but without analysis of how those markers affected care in pastoral-social spaces. In their roles as minister-theologians, the hospital chaplains implicitly offered grounded theories of recognition and subjectivity when they spoke about their patients. Feminist pastoral theologians also offer implicit theories of recognition and subjectivity when we write, teach, and practice. When feminist pastoral theologians imagine the nameless mothers, who exactly do we imagine? How much agency do we give the nameless in our accounts of best caregiving practices? Whose claims for recognition do we hear when we attend to identity and diversity and whose claims do we not hear? Thus far, I have argued that the

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<sup>36</sup> Young, 131.

description of the subject in feminist pastoral theology is inadequate because we have not sufficiently attended to her construction.

This dissertation is guided by three overarching questions. First, what is the state of subjectivity in feminist pastoral theology? Second, what resources in philosophy and psychology deepen our theories of subjectivity, suffering, care, and justice? Third, what does feminist pastoral theology have to say in response? In this chapter I described how I reached these questions by starting in reflection between grounded research on practices and theoretical inquiry in the literature of the discipline. In chapter two, I continue the argument I began here, namely that subjectivity is at the heart of pastoral theology, and, as such, ought to be examined in-depth because of the implications for pastoral practice. In subsequent chapters, I dialogue with theories of recognition to reflect on these questions.

#### Method of Research and Self-Reflexivity

This dissertation is situated within the subdiscipline of feminist pastoral theology, the discipline of pastoral theology, care, and counseling, and the field of religion and psychology. I use a revised critical correlational method, a method shared amongst feminist pastoral theology, the discipline of pastoral theology, care, and counseling, and the field of religion and psychology. In this section, I describe a feminist revised critical correlational method and reflect on myself as a situated knower.

## Critically Correlational, Revised, and Feminist

The revised critical correlational method is the method par excellence of modern pastoral theology. When used with commitments to human flourishing by accounting for gender and women's experience, the method contributes to the creation of feminist pastoral theologies and methods. In this section, I provide brief explanations of the correlational method, the revised critical correlational method, and feminist pastoral theological method. But first, I briefly highlight the aims of pastoral theology, care, and counseling, and relate it to the field of religion and psychology.

The word *pastor* is the Latin derivation of the word shepherd. Traditionally, pastoral theology referred to a theology of shepherding in which a religious leader tended God's flock of people.<sup>37</sup> As a practical discipline, pastoral theology, care, and counseling begins in the Christian mandate to empathize with and care for those who suffer. While pastoral theology and its practices traditionally occurred in ecclesial spheres, the discipline is now much broader in its scope and activities. Nancy J. Ramsay explains, "Pastoral theology is a performative discipline whether done by chaplains, pastoral counselors, pastors, or pastoral theologians in seminary classrooms."<sup>38</sup> To Ramsay's explanation, I add that pastoral theology may be an activity of reflection and theorizing also performed by non-ordained persons, particularly as the nature of care shifts into new

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<sup>37</sup> J.R. Burck and R.J. Hunter, "Pastoral Theology, Protestant," *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, Revised ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 867.

<sup>38</sup> Nancy J. Ramsay, "Contemporary Pastoral Theology: A Wider Vision for the Practice of Love," *Pastoral Care and Counseling: Redefining the Paradigms*, ed. Nancy J. Ramsay (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 175. See "Pastoral Theology as Public Theology: Revolutions in the 'Fourth Area'" in that same collection (Miller-McLemore, 2004).

forms that address “a wider social, political, and religious context,” such as public theology.<sup>39</sup>

Three legs of knowledge support the stool of pastoral theology. First, pastoral theology gathers reasonably accurate description of human experiences of tragedy and suffering. While one can never fully know the depth of another’s tragedy and suffering, academic pastoral theologians participate “in the scholarly enterprise of understanding human struggle, survival, and healing” through truthful dialogue with secular theoretical partners.<sup>40</sup> Second, contemporary pastoral theologians gather knowledge about the human condition through critical dialogue with psychology. Scholars explore the nature of suffering on an intrapsychic, interpsychic, and psycho-sociocultural level and identify methods of offering relief, care, or cure to the suffering. They critique harmful or inadequate theories and practices in theology, religion, and psychology. As a third leg, pastoral theologians gather and reflect on religious and theological knowledge which assists the sufferer, when possible, to make sense of tragedy and pain. With those who suffer, pastoral theologians explore and offer other modalities of healing, such as rituals or prayer practices. As members of a dialogical discipline, pastoral theologians also critique harmful or inadequate theories and practices of care.

Pastoral theology uses these three legs of the stool of knowledge to offer care and reflection in a variety of settings: more general pastoral care contexts in churches and

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<sup>39</sup> Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore and Brita L. Gill-Austern, eds., “Introduction,” *Feminist and Womanist Pastoral Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 13.

<sup>40</sup> Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, “Shaping the Future of Religion and Psychology: Feminist Transformations in Pastoral Theology,” *Religion and Psychology: Mapping the Terrain*, eds. Diane Jonte-Pace and William B. Parsons (New York: Routledge, 2001), 181.

faith-based ministries, specialized care in psychodynamic pastoral counseling settings, transformational and dynamic healing through broad attention to public policy and activism to remedy injustices, and in teaching and writing in the context of theological education. Moreover, pastoral theologians who work in a dialogical fashion also offer critique to psychological, and, increasingly, social and political theories, and policies, a hallmark of the two-way pattern of the field of psychology and religion and of the critical correlational method.

The correlational method has a rich theological history, beginning in Paul Tillich's one-way method of correlation. David Tracy, Seward Hiltner, Hans-George Gadamer, and Don Browning are contributors to a revised correlational method in which mutual critique and transformation of theology and culture is encouraged. Feminist pastoral theologians Bonnie Miller-McLemore and Carrie Doehring have reenvisioned a revised correlational method using feminist theory, feminist psychology, and women's experiences to engage in dialogue. I describe these methods next.

In *Systematic Theology, Volume 1*, Paul Tillich first describes and argues for a correlational method between Christian theology and philosophy. The correlational method "explains the contents of the Christian faith through existential questions and theological answers in mutual interdependence."<sup>41</sup> It can be used in three ways. First, the correlational method can be applied to problems of religious knowledge, second to statements about God and the world, and third to the relationship between the Divine and

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<sup>41</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume One* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1951), 60.



human, especially in regards to religious experience.<sup>42</sup> Writing against theologians of the Christian tradition such as Calvin and Barth who argue that the Divine-human relationship is fundamentally unidirectional, with human knowledge dependent upon unquestionable divine revelation, Tillich argues that the correlational method requires interaction between humans and the Divine. He writes, "God answers man's [sic] questions, and under the impact of God's answers man [sic] asks them."<sup>43</sup>

However, Tillich is limited in his interpretive lens, arguing that all human experience can and must be made sense of through Christianity. He explains, "In using the method of correlation, systematic theology proceeds in the following way: it makes an analysis of the human situation out of which the existential questions arise, and it demonstrates that the symbols used in the Christian message are the answers to these questions."<sup>44</sup> The role of the social sciences is limited in a Tillichian correlational method. Answers to theological questions must come through Christian salvation history, never through social sciences. "The Christian message," he writes, "provides the answers to the questions implied in human existence. These answers are contained in the revelatory events on which Christianity is based and are taken by systematic theology from normative theological sources. Their content cannot be derived from the questions, that is, from an analysis of human existence."<sup>45</sup> Social sciences assist in the identification of theological questions. They cannot adequately answer them.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 64.

In *Blessed Rage for Order*, David Tracy argues for a revisionist correlational method. It is a corrective to Tillich's correlational method and a response to other theological methods, namely the orthodox, liberal, neo-orthodox, and radical, that are deployed to make sense of the recent past which, while infused with the modern hopes of the emancipation and liberation, has included tragic and fatal suffering. The revised critical correlational method “holds that a contemporary fundamental Christian theology can best be described as philosophical reflection upon the meanings present in common human experience and language, and upon the meanings present in the Christian fact.”<sup>46</sup> Social sciences and disciplines that reflect on human experience can be sites of questions as well as answers in a revisionist model.

Practical theologian Don Browning contributed to the development of a revised critical correlational method. His revised method reflects on third-order knowledge and models how to put social sciences and theology into dialogue with an orientation to liberal principles. In the last ten years of his life, Browning developed a critical hermeneutics, drawing on Gadamer and Ricoeur, which informed his work in religion and psychology, and practical theology. Four considerations inform a critical hermeneutics for Browning. First, critical hermeneutics begins in reflection of a contextual situation; second, situations are interpreted through “the ideals or classics that have shaped their effective histories” with sufficient insight into how those histories have worked to disrupt, silence, or liberate persons and communities.<sup>47</sup> Next, critical

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<sup>46</sup> David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996), 43.

hermeneutics requires the retrieval and evaluation of these ideals for how they work on a practical and strategic level. Last, it reexamines the contextual situation to understand overlaps between religion and the social sciences, and to reconstruct ethical and concrete action.<sup>48</sup>

Feminist pastoral theologians with liberationist perspectives make use of the revisionist method, correlating gender, social sciences, and theology. They employ an emancipatory locus theologicus that begins in pastoral practice and its relationship to gender analysis. In her essay, “A Method of Feminist Pastoral Theology,” Carrie Doehring writes that four criteria guide her work in the construction of feminist pastoral theology. First, feminist pastoral theology works by dialoguing within larger disciplinary questions of method.<sup>49</sup> The revisionist method articulated by Tracy and modified by pastoral theologian Don Browning is one methodological site. Second, feminist pastoral theological constructions are “poststructural, contextual, and pragmatic.”<sup>50</sup> Theological constructions in feminist perspective ought to move beyond binaries of gender, account for the intersection of difference and their impact on the person, and remember that truth claims are provisional. Thirdly, “feminist pastoral theology will be explicit about the

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<sup>47</sup> Don S. Browning, “The Past and Possible Future of Religion and Psychological Studies,” *Religion and Psychology: Mapping the Terrain*, eds. Diane Jonte-Pace and William B. Parsons (New York: Routledge, 2001), 177.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 176. See Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, “Cognitive Science and the Question of Theological Method,” *The Journal of Pastoral Theology* 20 (Winter 2010) : 67-78. In her article, she argues for a revised critical correlational model when bringing cognitive neuroscience and theology into dialogue.

<sup>49</sup> Carrie Doehring, “A Method of Feminist Pastoral Theology,” *Feminist and Womanist Pastoral Theology*, eds. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore and Brita L. Gill-Austern (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 99.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 101.

sources and norms that shape our identities.”<sup>51</sup> Sources and their ensuing norms may be biblical, denominational, experiential, gendered, or social scientific. Lastly, Doehring argues that a feminist pastoral theological method bridges disciplines for the purpose of transformation of inequalities.

In this dissertation I use a revised critical correlational method attentive to feminist theories of subjectivity and recognition. Like Browning’s critical hermeneutics and Doehring’s feminist pastoral method, I begin in a concrete situation which called for reflection on theory and practice. In my next chapter, I move to appreciation and critique of what feminist pastoral theologians have contributed to theories of subjectivity, paying close attention to difference and recognition. In subsequent chapters I dialogue with feminist psychology and feminist social theory on questions of subjectivity and recognition. In my final chapter, I return to feminist pastoral theology and pastoral care to offer practices that build toward an account of a feminist pastoral theology and praxis of recognition.

### Self-Reflexivity and Method

As a feminist scholar-practitioner living at the porous peripheries of the modernity and post-modernity, I am aware of the importance of inhabiting self-reflexivity as a situated knower. I have built a knowledge portfolio that has both strengths and weaknesses based on what I have experienced, what I have not experienced, what I will never experience, and what I can only imagine experiencing. I trade knowledge using

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 102.

currencies drawn from the modern ethos of universal emancipation and the postmodern ethos of asking which power and whose emancipation.

The particularity of postmodern knowledge claims is important to the enterprise of pastoral theology. Feminist pastoral theologian Christie Cozad Neuger explains,

The postmodern contribution has been not only to look to the importance of standpoint in observations and theories, but also to recognize that value and truth claims have been based on criteria grounded in the ordering of power in the culture. What is truth and what is myth, what is health and what is sickness, and what is reality and what is fantasy have been normalized by criteria determined by those with the power to do so.<sup>52</sup>

Pastoral theologians are called to account for the power that they hold through social identities or locations, such as race and ethnicity, class, gender, ability, religion, sexuality, age, and education. As Carrie Doehring argues in her interpretation of a feminist pastoral theological method, feminist pastoral theologians must be explicit about how their locations impact the shape of the knowledge they build.

One accepted way to be explicit is to name one's social location. I am deeply grateful for the fortitude and courage that women and men in pastoral theology have exhibited in proceeding in this manner,<sup>53</sup> especially when naming a location is also a "coming-out as" process.<sup>54</sup> However, I also resist this form. I am too wary of

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<sup>52</sup> Christie Cozad Neuger, "Power and Difference in Pastoral Theology," *Pastoral Care and Counseling: Redefining the Paradigms*, ed. Nancy J. Ramsay (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 66.

<sup>53</sup> See the foreword to feminist pastoral theologian Joretta Marshall's *Counseling Lesbian Partners* (1996) where Andrew Lester acknowledges his gratitude "to Joretta for taking the personal risk inherent in writing this book" (ix).

<sup>54</sup> I use the phrase "coming-out as" to denote, first, that naming and claiming an identity is not a one-time process, but one in which a person comes out again and again. Second, I use this phrase to denote how an identity may become crystallized for us, even when we see our identity as something much more fractured.

confessions that feel coerced, of new norms of liberative practice that enslave persons in old economies of knowledge, of difference that solidifies and mutates into deviance. I worry about these things less in pastoral theology. Instead, I am wary of asking social locations to do too much work without questioning the shape of our revealed and revealing knowledge. Social theorists Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper comment, “If identity is everywhere, it is nowhere.”<sup>55</sup> The onus is to then communicate what might be conveyed through identity or social location without lapsing into extensive memoir or autobiography, while also acknowledging the incompleteness and tensions of every narrative. In fact, this observation is central to my argument.

So, I tell you as I can, as succinctly as I can, of my social location and how it informs the shape of my research. I have no doubt that I have already revealed things about myself to you in writing thus far and also by what I have not written. I am a white woman. I grew up without memorable family ethnic influence in Northern Virginia. I have never been pregnant. I am most familiar with the Roman Catholic religious tradition. I appreciate its historical richness, religious ritual, and theological imagery while experiencing frustration at its patriarchal ecclesial structures. I have been privileged to enjoy extensive education opportunities. I situate my research interests at the broad intersection of theories and practices of care and justice. I worry about domination and submission, subtle coercion, and psychological manipulation in everyday practices of caring because they are mistaken for love, for justice, for mercy, for healing. Working out of a feminist, pastoral, and theological framework in this dissertation, I intend to engage my sources with theological virtues of prudence, generosity, respect,

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<sup>55</sup> Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘identity,’” *Theory and Society* 29 (2000) : 1.

and humility for deliberation on the common good and the role of women's experience, and feminist second and third-order knowledge in doing so. I hope that those who engage this work will also act in the same spirit.

### Conclusion

In this first chapter I described how I came to the problem of subjectivity and recognition in feminist pastoral theology. I began by explicating a problem that arose from the practice of hospital chaplaincy, namely how ministers make decisions when their religious traditions conflict with requested practices of pastoral care. Next, I articulated how the research I conducted to answer this question of practice led me into questions of identity, recognition, and subjectivity. I showed a pattern in the feminist pastoral theological literature which uses one-point of identity and intersection of two-points of identity to speak to issues that call for attention in feminist pastoral theology, care, and counseling, and argued that this paradigm, while useful and needed, also limits the breadth and depth of subjectivity. Lastly, I spoke to my method and social location. In the next chapter, I argue that pastoral theology has a history of concern for the human person, suffering, and power, and as such is already in conversation with theories of subjectivity. I also review selections from feminist pastoral theology that engage in reflections on subjectivity and theological anthropology, showing both insights and limitations.

## CHAPTER II

### AN IMPORTANT SUBJECT: HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND FEMINIST PASTORAL THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGIES

*“Pastoral theology attempts to grasp the complexities of lived faith.”<sup>1</sup>*

In chapter one, I explained how I came to name and nuance the problem of subjectivity as an issue for feminist pastoral theology. I wrote that recognition is a problem of subjectivity with implications for individual development at the psychological level and with broader impacts on group identity and social justice at the socio-political level. I asked, what is the state of subjectivity in feminist pastoral theology, and argued that this question deserves consideration in light of theories of recognition.

In this chapter, I dig deeper into select literature of feminist pastoral theology to answer the question I proposed. But first, I step back from feminist pastoral theology to the larger historical expanse of modern pastoral theology and argue that pastoral theology, and feminist pastoral theology as a correlative, indirectly offer grounded theories of subject formation by theologizing from the experiences of suffering, healing, and personhood. While the fact that pastoral theology is grounded in lived experience is not revelatory, it provides the context for a normative practice that attends to Others.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore and Brita Gill-Austern, eds., *Feminist and Womanist Pastoral Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 10.

<sup>2</sup> I am using the words ‘other’ to motion toward two ideas that I will explore in Chapters 3 and 4. First, that a person may be made an ‘other’ through a resistance to laws, names,



Next, I turn to key authors in feminist pastoral theology to appreciate and critique how the feminist subject is constructed. Situated within the historical development of feminist pastoral theology that I described in chapter one, I show how each author has contributed to the construction of multiple subjectivities that call for attention in pastoral theology, care, and counseling. I argue that describing subjectivity without attending to psychological and social recognition is problematic if we are to identify and frame intersubjective and social suffering through a care lens that seeks justice.

### Pastoral Theologies as Grounded Theories of Subject Formation

“Pastoral theology has always looked to the parishioner, the believer, the suffering, and the practices of religion as central resources in the search for theological answers,” write the editors of *Feminist and Womanist Pastoral Theology*.<sup>3</sup> The human person, her suffering, and theological responses to enable flourishing are foundations of pastoral theology and pastoral ministry. Pastoral theology reflects on ministry, context, process, and practice. However, at the root of pastoral theology is concern for the self-in-context, though the scope of the context—a cone that begins with intrapsychic forces and expands to familial, cultural, and socio-political forces—has not remained static.<sup>4</sup>

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and practices which then mark a person as non-normative or deviant. In post-colonial terms, this is the subaltern. Second, Others are also made within individual selves by cutting off pieces of one’s embodied psychological and emotional formation.

<sup>3</sup> Miller-McLemore and Gill-Austern, 11.

<sup>4</sup> Please note that I am arguing that the subject and the conditions around the subject are what we do in our discipline. However, this does not mean that we are not interested in linking situated selves to issues that can appear to be non-human or extra-human, such as

Concern for the self-in-context is apparent when we examine the ways that pastoral theologians describe the work of pastoral theology through historical paradigms, the pastoral functions as activities of care, and a focus on human experience. In this section, I argue that these are the three roads that help us to understand just how foundational the person is to pastoral theology.

Definitions of pastoral theology and pastoral care are complex, contested, and multiple because the activities and challenges do not produce static knowledge. An additional complexity is a historical trajectory that spans pre-modernity, modernity, and post-modernity in defining pastoral theology and its activities. In light of these complexities, let me share four preliminary observations about where I see the field of pastoral theology, care, and counseling coming from and headed toward. First, pastoral theology is reflection on the activity of pastoral care, and the situations that stimulate the need for care. Second, contemporary pastoral theology, while aimed toward contextuality and diversity, cannot be divorced from its historical Christian roots in offering normative visions of flourishing (and salvation) through pastoral practices of care, vis a vis moral guidance, ecclesial wisdom, and practices of faith. Thus contemporary pastoral theology sees many viable forms of flourishing in individuals from its pre-modern roots, but remains committed to addressing issues that stem from a modern commitment to the struggle for human liberation in a pluralistic, global world. Third, this very commitment leads to a broadening of the scope of care. Pastoral theologian Nancy J. Ramsay observes that pastoral theology has increasingly become concerned with the “wider

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ecological and sustainability issues. See, for example, Howard Clinebell’s *Ecotherapy: Healing Ourselves, Healing the Earth* (1996).

public horizon for care.”<sup>5</sup> As such, “this wider horizon has meant that pastoral theologians now find themselves developing normative proposals for public policy debates on issues affecting care in our common life such as welfare and family policies.”<sup>6</sup> Fourthly, by speaking about human fulfillment, human desire, and human suffering, coupled with taking action to address harms in the church and society, pastoral theology sits at several conversational loci. It dialogues within the broader field of religion and the social sciences, especially psychology and religion, while also dialoging with theologians, ethicists, Biblical scholars, and other colleagues in practical theology. Additions, the praxis of pastoral theology bring us into dialogue with the fields of counseling psychology, micro- and macro-social work, community development and organizing, and public policy.

What holds these historical trajectories and definitions together is concern for the person in practice, not only theory—psychological, pastoral, social, or otherwise.<sup>7</sup> I have alluded that pastoral theology already participates in reflecting and formulating theories of subjectivity. However, I believe that pastoral theology’s reflection on subject formation through appreciative inquiry of experience is unique and can be better appreciated when read against the backdrop of grounded theory.

Grounded theory is a qualitative research method of the social sciences. Sociologists Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, the first proponents of grounded

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<sup>5</sup> Ramsay, 157.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, “Practical Theology and Pedagogy,” *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry*, eds. Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 185.

theory, developed their method in light of their research of dying hospital patients. They contradicted the deductive model of research that tests hypotheses based on existing theories. Instead, they began by appreciating the lives of the research participants.<sup>8</sup>

Like pastoral theological method, grounded theory begins by gathering rich data, and then turns to theorizing using heuristic devices of coding, memo-writing, sorting, reconstructing theory, and reflecting on the research process.<sup>9</sup> Sociologist Kathy Charmaz explains, “Data form the foundation of our theory and our analysis of these data generates the concepts we construct.”<sup>10</sup> As such, grounded theory rejects epistemological positivism.

Not all pastoral theologians engage in the formal methods of grounded theory or other kinds of qualitative research. However, they grapple with the same kind of rich data that is complex and contested, not only as researchers but as practitioners in church, academy, and public. Instead of grounded theory, pastoral theologians may call the theories they construct phronesis, prudence, or practical wisdom.<sup>11</sup> Practical concern for

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<sup>8</sup> Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine, 1967).

<sup>9</sup> These same kinds of tasks are present in other qualitative research methods and in use in pastoral and practical theology. See *Ethnography as Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Moschella, 2008) and *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Ammerman, Carroll, Dudley, and McKinney, 1998) for examples in pastoral and practical theology.

<sup>10</sup> Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2006), 2.

<sup>11</sup> Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 3. Browning takes up the task of describing how religious communities are carriers of and contributors to practical reason in this book. His argument hinges on understanding communities made of practitioners of faith as embodiments of practical wisdom (10). Also see *Religious Ethics and Pastoral Care* (1983) for an earlier synopsis.

the subject is descriptive and normative, as well as prescriptive. Practical concern is grounded in situational realities of suffering that become apparent in the profession of ministry. Therefore, I believe that pastoral theology implicitly contains theories of subjectivity because the subject—whether we refer to the subject as self, person, living human document or living human web—is at the heart of pastoral theology. Reflections on the subject are visible in the three ways that pastoral theologians orient the discipline: through paradigms, pastoral functions, and human experience.

### Paradigms

Three distinct paradigms define the academic field of pastoral theology.<sup>12</sup> The first is the classical paradigm; the second is the clinical paradigm; and the third is the communal-contextual and intercultural paradigms. The emergence of paradigms in pastoral theology is a result of self-reflection on the state of the field and its aims, and provides one way to understand what pastoral theology and its practices are and what they do. Further, the paradigms give us insight into the underlying pulse of pastoral theology, attentive to souls, psyches, and situated selves. These paradigms are both interdependent and complementary.<sup>13</sup>

The classical paradigm refers to modes of pastoral care that dominated the American religious landscape until the mid-twentieth century. However, the forms of care in the classical paradigm were not limited to the American or Protestant landscape,

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<sup>12</sup> John Patton, *Pastoral Care in Context: An Introduction to Pastoral Care* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 4.

<sup>13</sup> Nancy J. Ramsay, “A Time of Ferment and Redefinition,” *Pastoral Care and Counseling: Redefining the Paradigms*, ed. Nancy J. Ramsay (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 11.

but are also found in Catholic pastoral theology and practice as well. What marks this long period of time is interest in the questions of the soul, salvation, and sin. Ministers provided guidance and counsel to their flock; they were physicians of the soul, and their work, the cure of souls.<sup>14</sup> The classical paradigm of pastoral theology taught ministers the how-to's of this work. In the Roman Catholic tradition this included teaching the professed religious liturgics, sacraments, devotional practices, and complex manual systems of casuistry that aided the practice of penance. In the Protestant tradition, the how-to's included conversation with the faithful, preaching, conversion, and exhortation. The fate of the soul was of central concern in these pastoral practices.

Like many historical developments, there is no end-date to the classical paradigm; it exists side-by-side the clinical and communal-contextual paradigms. The clinical paradigm and its focus on the psychological make-up of the person was preceded by a gradual historical movement, from "self-denial to . . . self-love, from self-love to self-culture, from self-culture to self-mastery, and self-mastery to self-realization within a trustworthy culture, and finally to a later form of self-realization counterposed against cultural mores and social institutions."<sup>15</sup>

The *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* is one key document that reflects the clinical paradigm while also looking toward the communal-contextual paradigm. Written throughout the 1980s, and published in 1990, the dictionary serves as a hinge text in the field of pastoral theology, care, and counseling. It summarizes the scope of the field and extant knowledge of the modern pastoral care movement in the

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<sup>14</sup> E. Brooks Holifield, *A History of Pastoral Care in America: From Salvation to Self-Realization* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 11-12, 15-17.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

twentieth century. It is aware of the critical stances of postmodernity particularly on gender and racial difference, but mostly concerns itself with care informed by the humanistic psychological sciences, or a clinical pastoral perspective. As Nancy J. Ramsay explains, “The clinical pastoral perspective that predominates in the *Dictionary* is more clinically focused on relationally conceived selves in the immediacy of their lived experience with their social context often in the background. It values an existential focus on *being* over *doing* that recognizes moral issues but does not take up their political and social consequences.”<sup>16</sup>

In practice, the clinical paradigm of pastoral care focuses on caring for the individual through talk and empathic listening. It relies on therapeutic models and puts to use psychoanalytic and psychodynamic psychology, family systems, and other psychologies that lead an individual to insight about his or her history, its manifestation in the present, and his or her ability to affect future personal life trajectories. Pastoral counseling, a practice that requires psychological and theological training, and with an organization which oversees practitioners, the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, is a specialized form of this paradigm of pastoral care. The person as psychological creature worthy of study and assistance forms the backbone of the clinical paradigm.

The most recent paradigms, the communal-contextual and intercultural paradigms, expand the scope of understanding the person. These paradigms argue that the intrapersonal make-up of a self must be considered in light of the complex systems that also inform and impact how individuals understand themselves in the world.

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<sup>16</sup> Nancy J. Ramsay, “A Time of Ferment and Redefinition,” 9.

Likewise, healing is offered in community and by community; the pastor does not have sole responsibility or authority for caring acts. Patton explains that communal-contextual paradigm recalls earlier biblical and apostolic traditions of caring communities of faith.<sup>17</sup>

Emmanuel Lartey's proposal for the intercultural paradigm indicates the importance of attending to "the complex nature of the interaction between people who have been influenced by different cultures, social contexts and origins, and who themselves are often enigmatic composites of various strands of ethnicity, race, geography, culture, and socio-economic setting."<sup>18</sup> The intercultural paradigm contributes to the understanding that practices of pastoral care and counseling and reflections on these practices must be considered in light of complex developments such as globalization, internationalization, and indigenization.<sup>19</sup>

The communal-contextual and intercultural paradigms also signal a shift in focus from personal redemption and healing to questions of relational justice. "Relational justice," Ramsay writes, "normative for the communal contextual and intercultural paradigms, shifts the understanding of the self to a far more contextual, socially located identity in which the political and ethical dynamics of asymmetries of power related to difference such as gender, race, sexual orientation, and class are prominent."<sup>20</sup> She explains further,

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<sup>17</sup> Patton, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Lartey, 13.

<sup>19</sup> Emmanuel Lartey, "Globalization, Internationalization, and Indigenization of Pastoral Care and Counseling," *Pastoral Care and Counseling: Redefining the Paradigms* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 88-91.

<sup>20</sup> Nancy J. Ramsay, "A Time of Ferment and Redefinition," 10.



From within the clinical pastoral paradigm pastoral counseling had long focused largely on liberating persons from spiritual and psychological bondage, but relational justice requires that care also include attention to liberation from the actual bondage of oppression—the corollary of freedom from bondage is relational justice. To be in bondage is to be in an unjust relationship to an external power, or to an external power internalized psychologically and spiritually. To fulfill the image of God in human relationships, therefore, is to be liberated from internalized bondage and to create a human environment characterized by relational justice rather than oppressive structures of domination and subordination. Relational justice involves redistribution of power, resources, privilege, and risks in an equitable manner.<sup>21</sup>

The communal contextual and intercultural paradigms contribute to pastoral theological projects of care, counseling, and theology to effect systemic changes for the flourishing of all God’s people.

#### Functions

Another way to more fully understand how pastoral theology links its work to persons is to look at the types of activities that it undertakes. Certain activities come to prominence within particular paradigms, but like the paradigms themselves, the activities are interdependent and complementary. Thus while the functions of healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling inform the classical paradigm, they also extend through the clinical, communal-contextual, and intercultural paradigms. In the same way, the functions of liberating and empowering, while prominent in the communal-contextual and intercultural paradigms, may also be traced through historical theological practices informed by the classical and clinical paradigms. The function of nurturing which came to prominence in the clinical paradigm is also found in the historical trajectories of pastoral practice. Lastly, the functions, while articulated as activities without substantial

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 10.

attention to agency or subjectivity, are best understood as practices of ministry formed over time through the complex navigation of persons, systems, contexts, and doctrine. In this section I present the functions as named by key figures in the field and show that the person in need of care is foundational to the exercise of the functions.

In his *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, Seward Hiltner describes the function of shepherding as a distinctive operation of pastoral theology. He writes, “Pastoral theology is a formal branch of theology resulting from the study of Christian shepherding, that it is just as important as biblical or doctrinal or historical theology, and that it is no less the concern of the minister of the local church than of the specialist.”<sup>22</sup> The minister as shepherd offers tender and solicitous concern. He writes, “The view of shepherding as a perspective enables us to think of shepherding as a readiness, an attitude, or a point of view that is never absent from the shepherd and is therefore in some way involved in all his (sic) feelings and actions.”<sup>23</sup> Shepherding provides an overarching metaphor for three distinctive functions of the minister as shepherd of the flock of God: healing, sustaining, and guiding.

*Preface to Pastoral Theology* is a foundational text of pastoral theology. In writing it, he provided a clear articulation of pastoral theology as a discipline worthy of time, attention, and funding in theological education. He argued that pastoral theology was more than the pastoralia literature and how-to manuals, which had been assumed to be the limits of pastoral theological thought. Lastly, Hiltner compared methods used in the past through case study of Presbyterian minister Ichabod Spencer’s records of

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<sup>22</sup> Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (New York: Abingdon, 1958), 15.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

ministry to then-new trends of using the insights of psychology and psychiatry in pastoral care. Within the discipline Hiltner is hailed as the founder of the field for his defining contributions. Additionally, his shepherding perspective reiterated that ministers and those who reflected about ministry were ultimately concerned with the person and his or her well-being.

In 1964 theological historians William Clebsch and Charles Jaekle asked whether there was any historical continuity to pastoral care understood as helping acts. By sampling historical records about acts of Christian pastoral care, they made three significant contributions to the field of pastoral theology. First, they argued that there was indeed a contiguous lineage in the pastoral care traditions, offering exhibits of this pastoral care beginning with Clement of Alexandria's second epistle (c. 150) and ending with excerpts from William James' Gifford lectures, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1901-1902). Second, they argued that pastoral care as helping acts differed according to the needs of the communities and persons seeking assistance from their religious leaders. As such, pastoral caregivers responds with ingenuity to address the diverse needs of faith communities. Third, they identified reconciling as a pastoral function intended to restore right relations between persons, God, and community. They conclude that acts of pastoral care are always being renewed, reinvigorated, and retooled so as to best support the faithful.<sup>24</sup>

Howard Clinebell identified the function of nurturing as central to pastoral care in his 1966 *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling*. A foremost leader in the pastoral counseling movement, he argued that "the aim of nurturing is to enable people to develop

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<sup>24</sup> William A. Clebsch and Charles R. Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective* (New York: Harper, 1967), 1-2.

their God-given potentialities, throughout the life journey with all its valleys, peaks, and plateaus.”<sup>25</sup> Pastoral counseling in particular provides this nurturing function by attending to the wholistic growth of persons through reality-centered therapy. Nurturance occurs between client and counselor through empathy, rapport, and reflective empathic listening.<sup>26</sup>

The functions of empowering and liberating are first advocated by Carroll Watkins Ali in *Survival and Liberation: Pastoral Theology in African American Context* (1999) and then rearticulated by intercultural pastoral theologian Emmanuel Lartey.<sup>27</sup> As pastoral practices, empowering and liberating link pastoral care and relational justice. Empowering finds “ways to give power to those disenfranchised, to enable persons to resist oppression on their own and to take authority over their own lives.”<sup>28</sup> Liberating acts are both spiritual and political acts. Ali writes, “Liberating acts of ministry would be those that work toward actually setting persons free from oppression.”<sup>29</sup> At the heart of these functions, as well as those of healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling, and nurturing, is aid to persons and their communities. Thus, I conclude that the pastoral functions, while expressed as actions, are about subjects in pastoral theology.

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<sup>25</sup> Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 43.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 74-78.

<sup>27</sup> Lartey, *In Living Color*, 67-68.

<sup>28</sup> Carroll A. Watkins Ali, *Survival and Liberation: Pastoral Theology in African American Context* (St. Louis: Chalice, 1999), 139.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

## Human Experience

Reflection on human experience is central to the discipline of pastoral theology. As the practices of pastoral care were infused with new knowledge from the field of psychology, the study of the living human document substantiated claims that pastoral theology was a vital field of study in theological education. Bonnie Miller-McLemore observes,

In a sense, pastoral theology is a modern study of religion *par excellence*, coming to fruition precisely as a result of new so-called objective, measurable, empirical means of knowing the ‘truths’ of human experience. In other words, the field did not consolidate its academic position until after the social sciences, psychology in particular, had given new life to the study of the person, religious experience, pastoral care and ministry.<sup>30</sup>

As a theological discipline, pastoral theology’s existence is founded on the need for complex understandings of the human person and the role of religion.

Human experience is gathered from a variety of sources and points of contact, including the pastoral theologian or pastoral caregiver; the student, care recipient, parishioner, or counselee; and other individuals and groups of persons that pastoral theologians seek out in order to know more about the human condition, the role of theology, and care. Two terms, the living human document and the living human web, bear our attention.

The phrase ‘living human document’ was coined by theologian Anton Boisen to specify a new source of theological knowledge, but has a history that precedes and

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<sup>30</sup> Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, “The Subject and Practice of Pastoral Theology: Pushing Past the Nagging Identity Crisis to the Poetics of Resistance,” *Liberating Faith Practices: Feminist Practical Theologies in Context*, eds. Denise M. Ackermann and Riet Bons-Storm (Leuven: Peeters, 1998),177.

follows its coining.<sup>31</sup> Recall that in the hands of Seward Hiltner, the study of the living human document prompted the founding of the operation-centered discipline of pastoral theology in theological education, again demonstrating the centrality of the human subject to the discipline. With pastoral theologian Charles V. Gerkin, the phrase is renewed and reinterpreted in light of modern pastoral theology's turn to narrative and philosophical hermeneutics in *The Living Human Document* (1984). Finally, Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore refashions and updates the phrase to 'living human web' to capture "the delicate interweaving of multiple personal, social, and political strands that comprise every problematic situation and caring act."<sup>32</sup>

In 1920 Boisen suffered a major psychotic episode and was hospitalized at Worcester State Hospital in Massachusetts with a diagnosis of schizophrenia. After his recovery and release he turned to the study of living human document, specifically his own case, but also those of other patients. He recorded his experiences as a mental patient in *Out of the Depths* and *Exploration of the Inner World*. Boisen warrants our attention for three reasons. First, he both theologizes and psychologizes his experience of mental illness, and critiques those who sought to help him for their lack of knowledge outside their area of expertise—both ministerial and psychological. Second, drawing from and assessing his experience, Boisen developed a training program for theologians and

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<sup>31</sup> Robert C. Dykstra, *Images of Pastoral Care: Classic Readings* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2005), 229. Dykstra notes that Boisen seems to have borrowed from William James his phrase 'living human document' without proper citation, as well as a similar approach to the psychology of religion. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study of Human Nature*, James uses the phrase "*documents humains*" and writes that they are not sequestered "in the haunts of special erudition," but encountered "along the beaten highway" (3 in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 1902, 1982 imprint).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

ministers—the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) movement—which continues today as a primary means of training for chaplaincy in a variety of institutional settings. Lastly, the case study method he developed reflects his drive to understand human nature by the study of mental illness. The case study for Boisen, then, is an in-depth study of the human document and their datum of religious phenomena for the sake of easing sickness and suffering in the whole of humanity.

In *Exploration of the Inner World*, Boisen describes multiply the role that faith, religion, and theology played in the shape of his mental breakdown as well as the reestablishment of his mental hygiene. In the midst of his breakdown, he describes how he saw the moon provide a counter-illumination of a cross. He writes,

I was therefore much impressed one night, as I lay awake out on the sleeping-porch, by the observation that the moon was centered in a cross of light. I took this as confirmation of my worst fears. Did not the cross stand for suffering? What else could it mean than this, that the moon—which, as so often happens in acute disturbances, I had personified—is in mourning over the coming doom? In order to be sure I called an attendant and inquired if he also saw the cross. He said that he did. I was greatly impressed and agitated. But some days later in the early watches of the morning as I lay awake looking at the moon, speculating about the terrible danger which that cross betokened, I made a discovery. Whenever I looked at the moon from a certain spot the cross did not appear. I immediately investigated and found a hole in the wire screening! With this discovery the edifice I had reared upon the basis of the original premise began to fall. And only a few days later I was well again.<sup>33</sup>

In this short passage Boisen shows us how his pathogenic thinking proceeded. He saw a cross backlit by the moon. Informed by theologies of which he does not speak—perhaps end times or final days of judgment—he reasoned that the moon was preemptively mourning the end of days and the suffering that would come not only to Boisen but to all of humanity. In his psychotic break Boisen read the signs of the times that were available

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<sup>33</sup> Anton Boisen, *Exploration of the Inner World* (Chicago: Willet, Clark, and Co.), 1936, 4.

to him. Fixating on the knowledge revealed to him, he suddenly discovered a hole in the screen. His eschatological cross was the wire of the screen and the terrible doom of judgment was a theo-psychological projection. Boisen attributes this realization to his recovery. However, it is not the case that all religious phenomena for the mental patient contribute to recovery. He comments, “Voices and other hallucinations indicate a stirring of the deeper levels of the mental life, something which in itself may be helpful as well as destructive.”<sup>34</sup>

According to Boisen, destructive religious imagery and dogma come from external sources of theology, as well as internalized sources. Boisen offers a sharp critique of the local visiting ministers who did not adequately understand the complexity of mental health or the kind of care required for patients. He writes,

I soon discovered that the ministers from the neighboring village who conducted those services might know something about religion, but they certainly knew nothing about our problems. They did no visiting on the wards....All they did was to conduct a formal service on Sunday afternoons, and for lack of anything better they usually gave us the same sermons they had given their own congregations in the morning.<sup>35</sup>

More than casual neglect of the spiritual needs of the patient, Boisen finds that the ministers proffer detrimental spiritual advice. He recalls how one preacher chose to explicate the gospel pericope, “If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out.” Boisen writes of hoping that no patient take the preacher at his word.<sup>36</sup>

Both types of experiences informed Boisen as he developed a curriculum for his theology students. Rather than merely observing the patients, Boisen sent four of his

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.



students to work as “ordinary attendants” in the wards.<sup>37</sup> Their position as attendants would afford them the opportunity to develop a more intimate relationship. “My own experience,” Boisen writes, “had convinced me that there is no one upon whom the patient’s welfare is more dependent than the nurse or attendant who is with him hour after hour during the day.”<sup>38</sup> For this reason, the theology students were going to “first-hand sources for their knowledge of human nature.”<sup>39</sup> Boisen writes, “I wanted them to learn to read human documents as well as books, particularly those revealing documents which are opened up at the inner day of judgment.”<sup>40</sup>

Boisen thought that mental illness was beyond a simplistic good or evil orientation. In fact, mental illness is “the price we pay for being human.”<sup>41</sup> There is no stigma attached to a diagnosis. As part and parcel of the human condition, studying the living human document suffering from mental distress reveals information about the general human condition. In a manual designed for his students working on the wards, he writes several objectives of the case study method including: “To discover the forces and formulate the laws of the spiritual life, revealed in the disturbed conditions, which apply to human nature in general.”<sup>42</sup> The case study method he proscribed for his students was

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Paul Pruyser, “Anton T. Boisen and the Psychology of Religion,” *Journal of Pastoral Care* 21 (December 1967) : 212.

<sup>42</sup> Glenn Asquith, “The Case Study Method of Anton T. Boisen,” *Journal of Pastoral Care* 34 (June 1980) : 87.

lengthy, seeking to understand the totality of the person.<sup>43</sup> But more than merely understanding the person, the use of case study was also meant to deeply inform the theology of his students. Students were to ask theological questions of the patients without prejudice. Questions were both helpful in assessing theology as well as determining whether (Christian) practices of care might aid in a patient's restoration of health. For example, Boisen includes the following line of questioning: "What does prayer mean to you? Has it given you any special comfort or help? Have you received any special answers to your prayer? For what kind of things should one pray?" Asking questions of this nature was not to indict the person of apostasy. Rather, they served as way of doing assessment where the fullness and the limits of the human experience, including spiritual and psychological dimensions, are integrated into determining best treatment. Boisen's image of the living human document and his appreciation of acute and general mental illness in relation to religion again situates pastoral theology as a discipline of the subject.

One additional image that speaks to the importance of the subject is the living human web. Proposed by Bonnie Miller-McLemore, the living human web speaks to the complex embeddedness of persons in culture as well as the relatedness and caughtness in which persons live. As a result, contemporary pastoral care and reflection on that care can no longer dialogue solely with a psychology that accounts only for intrapsychic forces. "These moments," Miller-McLemore detects, "are always and necessarily situated within the interlocking, continually evolving threads of which reality is woven

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<sup>43</sup> Asquith's article provides segments of the case study areas: social history, family history, psychological history, sexual development, psychosocial development, education, vocational trajectory, and diagnostic impression.

and *they can be understood in no other way.*"<sup>44</sup> She gives the example of public policy issues which impact the health of not only the individual, but the whole web of human relations. She argues that these issues are as important to pastoral theology as intrapsychic, individual problems.<sup>45</sup> The role of the individual in the living human web is not diminished but made more intricate, with both the delicacy and strength found in the person and their webs. Thus, the overarching image of the living human web, and its predecessor the living human document, underscore the primacy of the person or the subject to the discipline.

### Feminist Pastoral Theologians on the Subject

Feminist pastoral theologians have not been silent on subjectivity. Indeed, they have actively reflected on the formation of the feminist subject. Some, like Joretta Marshall (1997) and Carroll Watkins Ali (1999), have offered implicit theories of subjectivity by attending to the complexity of identity, suffering, and injustices, while others, like Pamela Cooper-White, have articulated theological anthropological visions of the person (2007, 2011). In this section, I offer a selective literature review of feminist pastoral theologians who have reflected on subjectivity, broadly conceived. I see each author progressively refining understandings of subjectivity and barriers to flourishing, beginning with heterosexism (Marshall), racism (Ali), and sexism (Graham), moving to

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<sup>44</sup> Bonnie Miller-McLemore, "The Living Human Web: Pastoral Theology at the Turn of the Century," *Through the Eyes of Women* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 18. Italics mine.

<sup>45</sup> Bonnie Miller-McLemore, "The Human Web: Reflections on the State of Pastoral Theology," *Christian Century*, 7 April 1993, 367.

social constructivism (Graham, McClure, and White), and extending to multiplicity in theological anthropology (White). I conclude that they offer significant contributions to thinking about subjectivity, but have not attended to the dynamics of intersubjective and social recognition which are crucial theory and practice to care for subjects. Without attention to these dynamics, care for the living human web is distanced from critical analysis about the formation of persons through identity and the machinery of oppressive systems that judge and condemn based on one's identity and performance thereof.

### Subjectivity and Sexuality

Tending to diversity and difference is one route of reflection on subjectivity, and one that is widely-accepted in feminist pastoral theology. As I noted in the previous chapter, literature that engages specific issues of diversity proliferates. However, it is important to remember that this paradigm that encourages reflection on diversity was not always so. Courage was (and continues to be) required in the face of internalized and socially constructed institutions, practices, and thought patterns of oppression, marginalization, and exclusion. For this reason, the publication of *Counseling Lesbian Partners* by Joretta L. Marshall was (and remains) an important contribution to pastoral theological reflection on subjectivity and sexuality.<sup>46</sup>

At the most fundamental level, Marshall argues that lesbian individuals are complex subjects who, first, are not deviants from a God-given heteronormative sexuality, and second, are deserving of supportive pastoral counseling because God

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<sup>46</sup> See reviews by Nancy J. Ramsay in *Journal of Pastoral Theology* (7:1) and James I. Higginbotham in *Encounter* (60:1) for examples of how *Counseling Lesbian Partners* was praised for its substantive and courageous contribution.

affirms human sexuality that is covenantal. She writes, “[W]omen in lesbian covenantal partnerships reflect the church’s normative understanding of relatedness and are to be affirmed and blessed by God and the church.”<sup>47</sup> Further, Marshall explains that God desires that the covenant between oneself and God-self be enriched through relationships of love, justice, and mutuality.<sup>48</sup>

Marshall offers us a thick theological anthropology of human development and partnership; she does not shy away from human brokenness in individual development or in the context of relationships. As such, I believe Marshall offers us a rich theology of subjectivity by issuing a vision of life together as women-loving-women, but not one which is idyllic or which might ever be free of the pains of patriarchy, sexism, or heterosexism. Thus, Marshall holds in tension the call to support partnerships of love, justice, and mutuality as the telos of human sexuality, while describing how challenges to a woman’s understanding of herself as a lesbian arise from internal and external sources.

First, Marshall argues that the claiming of a lesbian identity is a challenge, though one that leads to liberation, spiritual depth, and possibilities for deeper relationships of mutuality and care. She draws on clinical psychologist Vivienne Cass to provide a six-step developmental frame for identity emergence: identity confusion to identity comparison to identity tolerance to identity acceptance to identity pride to identity synthesis. While Cass asserts that these stages are linear, Marshall disagrees, writing, “I would suggest that they be seen as fluid and dynamic interpretations women bring to their self-understandings at different points in their journeys. Often a movement from one

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<sup>47</sup> Joretta L. Marshall, *Counseling Lesbian Partners* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 14.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

perspective to another is met by resistance, fear, or lack of support, making it difficult to fully embrace what Cass describes as the qualities of a given stage.”<sup>49</sup> “Fluctuation and shifts” and identities that “may be experienced as long-lasting but are not necessarily fixed and permanent” are part of the formation of a sexual orientation, and a key component of a lesbian’s sense of self. Thus, part of Marshall’s theology of subjectivity includes a sexual and embodied self whose is in-process. Marshall’s use of language of self-identifying, while also being identified by others, or “naming and being named,”<sup>50</sup> also implies the relational nature of her theological anthropology. As well, it implies a sense of coming to know who one is and having that identity positively reflected by another individual.

Second, Marshall presents specific challenges to covenantal lesbian partnerships in the form of addiction, lesbian battering, sexual abuse survival, and fusion in relationships. She notes that these challenges are not unique, “but they can be the most common and overlooked struggles in these relationships.”<sup>51</sup> While she focuses on the intrapersonal dynamics between the challenged partners, Marshall demonstrates how to carefully excavate and examine personal histories and social norms that weaken partnerships of love, justice, and mutuality. Additionally, she shows us how to use all the data available to make wise assessments and do goal-setting. For example, she gives the case of lesbian battering in the couple Jane and Phyllis. They have engaged in verbal and physical combat with each other, with Jane as the perpetrator of domestic violence and

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 70.

Phyllis as the victim. Marshall's description of the situation fits the typical understanding of domestic violence, with the important exception that it is woman to woman. She writes, "The most common misconception in working with lesbian partnerships is that women do not hit other women and that battering is not present in the lesbian community....Physical violence between women does exist and reckoning with this reality is imperative so as not to minimize abuse when it does occur."<sup>52</sup> By making a claim like this, Marshall also shows us that her theological anthropology does not assume essentialist feminine qualities of caring and tenderness as constitutive of gender identity. Instead, a woman can be violent and aggressive, emotional states which may be due to internalized images of "women as victims or as unhealthy persons."<sup>53</sup>

Lastly, Marshall's emphasis on assessment, goal-setting, and pro-active pastoral care reveals a theological anthropology where relational injustices are reflective of social injustices and thus must be encountered within oneself and within larger social structures. She presents the case of Sara who is an executive director of a new pastoral counseling center. Sara and the board grapple with whether they ought to reach out to the new communities by placing an advertisement in the lesbian and gay newspaper in order to grow the center. Further, they worry what the reaction from the denominations that support the center might be. Marshall uses this case to state explicitly that the theological

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 79. Marshall moves quickly into assessment for pastoral caregivers: begin with individuals, not partners; assess power and dominance issues; and do goal setting for each partner. She spends only a few sentences noting that internalizing negative images is often present in relationships that fall into traditional male/female roles. This quick movement is purposeful, but I wonder what kind of further elaboration on subjectivity and female sexuality Marshall might describe if she were to consider the negative cultural stereotype of the lesbian as a woman who wants to be man.

call to build community necessitates inclusion of marginalized voices.<sup>54</sup> To refuse to do so is to collude with silencing and to believe that the church has nothing to do with injustices that arise from lack of access to resources of care. However, to break silence also requires that pastoral care specialists do inner work to identify their own homophobia.

To sum up, by attending to lesbian partnerships in all their strengths and weaknesses, and as part of the divine gift of human sexuality, Marshall offers pastoral theologians and care specialists a rich theological anthropology that, though focused on lesbian identities, has a wider reach. First, she reminds us that developing a sexual orientation is always a process, and one negotiated at an interpsychic and intrapsychic level. Second, she shows that a woman-loving-woman can embody hyper-masculinized qualities of control, physical aggression, and rage. Third, while sexism, homophobia, and patriarchy are forces that impinge on the psychic and spiritual health of individuals and couples, Marshall shows us that persons have the ability to resist and to create loving, just, and mutual relationships, sometimes calling upon assistance from pastoral care specialists to help in resistance to those oppressive forces.

Marshall's work is pivotal to developing and sustaining a line of questioning that challenges heteronormativity in Christian religious traditions and practices. Her work offers a pastoral apologetic for caring about women in homosexual relationships. In light of the conservative streak of the U.S. religious landscape, which responded with a 'love the sinner, hate the sin' thematic approach throughout the 1980s (and even today in some traditions), or demonizing desire and naming the homosexual as patient in need of *cure*

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 128.



from wrong desire (e.g. reparative therapy), Marshall puts into literary flesh a liberal pastoral theology that dialogues with emergent psychological scholarship on supporting lesbians while deploying Christian theological concepts to bolster her claims. Yet, more is needed in thinking pastorally about how a subject is formed in relationship to her sexuality. Taken from an approach that begins in gay and lesbian studies (as distinct from queer theory), Marshall's analysis of coming out requires amplification. We know, for example, that to call someone 'gay' or a 'homo' remains a derogatory term. Although Marshall reminds us that coming out may be a liberative and challenging process "that upsets the status quo and moves the world off-center,"<sup>55</sup> she neglects to fully take on the possibility of psychic and physical violence. Nor does she consider what an intersectional analysis of lesbian sexuality and race might mean for pastoral care, particularly given the politics of sexuality in the black church.<sup>56</sup> Lastly, Marshall's text does not consider the implications of queer theory, though through no fault of scholarship, as the approach had yet to gain prominence in religious studies or pastoral theology at the time of publication of *Counseling Lesbian Partners*. However, by engaging with queer theory in chapter four vis a vis Judith Butler, I hope to develop theoretical resources that take up the complicated relationship between sexual identity, recognition, and subjectivity.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>56</sup> Kelly Brown Douglas, "The Black Church and the Politics of Sexuality," *Loving the Body: Black Religious Studies and the Erotic*, eds. Anthony B. Pinn and Dwight N. Hopkins (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 349. Douglas writes, "While the Black Church community is arguably no more homophobic than the wider Church community or heterosexual society of which it is a part, causal observations do suggest that it is perhaps more unyielding and impassioned than other communities when expressing its anti-gay and anti-lesbian sentiments."

## Subjectivity and Racialized Injustices

Womanist pastoral theologian Carroll A. Watkins Ali brings complex questions of racial injustice to pastoral theology. Like Marshall, she is working out a pastoral theology with implications for care. Thus questions of subjectivity arise as she describes the limit situations that affect psychological and social health for African-Americans. When we consider her as a womanist pastoral theologian speaking on subjectivity, as well as a womanist offering a contextual pastoral theology, she offers a unique view that accounts for subject formation by multiple identity markers and a collective history that makes visible racially insensitive pastoral care and theology. Further, she remains hopeful that pastoral interventions may restore a subject's own sense of self.

Ali writes out of her own cognitive dissonance as a student of pastoral theology and a black woman. She asks how pastoral theology might build “a conceptual framework...in the African American context that is adequate to the struggle of many African Americans to stay alive and be free of the oppression of racial injustice.”<sup>57</sup> With this in mind, she leads us into the depths of human experience through the accounts of Lemonine, Pauletta, and Doris. She notes that these stories are to illuminate and speak to the collective whole about survival and liberation.

Ali's significant contribution to a pastoral theological anthropology is an account of the difficulties of surviving systematic racial injustice coupled with crippling social and psychological suffering. She briefly highlights the legacy of cultural loss through the transatlantic slave trade, the blindness of history that overlooks black women's

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<sup>57</sup> Ali, 1.

resistance, classism and racism vis a vis unequal pay and work opportunities, the systematic racism that supports hard-to-break cycles of crime and violence in impoverished black communities, the workings of the prison-industrial complex, and the familial stressors of alcohol and drug abuse that maintain “genocidal poverty.”<sup>58</sup> The stories of Lemonine, Pauletta, and Doris tell us about the process of becoming a subject in the face of survival against genocidal poverty. I recount Ali’s vignettes next.

Lemonine was a black woman who passed as middle class, but struggled to support her two children and her one grandchild as a single mother. She experienced racism at her workplace, worried about paying for medical care, worried that her car would be stolen by gang members or would need major repairs, worried about paying rent. Her multiple and intersecting jeopardies of class, race, and gender shaped her to strive toward being a strong matriarch for the family, striving which landed her in the hospital for debilitating exhaustion. “Truly,” Ali writes, “*life* was Lemonine’s presenting problem. There are no other diagnoses in the traditional sense.”<sup>59</sup> She “was basically suffering from being overcome by her own personal life, while trying to cope with all the external social realities that affected each age group of her family members.”<sup>60</sup> She was the strong black woman who suffered by trying to hold together that which social structures of oppression would tear asunder.

But Lemonine was also a savvy woman, and though she could not afford therapy she found in Ali someone who would work with her despite her inability to pay the full

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

fee. Meeting with her for three years, Ali primarily offered Lemonine supportive therapy: “Each weekly session during our relationship served mainly to build Lemonine up enough so that she could go back out to face a hostile world for another week.”<sup>61</sup> But this was not enough to reverse the cumulative life trauma and its psychological toll on Lemonine. Ali reports that Lemonine became more and more hopeless: “I witnessed Lemonine lose hope and give up on life altogether.”<sup>62</sup> Six months after therapy was mutually terminated, Lemonine died of a brain tumor.

In her second biographical sketch Ali describes her caring efforts with Pauletta. Pauletta was a single black mother and poor. She came to Ali to mourn the death of her first-born teenage son, a victim of gang violence. He was shot for wearing “the wrong colored hat,” a wrong doing which had occurred seven years previous to Paula’s therapeutic encounter with Ali.<sup>63</sup> Session after session Pauletta grieved the loss of her first-born, and “the dynamics of her own personal life in general.”<sup>64</sup> Loss of support engulfed her: her younger son was joining the army and church folk from whom she drew strength in the midst of her crisis seven years ago were tired of hearing about the tragic loss of her son.

Ali offered her supportive therapy and the space to grieve and cry out her anguish. “The purging went on session after session, but it was what she needed. That was not what was needed to solve her problems, but there was an enormous amount of grieving

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

that Pauletta had to come to terms with before she could move on with her life.”<sup>65</sup>

After all, “Life as a Black female had by no means been easy,” Ali writes.<sup>66</sup> By grappling with feelings of loss, abandonment, and isolation, Pauletta made positive strides in her life. “Currently,” Ali concludes, “Pauletta is doing fairly well; she is involved in work that she enjoys as a community activist.”<sup>67</sup>

Lastly Ali shares Doris’ story with her readers. Doris was a black woman who grew up in a home filled with physical and emotional abuse. Her mother justified the abuse with the following line of reasoning: “I would rather beat my own kids to make them act right, than for them to get beat out in the street by White police.”<sup>68</sup> Doris internalized this fear of violent external patriarchal and sexist systems as self-hatred: she abused drugs and alcohol. Her health was poor, Ali reports. Further, all the kinds of jobs that her education and training qualified her to do—minimum wage and physically taxing work—were not manageable given her poor health.

Doris also had two children who were both deaf. Seeking public aid for her family, she came under the watchful eye of the social work system. The “System,” as Doris called it, was an aggressor that fed off her fear with threats to prove her inadequacies as a mother, even though her skill as a translator between the children and the case workers, ironically, demonstrated her commitment to caring for them.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

Doris was referred to Ali when her court-ordered therapy group terminated. Ali makes the point that Doris was resistant to seeing anyone besides a black woman. When donated funds ran out to pay her fee, Ali continued therapy with Doris: “The issues were too serious to drop.”<sup>69</sup> She reports,

In reality, Doris spent most of her time at home child-rearing, in the silence of two deaf children, trying to negotiate the “System” and struggling with poor health, while people (even church people) and family distanced themselves from her and her children. I could see that Doris, despite all that she had been through, was still trying to overcome the odds without any real support. Doris was virtually alone.<sup>70</sup>

In these three vignettes Ali shows us how systematic injustices contribute to that material and psychological conditions of genocidal poverty, and further how they limit her subject’s ability to move with freedom in their social and psychological worlds. From these sketches, we can see that her implicit theory of subjectivity accounts for some agency of the subject, but this agentic power also meets with extreme resistance in multiple forms: from friends, family, and church who ought to care, but can no longer do so; from social systems that ought to help, but are unable to effectively do so; and from intrapsychic forces where unfulfilled desires for hope and belonging morph into despair, isolation, and grief.

To Ali, the dire conditions of African-Americans are a critique of the pastoral shepherding model. Furthermore, the realities of the African-American experience necessitate urgency and action on the part of pastoral caregivers. Ali critiques Seward Hiltner’s shepherding perspective in three ways. First, she argues that his shepherding model is paternalistic and overvalues the pastor’s perspectives. Second, his

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

individualistic approach is representative of white European American cultural thought, presumably a male rationality, though she does not articulate this point. Last, the pastoral operations he proposes—healing, sustaining, and guiding—are culturally insufficient for the current situations of African-Americans. As I noted previously, Ali offers additions to the pastoral functions in nurturing, empowering, and liberating.<sup>71</sup> She writes,

In general, guidelines for the pastoral care of African Americans from a womanist perspective call for the expansion in character and content of the ministry described by Hiltner's shepherding perspective. In terms of the character of ministry, the womanist perspective offers two guidelines in addition to Hiltner's call for an "attitude of tender and solicitous concern." The first order of business...is...urgency....Second, the attitude of pastoral care should also one of advocacy that is embodied in action.

Ali's expansion of the pastoral functions and her critique of Hiltner gives us insight into subjectivity through a practical theological lens. She argues that the Black church must engage in the practices of ministry—preaching, pastoral counseling, Christian education, youth ministry, and community outreach—to give hope while in the midst of struggle.<sup>72</sup> Because Ali is not explicit, we must draw some conclusions on our own. Namely, the tasks of Christian ministry in form *and* in content are practices of resistance to a dominant cultural formation that leads to nihilism and genocidal poverty for African-Americans. In this sense, Ali holds open a space for a changing self-perception of self and others in community, and is adamant that liberation cannot come at the expense of denial of one's culture.

It is outside the scope of her book to explicitly describe a theology of the person and her formation, yet I believe that Ali has done so, attentive to subject formation

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 154-161.

through the evils of racism, classism, and sexism, while maintaining hope that practices of pastoral ministry might intervene in that same subject formation. However, her case studies as grounded theories of subjectivity are problematic. As I recounted above, Lemonine, Pauletta, and Doris are representative figures of the suffering that black women undergo, but Ali does not consider whether her descriptions potentially reinscribe harmful stereotypes of black women.<sup>73</sup> Nor does she examine how cultural stereotypes are upheld by religious ideology and practices nor how controlling images are reproduced from generation to generation. As a result, her grounded theory of subjectivity inspects suffering at the intersection of race, gender, and class without sufficient attention to the historical machinations of oppression and domination and their impression upon subjects. What might it mean to read the story of Lemonine, the female head of household who died from exhaustion, through an analytic lens that accounts for the harms of the matriarch image and tries to trace these harms concretely as they become visible in Lemonine's family life and her interpretation of faith claims?

The matriarch is the strong black woman given to bouts of anger and, who through her unchecked aggression, drives away men. Her unfeminine personality emasculates her male lovers and husbands. Her children are without fathers because she will not conform to the appropriate and ideal gender behavior. Thus, she must become the bread winner, as well. Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins writes, "In this context, the image of the Black matriarch serves as a powerful symbol for both Black and White women of what can go wrong if White patriarchal power is challenged. Aggressive,

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<sup>73</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 76-93. Collins identifies the controlling images of the jezebel, welfare queen, mammy and matriarch and describes their historical development and current forms.



assertive women are penalized—they are abandoned by their men, end up impoverished, and are stigmatized as being unfeminine.”<sup>74</sup>

Womanist pastoral theologian Teresa Snorton identifies two relational locations where the matriarch stereotype thrives and describes the harm it causes. First, the controlling image is reproduced intergenerationally. Mothers covertly teach their daughters the skills of survival, namely strength and independence, so that they too are able to care leaders for their own households.<sup>75</sup> Snorton explains, “Often the lessons are so covert that one might miss them, except for their telling impact on how one is expected to respond to life’s difficulties.”<sup>76</sup> Second, an insidious incarnation resides in the pastoral exultation of that image. In the wake of deep suffering, the matriarch is a woman of strong faith, one who cries out to God for healing and prays for the Holy Spirit to revive her soul. Snorton writes, “She has many problems; however, traditions of faith and culture have taught her that her only recourse in this life is to look Godward.”<sup>77</sup> In the middle of crisis, she testifies to the saving power of God while others look to her for words of comfort.

Ali’s case studies, and her argument in general, would be strengthened by attending to these cultural histories. Her accounts of material poverty and the psychological state of her clients are descriptive, but not analytical, and as such, fail to adequately challenge oppressive systems, including pastoral systems, that cultivate

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<sup>74</sup> Collins, 85.

<sup>75</sup> Teresa Snorton, “The Legacy of the African-American Matriarch,” *Through the Eyes of Women*, ed. Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 55.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

nihilism and genocidal poverty in black women's lives, or to define what kind of agency is available to her clients. As a result, her account of racial subjectivity is distorted and borders on misrecognition of black women as potentially helpless subjects.

### Subjectivity and the Post/Human

Elaine Graham, Samuel Ferguson Professor of Social and Pastoral Theology at the University of Manchester, explores the post/human condition in the monograph *Representations of the Post/Human: Monsters, Aliens, and Others in Popular Culture* (2002). The term post/human connotes a trajectory of thought resulting from a genealogical method in which she examines the discourse of Western technoscience and popular culture for representations of human identity. She writes about a large range of scientific and cultural material and thinkers, from the Human Genome Project and Star Trek to Donna Haraway and Luce Irigaray, working each thoroughly to show the face of humanity that is refracted through the mirror of narrative. She explains,

In analyzing the representations of selected post/human figures—liminal characters, inhabiting the boundary between the human and the almost-human—I have resisted essentialist models of 'human nature', preferring instead to emphasize the way in which definitive versions of what it means to be human emerge from encounters with the refracted 'Other' in the form of the monster, the android, the *Doppelgänger*, or the alien.<sup>78</sup>

Using a genealogical approach, Graham shows us that current preoccupations with what becomes of the human subject in light of multiplying cybernetic, biomedical, and digital technologies is a question that is part of the mythos of the "purity and fixity"<sup>79</sup> of human

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<sup>78</sup> Elaine Graham, *Representations of the Post/Human: Monsters, Aliens, and Others in Popular Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2002), 221. Henceforth *RPH*.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

nature, or what Graham terms “ontological hygiene.”<sup>80</sup> The result of her study is a deconstructive theory of the person that builds on “representation, monstrosity and alterity, contingency of human identity, and the resurgence of the sacred.”<sup>81</sup>

It is important to situate her most current study within the trajectory of thought exemplified by her previous scholarship on gender and practice in postmodernity. In *Making the Difference: Gender, Personhood, and Theology* (1996), Graham embarks on a multi-disciplinary study of gender to develop a theology of gender. She engages anthropology, biology and psychoanalysis to teach her reader about normative theories of gender. Once she has accomplished this task, she interrogates theories of gender through detailed accounts of how bodies are disciplined to social norms, not exemplars of a free form anthropology of gender; how what is ‘natural’ is challenged in the bodies of intersex or transsexual persons and thus reveals the social construction of the ‘natural’; and how essentialist understandings of gender expel difference in order to stabilize themselves. Her contribution in this book is not only a thorough account of gender theory and its debates, but also a movement toward a theology of gender that “must engage with the pluralism and complexity of interdisciplinary theories of gender at a profound level.”<sup>82</sup> Further, her scholarship locates her reflections squarely within pastoral theological reflection on subjectivity.

In her book *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (1996), Graham develops an account of pastoral theology as a “critical theology of

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 11, 33-35.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>82</sup> Elaine Graham, *Making the Difference: Gender, Personhood, and Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 222.

Christian practice” that addresses the postmodern challenges to identity, power, and knowledge.<sup>83</sup> She argues that understanding pastoral theology as “critical phenomenology of pastoral practice” lays the groundwork for a postmodern pastoral theology.<sup>84</sup> In this form of pastoral theology, the grand narratives and ‘eternal’ moral norms of faith communities that shape practice are not absolutized and ahistoricized, but evaluated and investigated in light of “the complexity of human experience and their viability as public and communitarian forms of practical wisdom.”<sup>85</sup> She grounds her conclusion by way of observation of transformative feminist praxis that issue from the sources and norms of women’s experience, faith traditions, and the community of faith: feminist preaching, feminist spiritual direction, and liturgy as women-church. Again, her contribution in this demanding text is a depiction of the implications of postmodernity for ecclesial communities. In light of her future work in post/humanity, *Transforming Practice* is a critical study that attends to how ecclesial practices might be understood as sites for engaging difference and alterity.

In *Representations of the Post/Humans*, Graham extends her scholastic reflections on personhood, alterity, and the postmodern turn by engaging cultural studies as a locus of theological reflection. Her concerns are framed better as a reflection on subjectivity when we ask her text what we ought to be wary of when constructing a theory of subjectivity. She answers that we should be aware of the same four-fold factors listed

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<sup>83</sup> Elaine Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1996), 3. Henceforth *TP*.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

above in constructing theories of the person: representation, monstrosity and alterity, contingency, and resurgence of the sacred.

First, we ought to be wary of representation as a stand-in which displaces the original with a simulacrum. Graham gives the example of the human genome project which becomes the ‘code of codes’—that which distills the wild diversity of humanity by discovering the exact sequencing of four proteins: cytosine, guanine, adenine, and thymine. Decoding of the human person problematically effaces the actual person, but at the same time leads to questions of power and authority. If the code is only partially representative of human diversity, as scientists are increasingly coming to believe, then who has the power to speak for whom? Further, “representations that are ideological or reductionist—humans as genes, machines, nature as feminized other—serve to enshrine and reify certain assumptions about normative and exemplary humanity, but at the expense of excluding others from the discourse altogether.”<sup>86</sup> At stake in representation is the question of who has the authority to determine what and who is legitimately human, and the potential to repress or oppress that which is deemed alien or monster.

Second, we ought to be aware of the ways in which human creature-liness is reconstructed as alien or monster. Graham examines monstrosity, or teratology, as a discursive site on boundaries and identity. Examining *Star Trek* as cultural artifact, Graham shows that the fear and anxiety over technology’s encroachment on the male rational subject works against an ethos of equity, diversity, and tolerance. For example, in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* the android Lieutenant-Commander Data desires to act as and be understood through human subjectivity. In one episode his legal status as a free

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<sup>86</sup> Graham, *RPH*, 226.

subject with rights is called into question when Commander Bruce Maddox wishes to experiment on him. He wins the trial and his capacity for self-determination by articulating the fact that his life is at stake.<sup>87</sup> In other episodes, Data longs for human emotion, but fails to ‘get it’ quite right, failing at poetry, stand-up comedy, and romantic relationships.<sup>88</sup> At the prospect of being dismantled, Data worries whether his digitized memories will contain the ‘essence’ of the memory.<sup>89</sup> Thus, true humanity is marked out by what Data struggles to secure for himself, namely, liberty, emotive capabilities, and subjective experiences. Graham concludes that though *Star Trek* gives the appearance of attention to post/human difference, it defines authentic humanity as freedom and individuality by misrepresenting Data as an observer of human culture, always at the margins of full participation. As an ethos for constructing subjectivity, Graham observes, “This should encourage interpreters of representations of the post/human to be mindful of the invisibility or objectification—the misrepresentation—of those whose existence guarantees coherent categories, but whose non-participation or exclusion underpins the prosperity and security of others.”<sup>90</sup> Following Derrida’s observation that every seed of knowledge contains its own possible destruction, her analysis shows that attempts to describe an ontologically pure human nature subvert their own stable and fixed discourse by evoking alterity.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 227.

Third, we ought to consider an ethic of relationships in a theory of subjectivity. In particular, Graham argues that attending to “the digital, cybernetic and biotechnological” is cause to reflect on the porous peripheries between human and non-human. She uses the example of Donna Haraway’s cyborg to show the contingency and hybridity of human nature—or rather, the fact that human nature cannot be said to exist as it cannot be isolated from technology. With this in mind, a post/human ethic advocates attention to difference without dominion. Graham writes, “Ethically and experientially, the cyborg is a heuristic figure that suggests the rejection of solutions of either denial or mastery in favour of a post/human ethic grounded in complicity with, not mastery over, non-human nature, animals, and machines.”<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, the hybridity of human and technology leads to a coevolution that is thoroughly material.

Lastly, when theorizing or analyzing subjectivity, we ought to reflect on deep motivations, especially fears and hopes. Graham does this well, observing that representations of the post/human contain a Gnosticism in their discourses of transcendence, where the body and incorporeality are denigrated and technology draws us toward the transcendent and spiritual. However, the idealism and dualism of the transcendence is “not so much about love of life, as paradoxically, a pathological fear of death, vulnerability, and finitude.”<sup>92</sup> It is not the technophobic who is afraid of death, Graham argues, but the technophilic. From these insights, Graham concludes that the ideology of transcendence diminishes the sacramental nature of transcendence as embodied in person and technology. She observes, “This would acknowledge the

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 230.

fabricated, technologized world of human labour and artifice as equally capable of revealing the sacred as is the innocence of ‘nature.’”<sup>93</sup>

Graham offers astute analysis of culture and the idea of the person. As reviewers noted, this book “reads like a ‘pre-quel’” to a theology of transcendence in light of the post/human<sup>94</sup> or “an extended anthropological prolegomenon to a contemporary theology.”<sup>95</sup> As a theory of subjectivity, she refrains from normative and teleological statements. Instead she unravels what informs our imagination to advocate for an enlarged ethic that refrains from turning the Other into a monster or alien. Her unique contribution is a turn to cultural studies and her analysis of the theological in everyday discourse. She does not write an explicit theological anthropology informed by feminist pastoral-practical theology,<sup>96</sup> but, as I’ve shown, she does share rich insights that show how Others are made in discourse. Yet, we are left to describe on our own any implications for everyday practice related to church, care, or pastoral ministry.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>94</sup> Peter Scott, review of *Representations of the Post/Human: Aliens and Others in Popular Culture*, by Elaine L. Graham. *Theology and Sexuality* 10 (March 2004) : 114.

<sup>95</sup> Clive Marsh, review of *Representations of the Post/Human: Monsters, Aliens, and Others in Popular Culture*, by Elaine L. Graham. *Political Theology* 5 (Jan 2004) : 124.

<sup>96</sup> I say pastoral-practical here because of Graham’s context as a theologian in the United Kingdom. In the U.K. ‘pastoral’ has tended to have a more expansive definition than in the U.S. Protestant contexts where ‘pastoral’ often refers to the narrowed activities and research around care and counseling, while practical is the broader framework. See helpful definition entries on pastoral and practical theology in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (1990).



## Subjectivity and the Social Self

Pastoral theologian Barbara J. McClure offers a theory of the social self, an individual who is the embodiment of social systems, contra “an asocial, ahistorical, ‘authentic’ self” who informs the practice and theories of pastoral theology, care, and counseling, in *Moving Beyond Individualism in Pastoral Care and Counseling*.<sup>97</sup> She argues that the individualistic paradigm is pervasively institutionalized in pastoral theology and its practices of care and counseling, explaining, “A liberal Protestant notion of selfhood—which provides the background for most of my training and prevails in most pastoral theology and practice—includes a generally optimistic focus on the individual’s personal responsibility and ability to change, but does not account as well for the social and institutional realities that shape our experiences and our selves.”<sup>98</sup> She argues that it is not enough for pastoral theology “to rail against” individualism or to “treat the negative effects.”<sup>99</sup> Instead, pastoral theology must examine its “overly narrow conceptions of selfhood.”<sup>100</sup>

McClure finds that a strong social construction theory accounts for the ways in which individuals are reflections of dominant systems, as well as how individuals are agents in these conditions. For McClure, a self encompasses all dimensions of the person—“thinking, feeling, acting, relating, giving, receiving, with conscious and unconscious elements, hidden and performative qualities, sinful, graced, alone and

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<sup>97</sup> Barbara J. McClure, *Moving Beyond Individualism in Pastoral Care and Counseling: Reflections on Theory, Theology, and Practice* (Eugene: Cascade, 2010), 200.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

related, consistent and surprising.”<sup>101</sup> The self is embodied, emotive, spiritual, and rational, and also much more, because the self is always embedded, reflective of, and in relationship with the social, and thus also power.

In this line of social theorizing, it is tempting to assume that a self dissipates under the oppressive tide of dominant systems, and thus becomes a deterministic theological anthropology. On the contrary, McClure asserts that a strong social theory shows how potent a synergistic view is in shaping a self’s agency. She writes,

When we fail to recognize the fact that we are ontologically synergistic selves who come into being in the dynamic interplay between our physical selves, our interpersonal relationships, and the sociocultural contexts in which we are all embedded, we fail to understand the importance of reflexive agency in the face of conditions that make for distressed, fragmented or depressed selves. The origin of our agency is in the interstices of social contexts that have constructed us, the contexts and experiences that have come together in unique ways, creating perspectives and forms of agency that are new.<sup>102</sup>

New perspectives and new forms of agency arise due to the thoroughly unique creation of that who is one’s self. Each relationship with person, institution, and system and one’s overall life experience contributes to the creation of a unique individual. Further, this is an ongoing, never-complete process.

Drawing from process and liberation theology, McClure develops a theology with strong normative visions for interpersonal relations between God, self, and others. Synergistic theology parallels the synergistic person. That is, God, like the self, is ever changing and responding to the actions of persons in the world; what does not change is the principle that God is love.<sup>103</sup> She explains, “God is immanent, related, and is

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 201.

constantly and in every moment doing everything within divine power to prevent and repair needless and destructive suffering. But God cannot act without the will, responsiveness, and creative engagement of persons who can participate in easing or even preventing suffering.”<sup>104</sup>

The ramifications of a synergistic self, God, and society offer new opportunities to the field of pastoral theology, care, and counseling. A synergetic reality means that suffering is not an individual occurrence, but one connected to sociopolitical realities. Further, a synergetic reality presses upon our human agency and urges us to participate in the salvific work of changing oppressive institutions that uphold the status quo. This is the cultivation of the “kin-dom of God,”<sup>105</sup> and the work that must be done for the telos of human flourishing.

Following this theoretically rich material, McClure outlines theological, theoretical, practical, and organizational proposals for the field. She urges pastoral theologians to describe and effect the kin-dom of God, paying attention to who is able to access the institutions that support pastoral care and counseling, and to reclaim the capacity to name sin in order to make social critiques that lead to changes for better health. Theoretically, she urges pastoral theologians to move beyond individualism and develop “more socially adequate theological anthropologies.”<sup>106</sup> Consequently, that

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 215. McClure cites mujerista theologian Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz’s use of this term to describe the relatedness of persons as kin, brothers and sisters, and our participation in life together.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 240.

which falls under the purview of ‘pastoral’ will continue to broaden into the public and social spheres.

What does this mean for the practice of pastoral care and counseling? First, pastoral caregivers and counselors must prioritize active engagement and participation rather than insight and withdrawal.<sup>107</sup> Second, the pastoral caregiver’s physical office is a liminal space in which client and therapist must not only gain insight, but regain a sense of agency to change that which denigrates holistic flourishing. Third, pastoral caregivers must delineate the difference between the ideology of individualism and caring for an individual. Fourthly, McClure writes that training will require an expansion of perspectives beyond ego psychology and one-on-one, long-term counseling. These implications will require organizational shifts, such as moving beyond the fee-for-service model and developing business models that build upon relationships between parishes and counselors.

McClure makes theoretically dense material both accessible and practical. This is a feat to be lauded. Her expansive social notion of the self gives pastoral theology the handholds it needs to scale the peaks of social suffering. Further, her concern for on-the-ground practice, the health of institutions, and her encouragement to other pastoral theologians and practitioners to develop more socially adequate theories of the self fund my own project.

However, McClure does not narrowly attend to the processes of intersubjective or social recognition in her account of the social self who suffers. Without attending to these dynamics in her project, McClure does not account for how domination may disable

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 244.

a subject's ability to seek recognition as a step toward flourishing. Further, the type of agency she develops through a social construction of self sounds more akin to a definition of agency offered by anthropologist Saba Mahmood as "capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create" rather than "resistance to relations of domination."<sup>108</sup> As Mahmood shows in her description of the mosque movement, Egyptian Muslim women cultivate modesty or shyness as an expression of piety through embodied practices, such as wearing the hijab. While she argues these agentic practices shape "memory, desire, and intellect," her interpretation (and the women of the mosque movement) is critiqued as participation in patriarchal systems of oppression rather than liberative feminist practices.<sup>109</sup> In a project like McClure's, which aims for liberative actions to enable a broadly defined concept of human flourishing, a consideration of the processes of recognition would enable further discussion and critique of practices and institutions that reinforce harm.

### Subjectivity and Multiplicity

Anglican priest, counselor, and feminist pastoral theologian Pamela Cooper-White provides an elegant theological description of the human person as multiple in her many essays and books. She is most explicit about her relational theological anthropology in *Many Voices: Pastoral Psychotherapy in Relational and Theological Perspective* (2007), though she wrestles complexly with questions of subjectivity,

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<sup>108</sup> Saba Mahmood, "Agency, Performativity, and the Feminist Subject," *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, eds. Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville (New York: Columbia, 2006), 180.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

multiplicity, and the ethical dimensions of subject formation in a gathered collection of essays published under the title *Braided Selves: Collected Essays on Multiplicity, God, and Persons* (2011). In *Many Voices* she unfolds her nine characteristics of the human being that can be summed up in one sentence: “human beings are good, yet vulnerable; embodied; both alike and unique; intrinsically relational; multiple; mutable; loved, and therefore loving beings.”<sup>110</sup> In articulating her description, I show that Cooper-White provides the most systematic account of subjectivity as theological anthropology. Her feminist pastoral lens enables her to hold together paradoxes of the human condition. However, her description remains insufficient in articulating how the depths of intersubjective and social suffering impede recognition as a tool for self-determination, or the role that identity recognition, misrecognition, or non-recognition plays in subject formation.

A strong theology of God’s presence acting in the world informs her first articulation that human beings are good and also vulnerable. A fundamental principle of Christian theology is the belief that God has acted and continues to act in the world—through creation, redemption in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and in the movement of the Holy Spirit. She concludes that there is goodness in all of creation because the triune God renews the face of the earth. Despite some Christian approaches to human sin that focus on total human depravity, she argues, “No matter how muddied and dim that spark of goodness may seem to the outside observer, however buried under layers of suffering, fear, and negative, even evil, behavior, this primordial goodness is the

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<sup>110</sup> *MV*, 39.

original inheritance of all created beings from the beginning of time.”<sup>111</sup> A seed of goodness lies in the depth of all creation.

Second, Cooper-White states that human beings are embodied. She traces the Platonic separation of the body from the soul, and its use in early Christianity through the Reformation and Enlightenment, but then notes that the scriptures are “less dualistic.”<sup>112</sup> She cites the linguistic unity for the words in the Hebrew Scriptures for body, soul, feeling, desire, and life, as well as Paul’s emphasis on the body and soul as different orientations to the same whole person in the Christian Scriptures. With feminist and womanist theologians, she affirms the body as a location for knowledge of self and God.

Third, Cooper-White writes that human beings are both alike and unique. Drawing on the observation cited by pastoral theologian Emmanuel Lartey that every person is “like all others, like some others, and like no others,”<sup>113</sup> Cooper-White draws out conclusions that relate directly to subjectivity questions of identity, Otherness, justice, and recognition. Drawing on contemporary thinkers like Lévinas, Buber, Bhabha, and Spivak, Cooper-White theorizes the Other. Each person is irreducible; therefore an otherness always exists in our knowledge of other persons. She explains, “This emphasis in postmodernism and postcolonialism on restoring the speech and subjective stance of the ‘other’ has lifted up previously unheard and unseen individuals, and created a strong case for respect for the uniqueness of each human person and subgroup within larger

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 43.

society.”<sup>114</sup> Yet, each other’s demands for recognition raises challenges to our preconceived ideas of justice. Who are our neighbors? How are we to engage each other as our neighbors, especially when we may have competing demands?

Though every human may be like no other, we are also like some others. Cooper-White affirms that group identities are positive for human being: “Bonds of group and culture can create powerful communities and societies, knit together by ready empathy based on shared values and perceptions, and affection based largely on mutual identification.”<sup>115</sup> However, she also warns that these bonds may also be negative, xenophobic, or exclusionary. Asserting a dialectical relationship between persons and culture, she emphasizes that new variations of culture and of persons in that culture arise as people go about the practices of their everyday life. Navigating the tension, then, that we are like some others without falling into unknowable uniqueness of the individual, or claiming a removal of difference, is a significant ethical challenge.<sup>116</sup>

To be like all others is to affirm a shared sense of humanity that bolsters empathy and relationship amongst persons. However, Cooper-White also shows that an unconscious desire to deny difference and overemphasize sameness may be a developmental challenge where a person must cope with her internal differences. Drawing on cross-cultural research, she concludes that we are all alike in some aspects especially human affect and human needs, both of which are primary basis for assertion that all human beings are intrinsically relational.

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 48.



We are relational by the fact that we live in communities, that we depend upon each other and creation for existence. “Humans live in *contexts*, which include both the natural environment and human-generated cultures,” she writes.<sup>117</sup> Additionally the intrinsic relationality of the human person is God-given. She states “God uniquely created and bestowed human beings with the capacity for this relation, however obscured it may be by the brokenness of creation and the consuming preoccupations of daily human existence.”<sup>118</sup> We long for deep connection with each other and with God.

So far, I have explained four features of Cooper-White’s theological anthropology: that human beings are good and vulnerable; that human beings are embodied; that human beings are alike and unique; and that human beings are intrinsically relational. Cooper-White articulates four additional features: that human beings are multiple; that human beings are mutable, fluid, and in process; that human beings are loved; and that human beings are loving. I will flesh out the first two remaining features and briefly summarize the last two.

Weaving together relational psychology and postmodern French philosophy, Cooper-White deftly expands the idea of the person beyond a unitary self to a self of multiplicity. Additionally, she is attentive to the psychology that dialogues with pastoral theology, invoking Freud’s hydraulic model of the unconscious, preconscious, and conscious, and repression and drive theory, followed by object relations theory, to show a trajectory toward an expansive self. What is uniquely Cooper-White’s is her use of

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

French philosophers' Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's image of the rhizome to speak about the "multiply-constituted mind."<sup>119</sup>

In biological terms, rhizomes are root systems that spread out, moving horizontally, rather rooting down vertically. Any person who has ever weeded to rid a landscape of bermuda grass understands the lessons of Deleuze's and Guattari's rhizomatic approach and their influence on Cooper-White's understanding of the mind as multiple: that a rhizome is connected at any point to anything; that it is heterogeneous, spreading out along networks that are not always visible or conscious; that the mind is spatially multiple, connected by lines, not points or nodes; that like an uprooted and ruptured rhizome, it can be torn from the ground, but will begin again, either starting from an old line or beginning a new one; that one's history must be mapped and remapped, not told in a genealogical fashion, particularly in light of getting at 'the roots' of a pathology or neurosis; and lastly, that like the rhizome, there is no deep, predetermined structure, but instead "a form of mutable, open, experimental exploration."<sup>120</sup>

Cooper-White does not abandon psychoanalysis nor relational psychology and its emphasis on linking neuroses to events, behaviors, and feelings rooted in early childhood. Instead, she holds the psychoanalytic traditions in tension with the rhizomatic model. She explains,

The rhizome presents an alternative model to the classical psychoanalytic assertion that all thought, all behavior, proceeds genetically and to some extent deterministically from a deeper root cause in the past. With Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome image held in tension with the image of roots, the

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 59

psychoanalytic importance of tracing associations is retained, but now we can see the possibility for a different kind of associational chain of events—horizontal, at times more randomly selected, and linked by present conditions as well as past.<sup>121</sup>

The result is a ‘both-and’ approach that imagines the mind, and also subjectivity, as both tree and rhizome. She elaborates,

Imagine mind and self in terms of a three-dimensional multiplicity (or more)—neither vertical “depth” nor purely horizontal “plane,” but an infinitely dimensional, quantum substance, with internal indeterminacy and some fluid external parameters. Imagine a subjectivity, a multiple self, identifiable as both an “I” and a “Thou” simultaneously, and with a mobile consciousness that scans and networks various parts of the “self,” in an illusory but functional sense of self-cohesion, self-regulation, and self-continuity.<sup>122</sup>

In this understanding, there is no unitary self, no core self, except the one that comes to be through desire. Cooper-White points out how this understanding of the self as subject—a being of “contingency and relatedness”<sup>123</sup>—might be frightening, but is an opportunity to live creatively, exploring subjectivity, ‘Self,’ and ‘Others.’ Thus, Cooper-White argues that “human beings are mutable, fluid, and in process.”<sup>124</sup>

As mutable, fluid, and in process subjects, heretofore unexplored dimensions of ethical and creative living beckon from the emancipation of living as a rational One. Rules, procedures, and individual rights are not the exclusive terrain for determining ethical behavior and just action. Instead, ethical and creative living is more like dancing, where each subject has space to move with funk, grace, beat, and sometimes mixing multiple elements in a new dance of freedom. It is bodily inhabitation with room “for

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 61.

those nonverbal mental contents that are only symbolic, or even presymbolic.”<sup>125</sup> Yet, Cooper-White emphasizes that this new ethical and creative living comes with an expansion of conscience for oneself and for others, even as each continually grows, expands, and changes.

Finally, Cooper-White shows us that human beings are loved and loving beings. We are “profoundly known and loved by God,”<sup>126</sup> with our mutability, fluctuations, impermanence, and delicacy. Thus, human beings are also loving beings because the abundance of love for all creation spills across time and space. We are called to love each other—an ethic that calls us to “do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God.”<sup>127</sup>

To conclude, Cooper-White’s eight-fold theological articulation of the human person introduces a complexity to the subject that resonates with the complexity of modern experience. She brings the shifting terrains and their viewpoints to pastoral theological anthropology with cogency and clarity while retaining a voice that affirms humans as *imago Dei* and challenges the fixity of this image, as well. In her later collection of essays, *Braided Selves*, Cooper-White explores multiplicity and difference in more depth. However, reflection on how to practice what a pastoral theological anthropology of multiplicity demands—in subject formation and in ethical action—deserves more attention from the whole discipline. For example, what events impede the formation of a multiple self? What happens when a subject is unable to scan and network

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>127</sup> Micah 6:8, (NRSV).

various parts of the self to establish an illusory cohesion and continuity due to everyday injustices and oppressions? Taking account of psychological and social theories of recognition enables pastoral theologians to be on the look-out to develop critical accounts of persons whose voices are marginalized or disabled through misrecognition and non-recognition.

### Conclusion

So far, I argued two points. First, that answering the question ‘what is a person?’ and subsequent questions that arise, like ‘what is suffering?’ and ‘how does a person come to be?’ are questions that the field has taken up both explicitly and implicitly. We give answers to these questions when we define the nature, scope, and activities of the field. Second, I argued that feminist pastoral theologians have been about the work of reflecting on the state of subjectivity, again both implicitly and explicitly, by attending to the psychological and material effects of racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism (Watkins Ali and Marshall), the representation of post/humans that is a refraction of what culture understands about the human condition (Graham), the social construction of the self (McClure), and theological anthropology for pastoral psychotherapy (Cooper-White). Thus, I am claiming that feminist pastoral theological reflections on subjectivity are ongoing, and further, that my work is in broad dialogue with theologians who reflect on subjectivity, formation of the self, and theological anthropology.

Feminist pastoral theologians Watkins Ali, Marshall, Graham, McClure and Cooper-White each offer a slice of the vision of the subject and her formation in light of

theology, individual and relational psychology, and the sociopolitical and cultural difference. Common to all these views is concern for those who are marginalized, oppressed, or made other. I share these concerns, and as I reflected in chapter one, I believe that theories of recognition contain insight for feminist pastoral theological constructions of subjectivity. Feminist pastoral theology has yet to grapple sufficiently with the complexity of psychological and social recognition. Nor has it understood or even begun to adequately explore the role of religious communities and practices in the formation of a subject whose being and becoming is affirmed and recognized in light of oppressive social structures.

Along with Barbara J. McClure, I argue that a theory of psychological formation of the subject cannot be divorced from a social formation. To contribute to the discussions on subject formation from a psychological and social perspective, I dialogue with theories of recognition, concentrating on the feminist psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin and feminist philosopher Judith Butler while also drawing on additional theorists and resources in the next two chapters. I argue that attending to the problem (and the solution) of recognition is necessary as we feminist pastoral theologians continue to explore how individuals and groups of persons become othered, how otherness is internalized, and also how resistance to oppressive systems of domination is to be cultivated for agency and transformation of self and society.

## CHAPTER III

### INTERSUBJECTIVE FORMATIONS AND EVERYDAY INJUSTICE: CIRCUITS OF RECOGNITION AND ASSERTION/ CIRCUITS OF SUBMISSION AND DOMINATION

*“A theory or a politics that cannot cope with contradiction, that denies the irrational, that tries to sanitize the erotic, fantastic components of human life cannot visualize an authentic end to domination but only vacate the field.”<sup>1</sup>*

It is almost a truism to say that suffering exists, and further that the type, cause, and duration of suffering affects who a person becomes. Defining the nature of suffering becomes important in determining how to focus resources for personal, ecclesial, and social-political care, domains with which pastoral theology as a public enterprise interfaces. To try to define the nature of suffering is also to try to answer who suffers the most and thus deserves limited care resources.

However, to try to answer this question misses a central point. In addition to defining the nature of suffering and whose suffering calls for our attention, we must also examine the psychological conditions that make unjust suffering so commonplace that sometimes we do not recognize the experience of suffering. We must try to understand how suffering is weaved into the textures of everyday existence, especially in the forms of domination and submission in personal relationships, as well as the effects that oppression through structural violence takes on the subject. Taking up these questions

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<sup>1</sup> Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon, 1988), 10.

assists us in identifying theories and practices that enable agency and critique harmful structures in society, church, and self.

In my case on ministerial moral decision-making I wrote that I was perplexed by presentations of the women who suffered. I wrote that in my interviews I had expected to hear about how specific personal and social identities shaped the experience of suffering the loss of a child, but did not. At the same time, I juxtaposed this evidence against the written record of feminist pastoral theology which has produced a significant amount of literature that speaks to identity and pastoral care. I argued that to better attend to persons in our caring and writing practices our identity paradigm must be in conversation with theories of recognition, as they help us to understand how oppression and domination as forms of social suffering are manifest in the lives of individuals. Likewise, I stated that feminist pastoral theology also has much to contribute to an understanding of recognition through the role of religious care practices and the meaning-making.

In this chapter and the next, I argue that theories of recognition are powerful tools for analysis of individual and social suffering as they formulate how subjects are shaped by personal and social forces that are beyond individual and even collective control. As theories, they provide the how and why of subject formation which leads to more precise articulations of the what and who of suffering. Further, theories of recognition help us tighten the connections between individual suffering and the need for care, and social suffering as a result of structural injustice and the need for transformations of systems. In this chapter, I turn to the work of psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin to explain how recognition, domination, and submission are linked. I critique and build on Benjamin's



recognition by examining the nature of structural violence and political repression. Lastly, I turn to theological lament as a practice of assertion and recognition.

### Understanding Intersubjective Recognition and its Social Implications

Recall our chaplains who ministered to women experiencing stillbirth or fetal demise and our lack of knowledge about these women, their backgrounds, their identities, and how they made meaning out of their loss. Who were these women? What were their backgrounds? Are there patterns in their lives which link individual suffering and everyday manifestations of structural injustice and violence? When feminist pastoral theologians ask questions along these lines of contextuality, we amplify our understanding of the person caught in the midst of personal, relational, social, and political webs. In particular, feminist pastoral theology better understands the contours of suffering and its effects on the self when we look at the interplay of the developmental tasks of recognition and assertion, which, when taken to the extreme, may lead to sporadic or on-going instances of domination and submission in intersubjective relationships. I draw my primary psychological description from the psychoanalytic author Jessica Benjamin.

Jessica Benjamin is a practicing psychoanalyst and adjunct faculty in New York University's Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis. She is the author of *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (1988), *Shadow of the Other: Intersubjectivity and Gender in Psychoanalysis* (1997), and *Like Subjects, Love Objects: Essays on Recognition and Sexual Difference* (1998). Using

a feminist lens, her work focuses on gender, social structures, intersubjectivity, and psychoanalytic theories such as object relations theory, relational psychology, and ego psychology. For the scope of this chapter, I primarily elaborate the concepts she puts forward in *The Bonds of Love*.

In *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* Benjamin explores how persons not only accept but also perpetuate unequal relationships of domination and submission. Drawing from and reconstructing psychoanalytic theory, Benjamin argues that domination and submission are complex psychological processes in which both parties participate. Thus, it is an intersubjective process, and one reproduced from childhood, through adulthood, and with manifestations in family life, social institutions, and sexual relations. She argues that domination and submission pivot on the psychological need and capacity for recognition and assertion.

Benjamin argues that the desire for recognition is a primary psychological reason for why the dominated submit. Likewise, recognition is one reason why the dominator has power that results in submission of another. She explains, “Domination and subordination result from a breakdown of the necessary tension between self-assertion and mutual recognition that allows self and other to meet as sovereign equals.”<sup>2</sup> Recognition holds such sway over us because it is a human need and a human capacity. Her hope, then, is for the shackles of domination and submission to be transformed into circuits of assertion and recognition.

The heart of Benjamin’s argument is centered around the tension between recognition and assertion and its gendered distortions in intrapsychic, familial, and social

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 12.

contexts. When women are not conferred recognition as subjects in their own right, they participate in the reproduction of gendered systems of domination in order to gain that which they seek: recognition. Instead of actually leading to recognition, women retain status as objects who cannot encounter an outside world. Advancing claims from sociologist Nancy J. Chodorow, Benjamin argues that women are denied their subjectivity beginning in early childhood triangular relations between mother, daughter, and father, and reproduced through adulthood, resulting in women as the receptive, done-to, and objects, while men are the active, doers, and subjects. These specific gender roles are not only internalized but also reified in gender roles in society, marking women as domestic, child-rearers, and lacking exposure to the outside world, while men are of the world. Not only are these gender roles detrimental to individual development, they are patriarchal. In *The Reproduction of Mothering*, Chodorow explains, “Women’s mothering, then, produces psychological self-definition and capacities appropriate to mothering in women, and curtails and inhibits these capacities and this self-definition in men.”<sup>3</sup> The reproduction of mothering contributes to the recreation of a patriarchal society in which women are objectified and denied subjectivity. In Benjamin, to cultivate subjectivity, women and men must make the difference through intersubjective circuits of recognition and assertion that challenge and subvert shackles of submission and domination. In this section, I present Benjamin’s work on recognition by organizing it into three categories: the formational intersubjective relationship between child and primary caretaker (often mother), critiques of Oedipal theory, and the transmutation of domination and submission in sexual forms to social and political forms.

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<sup>3</sup> Nancy J. Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, 2d ed. (Berkeley: University of California, 1999), 208.

## Intersubjectivity and Child Development

Jessica Benjamin forges an intersubjective theory of the human development in critique of Margaret Mahler's theory of human development. In *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant*, child psychiatrist Margaret Mahler and her coauthors argued that an infant developed through the separation-individuation process. Mahler writes that "separation consists of the child's emergence from a symbiotic fusion with the mother, and individuation consists of those achievements marking the child's assumption of his own individual characteristics."<sup>4</sup> Separation and individuation mark the emergence of a separate self, a self which is no longer fused, or in symbiosis, with the mother. In separation and individuation, the human infant comes understand himself as an I, and his mother as a not-I.<sup>5</sup> All this occurs within the first 24 months of the child's life. The ultimate goal of this process is libidinal object constancy, which can only be established through positive internalization of the mother figure. This cannot occur, however, without a crisis.

Mahler argues that from 15-24 months the infant undergoes a rapprochement crisis. The toddler comes to understand that he and his mother are two separate persons. There is "an increased need, a wish for mother to share with him every one of his new skills and experiences, as well as a great need for the object's love."<sup>6</sup> Although the toddler wishes for symbiosis, his own increasing mobility and verbal communication become the tools which show to him that the symbiosis of his early months is impossible.

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<sup>4</sup> Margaret Mahler, Fred Pine, and Anni Bergman, *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant: Symbiosis and Individuation* (New York: Basic, 1975), 44.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 77.

The junior toddler “gradually realizes that his love objects (his parents) are separate individuals with their own personal interests. He must gradually and painfully give up the delusion of grandeur, often by way of dramatic fights with the mother....”<sup>7</sup> Through the rapprochement crisis the toddler begins to define his personality and attains a level of object constancy, namely by internalizing a positively cathected mother image.<sup>8</sup>

Trust is a key component of the positive mother internalization. The toddler must have experienced safety and nurturance as an infant in order to internalize a full representation of the mother object—that is, without splitting the mother object into only good or only bad. The toddler may feel hate toward the object because she is not present to him and yet by internalizing the good aspects he is able to self-soothe by calling upon this inner representation of the mother. Mahler argues that the separation of the self is required in order to fully develop into a person with a unique personality and sets of desires.

Benjamin critiques Mahler’s theory for its emphasis on the separation of individuals as the only way to achieve a full and healthy personality. Instead she argues, echoing psychoanalyst and infancy researcher Daniel Stern, that the infant is not born as a blank emotional and relational slate, unified to the mother out of necessity, who must then differentiate to become a person. Rather, the infant is a being who is interested in other persons from start. Benjamin explains, “Once we accept the idea that infants do not begin life as part of an undifferentiated unity, the issue is not only how we separate from oneness, but also how we connect to and recognize others; the issue is not how we

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 110.

become free of the other, but how we actively engage and make ourselves known in relationship to the other.”<sup>9</sup> Human development does not require a complete cut-off of self from others, especially objects of love and care. Instead, the self becomes itself more fully by being in relationships in which assertion and recognition are balanced. This is the intersubjective perspective. It positively affirms the relational process of becoming oneself, but also brings challenges to development and maturation.

Benjamin writes that the intersubjective view is “the study of a self who suffers the lack of recognition, as well as the new perception of the active, social infant who can respond to and differentiate from others.”<sup>10</sup> Human development occurs in relationship to other subjects who are persons, not merely objects, from this viewpoint. The self and the other subject are alike, but also different. That each subject is able to recognize this very point is the basis of Benjamin’s intersubjectivity, a term that has its roots in philosopher Jürgen Habermas’ social theory.<sup>11</sup>

In Benjamin, intersubjectivity criticizes the exclusiveness of the intrapsychic perspective in development. In child development, intersubjectivity emphasizes a self

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<sup>9</sup> Benjamin, 18.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>11</sup> In his article “Toward a Theory of Communicative Competence” (1970) Habermas used the phrase “the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding” to speak about an individual’s capacity and the social sphere. In the anthology *On the Pragmatics of Communication* (2000), his definition emphasizes the prelinguistic, shared understanding: “the term “intersubjective” no longer refers to the result of an *observed* convergence of thoughts or representations of various persons, but to the prior commonality of a linguistic pre understanding or horizon of the lifeworld – which, from the perspective of the participants themselves, is *presupposed* -within which the members of communication community find themselves before they reach an understanding with one another about something in the world” (355). See Benjamin’s footnote on 19 for further clarification.

who looks to another outside himself for recognition which ideally affirms his sense of agency, ownership, and responsibility for himself. She explains,

A person comes to feel that ‘I am the doer who does, I am the author of my acts,’ by being with another person who recognizes her acts, her feelings, her intentions, her existence, her independence. Recognition is the essential response, the constant companion of assertion. The subject declares, ‘I am, I do,’ and then waits for the response, ‘You are, you have done.’ Recognition is, thus, reflexive; it includes not only the other’s confirming response, but also how we find ourselves in that response. We recognize ourselves in the other, and we even recognize ourselves in inanimate things: for the baby, the ability to recognize what she has seen before is as Stern says, ‘self-affirming as well as world-affirming,’ enhancing her sense of effective agency: ‘My mental representation works!’<sup>12</sup>

These kinds of reflexive moments build on each other. As a young self asserts herself through action, she is recognized by the other who can mirror the emotions displayed through the action. Each act of assertion followed by recognition serves to build a positive sense of a self-in-relation. Additionally, each act of recognition cultivates an empathic self.

Relatedness of self and other selves is a task of mutuality. Emotional congruence between two persons affirms that recognition is indeed happening and that, rather than leading to feelings to separation, instead leads to feelings of connection. Benjamin gives the example of a child shaking a rattle in joy. The mother, she writes, shows that she feels similarly (I am happy, too!) “by matching his level of intensity in a different mode (she whoops).”<sup>13</sup> While the child is happy with the rattle, the mother is happy because her child is happy, and so they share similar emotions despite a difference in causation.

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<sup>12</sup> Benjamin, 21.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 30.

The shared emotions between mother and child are part of the emotional attunement of the two subjects. The pleasure of the child produces pleasure in the mother who in turn shows that same pleasure to the child.

However, within this process is the possibility of an internalized self-other conflict. “At one year the infant can experience the conflict between the wish to fulfill his own desire (say, to push the buttons on the stereo), and the wish to remain in accord with his parents’ will. Given such inevitable conflict, the desire to remain attuned can be converted into submission to the other’s will.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, as the child asserts himself, internal conflict arises from the need for recognition. At psychological best, the child becomes the adult who asserts himself and “experiences his own agency and the distinctness of the other,” even when recognition in the form of tacit approval does not come.<sup>15</sup> But this is not always the case.

#### Domination and Submission: An Extreme Means of Recognition

“[B]oth this flogging and the chain attached to the ring of your collar...are intended less to make you suffer, scream, or shed tears than to make you feel, *through* this suffering, that you are not free but fettered, and to teach you that you are totally dedicated to something outside yourself,” writes Pauline Réage, author of *The Story of O*, a tale of erotic submission of a woman to her sexual male master.<sup>16</sup> Jessica Benjamin uses this story to show how an unfulfilled desire for recognition transmutes into a desire

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Pauline Réage, *The Story of O*, trans. Sabine d’Estrée (New York: Ballantine, 1965), 17.



for fusion. Fusion and merger create submission; submission is accompanied by a loss of subjectivity, and paradoxically, submission results in the fulfillment of the desire to be recognized. From this story Benjamin considers how “domination is anchored in the hearts of those who submit to it.”<sup>17</sup> In this next section, I explain how domination and submission are powerful psychological motivations in sexual relationships that lead to relational and inequitable distortions between two selves.

Situated as one chapter (“Master and Slave”) within her text, Benjamin’s interpretive reading of *The Story of O* is an illustration of the extremes of domination and submission. Using this provocative story, which I briefly narrate below, Benjamin gives a concrete, but *extreme*, example of the psychological destruction of woman as ‘other’ and ‘object’ through denial of recognition. She describes the female submissive, O, as a subject who attaches herself to a masculine idealized authority figure. The idealized authority figure represents a father figure who liberates her from an engulfing mother figure. By identifying with the idealized father figure, submissive women hope to gain freedom rather than repeat their mother’s experience. That is, seeing the mother dominated within sexist and misogynistic family and social relations, and yet being dependent on her, the daughter moves towards a figure who can free her from the bondage of becoming an other and object. Benjamin writes, “The denial of subjectivity to women means that the privilege and power of agency fall to the father, who enters the stage as the first outsider, and so represents the principle of freedom as denial of

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<sup>17</sup> Benjamin, 52.

dependency.”<sup>18</sup> Paradoxically, that movement toward and identification with the idealized figure does not guarantee freedom, but may reproduce submission.

The problems for Benjamin are more complex. Viewing one’s mother as object is linked to the view of women as objects in society at large. Benjamin writes, “Only a mother who feels entitled to be a person in her own right can ever be seen as such by her child, and only such a mother can appreciate and set limits to the inevitable aggression and anxiety that accompany a child’s growing independence.”<sup>19</sup> Yet what results in mother/woman as object and father/man as subject is a gendered split, what Benjamin calls gender polarity, which pervades “social relations, our ways of knowing, our efforts to transform and control the world.”<sup>20</sup> For Benjamin, confronting and unraveling the effects of gender polarity requires that we disentangle the intersubjective ties of domination and submission so that they become circuits of recognition and assertion. It is from within this context and hope that Benjamin gives us the portrait of O as a severe case study of warped and distorted recognition.

Circuits of recognition and assertion gone awry become chains of domination and submission. Like recognition and assertion, the chains of domination and submission are forged through an intersubjective process. Thus, the circuit of domination and submission is not oppositional to recognition, but made possible by the desire for recognition and assertion. Benjamin explains,

Domination...is the twisting of the bonds of love. Domination does not repress the desire for recognition; rather, it enlists and transforms it. Beginning in the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 220.

breakdown of the tension between self and other, domination proceeds through the alternate paths of identifying with or submitting to powerful others who personify the fantasy of omnipotence. For the person who takes this route to establishing his own power, there is an absence where the other should be.<sup>21</sup>

That is, submission and domination are agential psychic forces that are tied together from the very start. Benjamin makes the point that both parties desire recognition even when their actions would drive them further away from a truly mutual exchange of assertions and recognitions. A lack of mutuality in recognition is not one-sided. Both agents are involved and both submit to and dominate each other, though in distinct ways.

In the *Story of O*, a female fashion photographer, O, submits to eroticized branding, chaining, whipping, masking, blindfolding, and piercing. She is trained to be available at any time for anal, oral, and vaginal intercourse. Yet, she is also asked to give her consent to her own torture. As the story begins, O is brought to the château at Roissy by her lover, René. She is trained to serve the group of men who gather at Roissy, including René. After her initial training, René places her in the hands of a more dominant master, Sir Stephen, as an act of love, trust, and generosity. For her, pleasure is dependent upon being dominated by another. Under the tutelage of Sir Stephen, O masters her role as submissive, agreeing to a labia piercing and a branding of Sir Stephen's initials and insignia. At the climax of the story O appears completely naked at a public party, save for an owl-like mask, where she is treated solely as an object. She is now an animal who has willingly abandoned her own freedom.

*The Story of O* is not only a tale of submission by violence or coercion. For Benjamin it is a teaching tool. First, it shows how submission for the gain of recognition is enticing. Second, it demonstrates the pain and suffering which individuals will

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 219.

undergo in order to achieve recognition which masquerades as love or acceptance.

Lastly, it teaches us about the entanglement between the psyches of dominated and dominator.

Talk of domination and submission often engender feminist theological, political, and social disgust because we assume that there is nothing to be gained by submission. This is a falsehood. Indeed, there is much to be gained through submission, including pleasure, recognition, and a certain kind of security, even if it is one where pathogenic beliefs constitute reality and recreate pathogenic beliefs into life action again and again. Human development is so deeply tied to recognition that even its most 'twisted' versions evoke and fill the psychological needs normally associated with a non-sadomasochistic love relationship between self and other.

Patterns of domination and submission are transmitted from generation to generation in families. To achieve independence, a child must receive recognition from those she has been dependent upon. In families where the mother/primary caretaker and child are undifferentiated, patterns of domination and submission occur. Take, for example, the mother who is unsatisfied with her life and lives out her life through her child. The child comes to identify with the mother, not out of desire, but out of psychic necessity. The child receives a form of approval—often mistaken as love and acceptance—when she fulfills the mother's desires. Her submission to her mother's desires fulfills her need for intersubjective recognition while at the same time suppressing her capabilities for self-determination.

For the child who is only recognized for what he can provide to the mother-figure, recognition and its fruits of independence and decision-making are suppressed. The child

feels abandoned because he is unable to exact the kind of emotive outpouring that accompanies recognition by the primary caretaker. It is not that the child stops asserting his existence with the expectation of recognition. Rather, the hole left by a lack of recognition, which in healthy maturation the adult self ought to be able to fill intrapsychically, is filled by relationships to patterns and things (like addictions and unhealthy relationships) which mirror the twisted primary bond of love. Thus, the same pattern repeats itself with lovers, friends, therapists, strangers, and even institutions, resulting in relationships of submission and domination. These patterns are formed by pathogenic beliefs about the self in relation to others. Even more importantly, the drive behind the pattern is one's psychic safety, albeit safety is twisted to mean to lack of mutuality and vulnerability in relationship to the other.

According to Benjamin, *The Story of O* exemplifies how the bonds of twisted love developed in psychic relationship to primary caretakers occur in eroticized physical relationships. Instead of the psychic pain of failed recognition, O submits to physical pain. Benjamin writes,

The pain of violation serves to protect the self by substituting physical pain for the psychic pain of loss and abandonment. In being hurt by the other, O feels she is being reached, she is able to experience another living person. O's pleasure, so to speak, lies in her sense of her own survival and her connection to her powerful lover. Thus as long as O can transpose her fear of loss into submission, as long as she remains the object and manifestation of his power, she is safe.<sup>22</sup>

The only way for O to feel safe is to be protected by the power of her dominator, Sir Stephen. As Benjamin interprets the story, through her submission, O gains the same kind of recognition that she desires—recognition in which physical pain substitutes for

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 61.

psychic pain and which is made possible by her submission to a master to whom she can bind her desire to his will.

Yet, O does not feel her submission as pain. Instead, it is pleasurable. In the text, O shows off her scars to her friend Jacqueline. They are a source of pleasure, a source of pride, even though Jacqueline is disgusted. Benjamin explains to us that O's pained pleasure is secondary only to her master's pleasure. In fact, her pained pleasure is dependent upon her ability to take refuge in a more dominant power, that of her master. Benjamin explains,

The experience of pain has yet another dimension. In Freud's terms, pain is the point at which stimuli become too intense for the body or ego to bear. Conversely, pleasure requires a certain control or mastery of stimuli. Thus Freud suggested that the eroticization of pain allows a sense of mastery by converting pain into pleasure. But this is true only for the master: O's loss of self is *his* gain, O's pain is *his* pleasure. For the slave, intense pain causes the violent rupture of the self, a profound experience of fragmentation and chaos. It's true that O now welcomes this loss of self-coherence, but only under a specific condition: that her sacrifice actually creates the master's power, produces his coherent self, in which she can take refuge. Thus in losing her own self, she is gaining access, however circumscribed, to a more powerful one.<sup>23</sup>

By her submission, O gains a freedom that she believes she never would have been able to access on her own. This is the temptation of games of domination and submission—a double dose of power gained through another—but it comes at a steep price. By complete submission to master, the submissive relinquishes control and the anxiety of decision-making. The power of submission lies in psychically understanding that O's psyche merges with one greater than herself. She believes that she gains, even if she is lost and destroyed in the process.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 61.

However, the submissive is not the only person to suffer. Masters suffer as well, but from withheld ‘consent’ and withheld pain infliction, rather than reception. For the master, pleasure is derived not only in the acts of domination, but also through the responsiveness and consent of the slave. Every question of consent posed by the master contains within it the potential for refusal by the slave, and thus increases the power-laden tension between the two, even if the master mistakes true consent and the freedom to choose for cultural formations which restrict the ability to make free choices. In each act of bearing pain, he derives pleasure. This is so because, he believes, that she holds the key to his pleasure and so pleasure is derived from the fulfillment of his desire, to be the dominant. In a more colloquial way, the phrase, “the bottom is in charge” speaks to this element. Thus, the master’s suffering comes from his vulnerability and need to recognize the slave through an assertion of submission.

In the essay, “This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers,” Michael Joseph Gross recounts his experiences attending the annual International Mister Leather, the largest convention of leather men in the world and a gathering filled with masters and slaves. He narrates how the submissive is a powerful role in the leather world:

The good Daddies I have known have had one thing in common: they use humiliation to paradoxical effect, revealing how absurd shame actually is. Daddy calls boy his bitch; he brings the bottom’s hidden shame into the open and plays with it, makes shame a source of pleasure, beauty, and even power. The first leather top I met taught me a maxim of the leather world—that the bottom is always in control, because the bottom chooses a safe word at the beginning of the scene. A good top knows how to read his bottom, to take him to his limits of pleasure or pain, and then push just beyond it. For the times when Daddy’s

judgment fails, however, the safe word is the bottom's power. I say that word, the scene is done.<sup>24</sup>

Here, Gross implies that submission is not about complete loss of power and subjectivity resulting in objectification of a person. Instead, he explains that in a good submission the currency of shame is converted into currencies of pleasure, beauty, and power.

Additionally, in the sadomasochistic relationship, the currency of the submissive's power values over time. Gross relays another conversation he had with a Daddy named Tony. "Afterward he told me that his last relationship had been a three-year Master/slave arrangement. He said that he had thought that being a Master was the ultimate safeguard against being abandoned. 'I thought if I owned him, he would never leave me.'<sup>25</sup> In this example, the power dynamic is again reversed. Whereas it would appear that the master has no particular need or emotion, and thus stems innate cruelty, Tony remorsefully indicates that his desire to dominate had everything to do with his own need to never be abandoned.

Even though we may come to understand why submission and domination are powerful forces or even decide that the games of erotic submission and domination may not cause harm for some individuals, larger problems remain. First, safe words do not exist in every master-slave relationships. There are times when the pleasures of inflicting violence and pain on another, *even until death*, overcome the desire to have the experience with that same partner again. Cases of intimate abuse or of violent rape are examples. Here, there is no play. It is all reality with no words to cut the scene.

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Joseph Gross, "The grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers," *Open House: Writers Redefine Home*, ed. Mark Doty (St. Paul: Graywolf, 2003), 156.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.



Second, pleasure cannot be the sole criterion in judging sexual acts of domination and submission. It is essential to mark out the peripheries between playing and reality, and to examine in what ways they become blurry and even mutually informing. Again, Gross writes,

When I asked one sexy, single Master whether he and his slave would ever break character when they were in public, he said, “I don’t think of these as roles. This is who we are. Most people in our lives would not know that we are Master and slave. But I would dominate him in subtle ways in public. He would open the door for me as we enter a restaurant. When I realized that I’d forgotten my glasses in the car, he would retrieve them.”<sup>26</sup>

Fetching another’s reading glasses and opening the door for another are rather mundane activities, not ones we might associate with domination, but instead with courtesy or even love. That the Master can seemingly dominate his servant in these most pedestrian activities shows us again how narrow the balancing spot is between mutual assertion and recognition and how easily the intersubjective circuits can be twisted between psyches. The danger of the game is when tactics used to navigate through pain and abandonment become the overwhelming psychologically normative way of life, when submission is mistaken for recognition and obedience for love. As Sir Stephen reminds O, “You’re confusing love and obedience. You’ll obey me without loving me, and without my loving you.”<sup>27</sup>

#### Gender Polarity, Social Institutions, and Recognition

Just as intrapsychic dynamics become intersubjective dynamics, so too do intersubjective dynamics become patterned in social institutions. While Jessica Benjamin

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Réage, 86.

concentrates on the phenomena of gender polarity as it moves from the family strata to social and political strata, her insight about the movement itself from intimate cases of submission and domination to the socio-political realm is applicable to discussions of how patterns of domination and submission are at work in other social institutions and are replicated in other seeming polarities, like race and sexuality.

Across the ecological spectrum, gender polarity is reproduced and reified. To understand this phenomena, Jessica Benjamin critically examines the Oedipus complex and considers how it normalizes women's roles as emotive engulfers while men are made as autonomous and rational selves. Further, she articulates how domination operates by relegating women to the private, domestic sphere, while men are in the world. These are splitting dynamics and psychological impairments to full recognition, she argues. Furthermore, splitting is replicated in social and political life. She concludes, however, that finding the balance between assertion and recognition between the genders is a difficult task, but one that when undertaken will be a corrective to the patterns of domination and submission at multiple levels of relationship—between intimates and family members, and in the socio-political sphere<sup>28</sup>. I explain her argument more fully in the next section to show how dynamics of domination and submission are pervasive in

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<sup>28</sup> Liberationist Marcella Althaus-Reid describes a similar process in Latin American intrapersonal and social relationships. Additionally, she describes the role of religion in maintaining the spheres of proper gender conduct. While *machismo* regulates the behavior of men, *hembrismo* defines the domestic as the rightful place for women. She argues that *machismo* and *hembrismo* are results of complex webs of colonization and patriarchy reproduced in social and theological practice. For example, she cites a Latin American Mariology which perpetuates harmful sexist ideologies of womanhood and is even more insidious because it is interpreted as liberative, a process that literacy educator Paulo Freire calls 'naïve consciousness.' See Marcella Althaus-Reid, "When God is a Rich White Woman Who Does Not Walk: The Hermeneutical Circle of Mariology and the Construction of Femininity in Latin America," *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology* (London: SCM, 2004), 30-43.

the everyday practice of relationships whether mediated through actions, emotions, or words.

Benjamin rereads the Oedipus conflict as the locus of gendered polarity. Like her critique of Mahler, Benjamin argues that Freud's description of the oedipal conflict is based on the incorrect assumption that individuation requires absolute separation for the creation of an autonomous, psychologically healthy self. Boys are made to repudiate all of that which is feminine in order to become men. Fathers serve a primary role in forcing the choice: the boy can either be coddled by the mother and remain in the domestic sphere or he can choose to become an autonomous agent. Thus, the mother's goodness is understood as "a seductive threat to autonomy."<sup>29</sup> And yet, the boy wants the mother to continue to nurture and protect him, and yet, she cannot. Male individuation thus requires a hard and sound split from the mother.

To control his desire for the maternal even while repudiating it, the man-boy psychically separates himself from any feminine attributes contained inside himself. What cannot exist within himself also cannot exist within family or political life. The autonomous male subject is created as the female becomes a non-subject. As Benjamin writes, "It enforces the split between male subject and female object, and with it, the duality of domination and submission."<sup>30</sup>

The result of the split is an idealization of the maternal and feminine while at the same time repudiating it from the male perspective. The feminine then becomes a fantasy that the male subject can project onto the female object. As a result, she retains

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<sup>29</sup> Benjamin, 136.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

an omnipotent status within the male psyche without the male ever having to be presented with the dissolution of her omnipotence as a real person who feels, emotes, fails, asserts, and recognizes. In short, she can remain perfect because she is an object who can be dominated in the male fantasy. Benjamin explains:

The symbolic structure of gender polarity produces the fantastic ideal of motherhood even as it stimulates the fear of destroying all maternal goodness. On the social level, male rationality sabotages maternal recognition, while on the psychic level, the oedipal repudiation of the mother splits her into the debased and idealized objects. The reparation for debasing her takes the form of sentimentalizing and idealizing the mother, a strategy that locks both men and women into an inner fantasy world and evades the real issue: the recognition of each other.<sup>31</sup>

Male rationality requires that the emotional reasoning associated with the feminine also be cut off. In this way, the autonomous individual is a non-feeling individual whose wants, needs, and desires have nothing to do with emotions. The autonomous male must cut himself off from all that would threaten his ability to be absolute and independent, and so he (and society) makes the idealized mother who will never threaten him again.

This is the ultimate psychological paradox, though. For in attempting to cut himself off from the real or introjected mother figure, he threatens his own sense of self-coherence as rational agent. He desires her unconsciously even while consciously pushing her and all that she stands for further away. It is an internal self-destruction played out in family and social life. Sadly, in this battle between the sexes, every one loses. “The self’s aspiration to be absolute destroys the self, as well as the other, for as long as the other cannot face the self as an equal in the struggle, the battle results in loss, and not mutual recognition.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 214.

Erotic submission is an evocative example of male domination. However, it is also an example that can lead us to focus primarily on the morality of the acts between two individuals while distracting us from considering how submission and domination is engendered in more subtle ways through social institutions and practices. Jessica Benjamin explains,

It is difficult to grasp the fact that the center of male domination lies not in direct expressions of personal violence (rampant though they are) but in the societal rationality which may or may not be defended by men. Male domination, as Weber said of rationalization, works through the hegemony of impersonal organization: of formal rules that refer to the hypothetical interaction of autonomous individuals; of instrumental knowledge founded in the subject's control of the objective world; of the accumulation of profit, which bows neither to need nor tradition. It is this protean impersonality that makes it so elusive.<sup>33</sup>

Male rationality is both pervasive and destructive. It distorts the recognition process in society and “eliminates the maternal aspects of recognition (nurturance and empathy) from our collective values, actions, and institutions” while also reducing assertion, social authorship, and agency.<sup>34</sup> It is insidious, but not irreparable.

Benjamin concludes that recognition between equal subjects can occur, but only by sustaining the paradoxical tension between assertion and recognition. We have simultaneous needs for both recognition and for independence, and the other who is required for our recognition is the very same other who can cripple our independence.<sup>35</sup> Thus, we must embrace this paradox to begin to undo the bonds that would bind.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 221.

“This means not to undo our ties to others but rather to disentangle them; to make of them not shackles but circuits of recognition,” asserts Benjamin.<sup>36</sup> It is an ongoing, imperfect process, but one to which we must aspire, accepting “the inevitable inconstancy and imperfection of our efforts, without relinquishing the project.”<sup>37</sup> By acknowledging the inconstancy and imperfection of our efforts to recognize each other, we become agents who can identify where the tension has broken down, and thus are able to restore that tension. If we refuse to do so not only will our personal desires for recognition be unfulfilled, but so will our hopes for social transformation.

#### The Effects of Structural Violence and Political Repression on Subject Formation

As a theory of subjectivity, Benjamin has much to offer. First, she provides an etiology of domination and submission by tracing child development in relationship to primary caretakers, a dynamic which also finds its way into other bonds of love between men and women as partners. Second, she names patriarchy and its ensuing dynamics of submission and domination are problematic and also implicates the reproduction of patriarchy from generation to generation through family systems. Third, she critiques psychoanalytic psychology, explaining that what was assumed to be normative—Freud’s Oedipus Complex—is actually sexist ideology posturing as normal human behavior. Fourth, she gives agency to men and women, arguing that to counteract patriarchy both genders must make the difference to balance the uneven scales from submission/femininity

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 224.

and domination/masculinity to mutual recognition/assertion. Lastly, Benjamin does not shy away from images and themes of the body, sex, and desire. She is explicit and graphic, a deviation from feminist theorizing that sterilize sexuality. Essayist Phyllis Grosskurth comments, “She is concerned with the strong puritanical streak among feminists and its consequences. In their attacks on pornography and campaigns for its censorship, some seems to have rejected sex, its fantasies, and its pleasures altogether.”<sup>38</sup> She challenges her readers to refuse to gloss over the erotic.

Benjamin has done us a great service by showing how recognition is a fundamental human desire, and as such, the extent to which we will go to receive recognition—extents which include severe physical pain, and human degradation until we become, and become to believe, that we are objects meant solely for the use by another. The loss of self to another in order to have self-worth affirmed is tragic. Further, the one who receives the lost self of submission and capitalizes on the need to be affirmed by wielding domination as power is also a tragedy. Yet, Benjamin remains hopeful that the balance can be found. With enough self-knowledge and enough self-will the destructive patterns of domination and submission can be rooted out. Individual men will recognize individual women: “I love you. You are awesome and amazing.” Individual women will assert themselves to individual men: “I love me. I am awesome and amazing.” It is assumed that from these words right action and right treatment worthy of all human dignity will flow. Psychic splits can be reunited; gender polarity can be reversed.

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<sup>38</sup> Phyllis Grosskurth, “The New Psychology of Women,” *The New York Review of Books*, 24 October 1991, 31.

I am hopeful as well, but more measured in my hope for what is possible given the constraint of the assertion-recognition circuits. When a subject is malformed and does not possess the capability to assert oneself in sexual or psychological relationships, theorists of subjectivity must be careful not to mistake coerced consent for conscious or unconscious submission.

Benjamin's reflections fail to take into account surrenders that are neither sexual nor psychological, but socially and politically coerced through systems that do bodily violence, not only patriarchal logic. These kinds of surrenders are the injustices of victims who have no choice, but give 'consent' under extreme duress from overwhelming and coercive exercises of power.<sup>39</sup> Submission is forced. If one concludes from Benjamin's theory that subjects have the power to say no, the unintended result is the formation of a subject-agent who may be blamed for his or her lot in life, without examination of the systems or networks that surround that person.

As I wrote earlier, there are circumstances when no 'safe word' is available and when assertion requires that one end a relationship. Cycles of interpersonal violence, like domestic abuse and battering, are topics which pastoral theologians have brought to the church for reflection and action that fall into this category.<sup>40</sup> However, there are cycles of violence where one does not wish to participate but must because there is no personal

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<sup>39</sup> Ethel Spector Person, "Why It's So Sweet to Surrender," *New York Times*, 26 February 1989. Online <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/06/26/books/why-it-s-so-sweet-to-surrender.html>. Accessed 13 December 2011. I echo Person's critique that Benjamin's "major omission is her failure to distinguish psychological surrender, whether to love, mysticism, or religion, from the necessary submission to overpowering force – a pure victimhood."

<sup>40</sup> See for example, *Woman Battering* (Adams, 1994) and *Cry of Tamar: Violence against Women and the Church's Response* (Cooper-White, 1995).



exit strategy. Furthermore, it may be the case that assertion at the socio-political level leads to death, especially in the case of political repression where asylum is not granted.

In addition to analyzing the circuits of domination and submission at the intersubjective level of subject formation, theories of subjectivity must also account for the violence of domination and submission at the social level and its effects on the individual. Attending to social and political violence helps us to analyze the effects of social suffering at the individual level. Next, I examine the effects of structural violence and political repression in relationship to subject formation.

### Structural Violence

Just as suffering happens everyday, so does violence. But, what counts as violence? Obviously, we know certain one-time and on-going actions are violent: terrorism and bombings, rape, crimes, murders, and wars. We can observe this violence. We will often say that ‘we know it when we see it.’ Behind each of these of these violent actions is an actor. Thus, as philosopher and cultural theorist Slavoj Žižek reminds us, violence with an agent or actor is subjective violence.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Violence* (New York: Picador, 2008), 2. Žižek presents two additional types of violence that he groups as objective violence, e.g. that they do not have an actor or agent behind them. He names them as symbolic violence and systemic violence. Symbolic violence is found in language where patterns of social domination and claims of universalism are habitually reproduced in speech. Systemic violence is the “catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems.” Both types of objective violence are often invisible. We mistake symbolic and systemic violence for the normal state of affairs, the even keel against which we judge subjective violence as the deviation from the norm. Instead of using Žižek’s category of systemic violence, I use the term structural violence to capture the limiting of human agency and the confluence of structures, like institutions, laws, and environments, that impede human flourishing.

However, there is a more insidious kind of violence which is structural in nature. Structural violence is objective, meaning that there is no one agent, actor, or author behind the violent acts that cause social suffering which becomes evident at the individual level. Medical anthropologist and physician Paul Farmer argues that social suffering is “structured by historically given (and often economically driven) processes and forces that conspire...to constrain agency.”<sup>42</sup> Consent to submit is not given; instead “life choices are structured by racism, sexism, political violence, *and* grinding poverty.”<sup>43</sup> One does not submit to the extremes of this violence and suffering, but instead comes to exist in these systems. Agency is limited.

Paul Farmer tells the story of Acéphie whose story is not unique. A poor, young Haitian woman from a rural area contracts HIV from a sexual liaison with a married soldier, the only men who receive a regular salary in the area. She moves to Port-au-Prince to find a *moun prensipal*, an unmarried main man, and works as a maid for \$30 a month. She finds a main man, Blanco, and becomes pregnant before they marry. She is fired because of her pregnancy. Her fiancée calls off the engagement. She returns to her rural village to have the baby and soon after the birth her HIV positive status becomes visible, devastating her body and spirit until she dies.<sup>44</sup>

Farmer’s point, and mine as well, is simply that Acéphie’s story is not just a personal tale of victimization or another citation of tragic individual suffering. Instead,

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<sup>42</sup> Paul Farmer, “On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below,” *Social Suffering*, eds. Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock (Berkeley: University of California, 1997), 263.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 266-267.

her story is indicative of a network of suffering that many women in Haiti face. Further, her story is indicative of the limited agency she has available to her because of the confluence of violent structures that impinge upon her. Her identity as a Haitian and as a woman certainly play roles in our understanding of her suffering, but her story cannot be considered without consideration of the effects of structural violence on the psyche.

Beyond limited opportunities to develop one's capabilities,<sup>45</sup> structural violence wears on those who suffer in such a way that on-going trauma becomes tedious and numbing, both to those who experience it and to those who witness it. Speaking about Acéphie's story and the stories of his other poor, female patients, Farmer comments,

There is a deadly monotony in their stories: young women—or teenaged girls—who were driven to Port-au-Prince by the lure of an escape from the harshest poverty; once in the city, each worked as a domestic; none managed to find financial security. The women interviewed were straightforward about the nonvoluntary aspect of their sexual activity: in their opinions, they had been driven into unfavorable unions by poverty. Indeed, such testimony should call into question facile notions of “consensual sex.”<sup>46</sup>

Witnesses, like pastoral theologians, caring ministers, and social justice practitioners, bear the burden of ensuring that the violence of suffering through structures is heard and

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<sup>45</sup> Economist Amartya Sen and philosopher Martha Nussbaum are two theorists of global justice who utilize the capabilities approach. The capabilities approach argues that justice is advanced when people have the capability to pursue the ends they desire. As such, freedoms to pursue those ends are required. This is a significant shift from thinking about poverty as economic misdistribution to thinking about poverty as capability deprivation. Nussbaum states that a capabilities approach to justice pivots on the “idea that all human beings have an inherent dignity and what they require is life circumstances that are worthy of that dignity” (*Examined Life*, 124). Or, as Sen articulates, a just society requires that individuals have “substantive freedoms—the capabilities—to choose a life one has reason to value” (*Development as Freedom*, 74). As such, a capabilities approach supports systems which diminish poverty, such as health-care and basic education for a nation's citizens.

<sup>46</sup> Farmer, 271.

interpreted as oppressive, even if there is no one dominator. It is an illusion to understand Acéphie's choices as willing participation or even unconscious consent.

Too often the social construction of indifference is misinterpreted as tacit consent in persons who experience the monotony of everyday social suffering. In the ethnography *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*, anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes investigates the social production of indifference to child death. As a community health worker focused on child and maternal health in Alto do Cruzeiro, a shantytown in the northeastern state of Pernambuco, Scheper-Hughes chronicles her first encounter with child death. A young mother brought her very sick male baby to Scheper-Hughes, who took him to the hospital. Despite her efforts and those of other medical professionals, the baby died. Scheper-Hughes writes that she was both overwhelmed with grief and fearful of the reaction of the mother. Carrying the dead weight in her arms through the shantytown while weeping bitter tears, she was confused when the mother took the baby from her arms in an unconcerned manner. She writes,

Noting my red eyes and tear-stained face, the woman turned to comment to a neighbor woman standing by, "*Hein, hein, coitada! Engraçada, não é; Tsk! Tsk! Poor thing! Funny isn't she?*" What was funny or amusing seemed to be my inappropriate display of grief and my concern over a matter of so little consequence. No one, least of all the mothers, had expected the little tyke to live in any case.<sup>47</sup>

From Scheper-Hughes' perspective, the idea of the casual acceptance of child death is cognitively perplexing and emotionally jarring. She argues that indifference to child death is not merely a cultural difference to be 'tolerated' or 'respected.' Instead, indifference of this kind is born of the routinization exhibited in the lives of individuals,

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<sup>47</sup> Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (Berkeley: University of California, 1992), 271.

and uncritically reproduced through formal, public institutions and located in social practices. She specifically cites the loss of breast-feeding culture as a matter of somatic scarcity and its replacement with formula made by multinational corporation Nestlé; poverty and its effects on mortality and fertility patterns; and an aversion to medical abortions and unnatural forms of birth control (e.g. the pill and condoms) coupled with strong religious sentiments linking prematurely terminated pregnancies with sin.<sup>48</sup> When combined with the personal experiences of suffering that come from familial and relational injustices, these elements create the structural violence into which Acéchie or this young mother live. Structural violence deadens their ability to assert their claims for well-being as it deadens their affective capabilities.

Describing structural violence is also tricky because it resists telling in a linear method where the casualties are easily visible. Structural violence is masked by complex and hard to predict natural, social, and political forces. Take, for example, the 7.0 earthquake in Haiti on January 12, 2010. It devastated the country, the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere, and especially the capital city of Port-au-Prince, with an estimation of over 222,570 dead, 300,572 injured, and 2.3 million, a quarter of the population, displaced.<sup>49</sup> Coverage of the natural disaster was extensive. It would be hard to believe that a significant population of the world's human inhabitants are unaware of this social suffering, caused by non-agential environmental factors, but amplified through grinding poverty, lack of national infrastructure, and political instability as a democracy.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 316-317, 327, 333.

<sup>49</sup> United Nations, *Haiti: 6 Months After...*, Online [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minustah/documents/6\\_months\\_after\\_commemoration.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minustah/documents/6_months_after_commemoration.pdf). Accessed 15 December 2011.

However, what became less visible were the harms reproduced through ongoing structural causes of suffering.

Nearly ten months after the earthquake, a bacterial strain of cholera found in South Asia appeared in Haiti. Haitians has not been exposed to cholera in roughly a century, so with such little resistance, 4,500 died and 300,000 were sickened.<sup>50</sup> An independent panel of experts from across the globe assembled to determine how cholera was introduced into the Haitian environs. They considered three hypotheses: first, that the strain was introduced to Haiti via the Gulf of Mexico after the tectonic plates shifted; second, that the strain was already present in Haiti before the earthquake but evolved into a pathogenic strain; or third, that a human host inadvertently carried the strain into Haiti. Haitian locals particularly believed the third hypothesis, arguing that UN soldiers from a country with cholera introduced the strain while serving at the MINUSTAH (Mission de Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en Haïti) camp. The panel confirmed that the bacterial strain of *Vibrio cholerae* was unintentionally introduced by a human carrier and transmitted through fecal matter in the Meye Tributary System of the Artibonite River. The widespread contamination, though, resulted from several factors beyond the control of any one individual. They write,

This explosive spread was due to several factors, including the widespread use of river water for washing, bathing, drinking, and recreation; regular exposure of agricultural workers to irrigation water from the Artibonite River; the salinity gradient in the Artibonite River Delta, which provided optimal environmental conditions for rapid proliferation of *Vibrio cholerae*; the lack of immunity of the Haitian population to cholera; the poor water and sanitation conditions in Haiti; the migration of infected individuals to home communities and treatment centers;

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<sup>50</sup> Alejandro Cravioto, Claudio F. Lanata, Daniele S. Lantagne, and G. Balakrish Nair, *Final Report of the Independent Panel of Experts on the Cholera Outbreak in Haiti*. Online <http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/haiti/un-cholera-report-final.pdf>. Accessed 13 December 2011.

the fact that the South Asian type *Vibrio cholerae* strain that caused the outbreak causes a more severe diarrhea due to the larger production of the more potent classical type of cholera toxin; and, the conditions in which cholera patients were initially treated in medical facilities did not prevent the spread of the disease to other patients or to the health workers.<sup>51</sup>

The panel concluded that all these factors created another instance of social suffering created by the confluence of circumstances. The assert that the outbreak “was not the fault of, or deliberate action of, a group or individual.”<sup>52</sup>

Here, oppressive forces have no particular agent, perpetrator, or dominator against whom one can assert one’s self. Instead, all become subjects formed and deformed by ongoing structural violence. The psychological imperative to reestablish the tension between recognition and assertion simply does not work here. Indeed, to call for recognition between two subjects misses the fact that even good intentions may cause harm, such as the human carrier of *Vibrio cholerae* who entered Haiti in an effort to assist in disaster efforts.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>53</sup> This line of argumentation is advanced by John L. McKnight, Professor of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University. In *The Careless Society: Community and Its Counterfeits*, McKnight identifies the ‘professional problem’ of care as a major contributor to cycles of poverty and oppression. In interviews conducted through asset-based community development, the poor and advocates for the poor described their victimization: as “poor people defined as deficient by those whose incomes depend upon the deficiency they define”(19). Building on philosopher, Catholic priest, and social critic Ivan Illich’s work in *Medical Nemesis* (1982), McKnight argues the ‘professional problem’ is best explained through the iatrogenic argument—that the work of helpers and carers actually hurts and disables those they assist with “sick-producing medicine, stupidifying education, and criminalizing justice” (20). He argues that weak communities are at the root of the professional problem and proposes asset-based community organizing as a strategy to recenter lives lived in community and to return those who are exiled (172). While I agree with McKnight’s diagnosis, I believe he gives too much agency to those who participate in caring systems, so that one blames the carer

## Political Repression

As I mentioned in the case of Haiti, an individual's experience of social suffering cannot be separated from collective experiences of political repression that are subjectively and objectively violent. Liberation psychologist Ignacio Martín-Baró, a Spanish Roman Catholic priest and one of the six Jesuits murdered by a Salvadoran death squad November 16, 1989, provided intellectual acuity on these topics and the necessity of a political psychology to confront, document, and analyze political regimes that oppress 'the people'—a concept he argues can be defined by historical particularity, political solidarity, and socioeconomic exploitation.<sup>54</sup> In the essay "The Psychological Value of Political Repression," Martín-Baró cites the effects of repressive violence on the psyche of the repressor, the repressed, and the spectator.

Repressors, those who carry out violent acts, experience two psychological effects. First, they internalize another's dehumanization in response to cognitive dissonance between violence and other principles (e.g. democratic values, religious values). Second, they act out learned habits of violence to resolve interpersonal

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rather than looking at a more nuanced interaction between systems and capability deprivation.

<sup>54</sup> Ignacio Martín-Baró, *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*, eds. Adrienne Aron and Shawn Corne, trans. Adrienne Aron (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), 182. He explains, "*The people* is a search and an effort directed at creating a concrete community of free people. *The people* is...a denial of all slavery, not as an achieved present reality, but as a dynamic demand, as a vocation—a calling. It is important to understand that this calling can remain trapped in the unconscious, repressed by the jealous violence of the oppressor. Contemporary Latin American history gives palpable proof of how, when this communitarian vocation is awakened in the popular consciousness, the established powers become ever more violent in their efforts to repress and silence it: Brazil, Uruguay, Bolivia, Chile—the list goes on."



conflicts.<sup>55</sup> Repressors undergo psychic splits, positing their social group (us, we) as ‘the good’ over and against opposing groups (them) as ‘the bad.’<sup>56</sup> Often, this occurs along the fault line of ethnic identity, especially in Central and South America, where indigenous peoples are suppressed economically, socially, and politically. Social collaboration and even communication are stymied, and repressive cycles of violence are enacted.

Because political repression is often directed against basic human needs such as food, shelter, and work, and because repression punishes behavior without providing an alternative to learned behaviors, the repressed experience the routinization that Scheper-Hughes identified while working in Brazil. They internalize a passivity to their own lives. Martín-Baró comments that is not uncommon to hear those in the campo say, “It is better to die fast from a bullet than slowly from hunger.”<sup>57</sup> Personal passivity congeals into political passivity. Repressive violence discourages behaviors through fear. The repressed internalize emotions that they associate when they encounter the regime—police, army, government—and thus are inhibited from action against the regime. Rules of the authority figure are internalized as inhibitions and lead to guilt when evaluative criterion of correct behavior is violated. Internalized guilt leads to a desire to hide transgressions. Thus the repressed also experience aggression as a result of their frustration.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 156-157.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 160.

Spectators of violent repression experience psychological effects that are dependent upon their identification with the repressed. If they identify with the repressors, the spectator may scapegoat the victims, separating themselves from those who deserved punishment, and distancing themselves from ‘guerrillas,’ ‘subversives,’ or ‘criminal’ elements. Those who identify with the repressed may experience cognitive dissonance as they name the repressors—‘fascist,’ ‘murderer,’ etc.<sup>58</sup> The most important psychological effect for the spectator is the learned value of violent power in response to social situations. Martín-Baró writes, “The daily spectacle of violence committed by repressive forces teaches and encourages spectators to use similar behaviors to solve their own problems.”<sup>59</sup>

Political repression limits agency and multiplies social suffering by dismantling any form of consent. Here, submission is required for existence. Individual assertions against the regime guarantee a protracted death from starvation, the purgatory of torture, or the anxiety of anticipating an attack against oneself or one’s closest friends and family. As an aspect of structural violence, political repression challenges us to understand subject formation in political contexts where assertion is met with violence to the body and the psyche. As a result, a theory of subject formation must take up the challenges to recognition at the social level and their effects on the individual.

More than this, theoretical considerations should attend to the ways that persons resist their own deformation. Scholars of religious practice, like pastoral theologians, are particularly well-equipped to deepen that conversation. In the next section, I argue that

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

lamentation as an emotional and theological act of resistance and solidarity informs my theological understanding of recognition, suffering, and the potential for healing.

### Lamenting Circuits of Submission and Domination

Therefore I will not restrain my mouth;  
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;  
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul....  
When I say, 'My bed will comfort me,  
my couch will ease my complaint,'  
then you scare me with dreams  
and terrify me with visions,  
so that I would choose strangling  
and death rather than this body.  
I loathe my life; I would not live forever.  
Let me alone, for my days are a breath.<sup>60</sup>

The words of Job, written somewhere in the 6<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., are not so far removed from words of those who experience submission and domination in personal relationships, structural violence, or political repression. Like the author, they may be persecuted by another person or entity which leaves them loathing their lives. However, unlike the author, we heard that domination sometimes means that the person who suffers does not cry out in anguish, does not wail lament, does not complain in the bitterness of her soul. Instead, the on-going trauma of violence is normalized so that the subject is either muted, for example the slave who thinks nothing of fetching glasses or opening the door for his master, or responds in a way that seems contradictory to the emotion presented, such as when the mother laughed when Scheper-Hughes tearfully returned to the favela with the mother's dead son.

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<sup>60</sup> Job 7:11, 13-16, (NRSV).

Social theorists of emotion have argued that the emotive aspects of the self are shaped in relationship to culture.<sup>61</sup> For example, we know that in Japan anger is an inappropriate emotion to express between two persons of the same social groups. In contrast, in the U.S., anger between individuals who are colleagues or friends is acceptable.<sup>62</sup> Emotions, then, are not “innate or prior to social engagement,” but instead are “cultural artifacts” built from social norms, interpersonal relationships, and cultural structures.<sup>63</sup> Pastoral theologian Barbara J. McClure explains,

...our sociocultural contexts encourage the cultivation of certain dispositions and not others. As we develop and mature we learn what actions and emotions are appropriate in what contexts. The relations of communication and culture in which emotional vocabularies and moral regulations develop are figurations of power balances that change by context and with history.<sup>64</sup>

In other words, the muted emotions of the person who submits, or cultivated indifference observed by laughter toward child death, are conditioned emotions that stem from the cycles of submission and domination to oppressive persons and systems. Certainly, political repression forms subjects through fear and aggression who are then limited in their capability to assert themselves in social and political spheres. What, then, is an appropriate pastoral theological response?

While culture in the form of social location, personal relationships, and structural violence may shape the range of emotions available to those who suffer, it is not merely

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<sup>61</sup> Rom Harré and W. Gerrod Parrott, eds, *The Emotions: Social, Cultural, and Biological Dimensions* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996); Keith Oatley, Dacher Keltner, and Jennifer M. Jenkins, *Understanding the Emotions* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2006).

<sup>62</sup> Oatley, Keltner, and Jenkins, 64.

<sup>63</sup> McClure, 197.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

cultural. As I have shown in the sections above, relationships of ‘care,’ whether by social institutions, the political state, or primary caretakers, can be unjust and oppressive. As a feminist pastoral theologian, I believe that we must critique the insidious everyday violence that makes a subject’s ability to wail in lament personally difficult or even incomprehensible. When persons who experience everyday violence and social suffering cannot lament for themselves in a way that is broadly recognizable, pastoral theologians and caregivers are called to stand against oppression and injustice by offering their lamentation as a form of solidarity and resistance to deformation of the subject.

To be in solidarity extends beyond compassion and empathy for others. To be in solidarity requires a commitment to be in the struggle—*en la lucha*<sup>65</sup>—with those who experience oppression and domination.<sup>66</sup> Pastoral theologians and caregivers, indeed all of creation, are called to be moved, emotionally, relationally, and even physically by the virtue of mercy when confronting injustices. Pastoral theologian Brita L. Gill-Austern asserts, “We must struggle alongside of the suffering in the pursuit of justice-making, knowing that by being in closer proximity relationally and physically more may be asked of us than we had anticipated.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *En la Lucha/In the Struggle: A Hispanic Women’s Liberation Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). To be *en la lucha* is an overarching theme for Isasi-Díaz’s work in this book and in her subsequent texts that develop *mujerista* theology (*Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century*, 1996; and *La Lucha Continues: Mujerista Theology*, 2004).

<sup>66</sup> Brita L. Gill-Austern, “Engaging Diversity and Difference: From Practices of Exclusion to Practices of Practical Solidarity,” *Injustice and the Care of Souls*, eds. Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook and Karen B. Montagno (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 35.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 36.

Lament is one aspect of ‘the more’ required of us as relational beings who are both agents and subjects in the projects of becoming ourselves. Without lament as a Christian pathos,<sup>68</sup> we are ill-equipped to encounter (and counter) domination, oppression, and suffering. Instead, we are stuck in “silent despair,” “forgotten sadness,” and “frozen grief.”<sup>69</sup> We become comfortably numb to ourselves and to the pain of others that calls for a response. Lament is grief work; it is the voice that cries out, like Job’s.

Even when those who suffer injustices cannot cry out, lament offered by those in solidarity is an assertion that calls for recognition. It is a distinctively recognition-oriented response that lays the groundwork for further engagement through resilient performances and hopeful participations, ideas that I develop in the next chapter. When communities of faith, pastoral theologians, and caregivers lament, we acknowledge that we are social selves who are not only subject to domination, structural violence, or political repression, but also agents whose voices rise resiliently in the face of the systems that cause suffering. Further, lamenting in solidarity ensures that theology and politics are not marked off as separate containers of belief and action, but instead bleed into each other.

When we wail our lament, we affirm the human need and ability to heal from political and social wrongs that cause undue social suffering and oppression. Writing about South African apartheid, feminist practical theologian Denise M. Ackermann

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<sup>68</sup> William Blain-Wallace, “The Politics of Tears: Lamentation as Justice-Making,” *Injustice and the Care of Souls*, eds. Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook and Karen B. Montagno (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 188.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

observes that the systems of repression “required compliant interlocking political, social and religious systems.”<sup>70</sup> Thus, she argues, social healing cannot be separated from political healing. Further, just as political repression psychologically harms all those subject to it, Ackermann argues that apartheid did so as well. Thus, victims and perpetrators need the opportunity to lament wrong-doing and the loss of humanity in order to heal from social and political oppression. Lament then becomes a theological and political act of assertion.

More than a theological and political act, lament is an embodied act of resistance to the status quo. For example, Ackermann describes “keening bodies” of women who are deemed liturgically inappropriate in South Africa’s mainline Christian churches, yet who publicly lament for days on end in African rural villages and townships.<sup>71</sup> The keening body of an African woman is a formidable site; her cries affirm that not all is right and that there are wrongs that must be acknowledged. Lament is the cry of resistance against being turned in a symbol of the subjugated Other.

In Garhwal, India, in the Central Himalayas, the Harijans are the lowest castes of persons. They suffer economically, physically, politically, and even spiritually. They are constantly humiliated, with insults hurled at them, or addressed as boy or girl, the form of ‘you’ reserved for animals and children. As anthropologist William S. Sax writes, “If ever there was a ‘community of suffering,’ this is it.”<sup>72</sup> In the face of their suffering, they

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<sup>70</sup> Denise M. Ackermann, “A Voice Was Heard in Ramah,” *Liberating Faith Practices: Feminist Practical Theologies in Context*, eds. Denise M. Ackermann and Riet Bons-Storm (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 81.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

too lament, crying out to the Hindu deity Bhairav. Bhairav is their god of justice who responds when the Harijan call out, “I have no one.” Commenting on the hidden transcripts that detail Bhairav’s appearance, the secreted property of the Harijan, Sax explains, “When the protagonist utters this sentence, it is a moment of maximum weakness and helplessness, and yet it is at precisely this moment that the god of justice appears, to punish the wicked and bring justice to the oppressed.”<sup>73</sup>

In rituals the Harijan call on Bhairav and ask him to manifest himself in the bodies of the believers. Gathered together they sing songs and proclaim “I have no one,” a profound sentiment given that networks of allies are the measure of political and social power in traditional societies.<sup>74</sup> Alone and vulnerable, the Harijan assert the truth of their situation and await religious response. Believers know when Bhairav recognizes the truth of the Harijan claim; he possesses the body of the believer, with hands clawed, teeth barred, and waist bent. He dances on his knees and rolls on the floor. The body of the believer becomes Bhairav’s and through this embodiment, the Harijan experience a modicum of healing.

The Harijan and cult of Bhairav are important reminders to those of us who call for lament, healing, and justice. Just like the Harijan are a community that embodies their god of justice, Christian communities of faith are called to embody the Christian God of justice. Christian communities are called to practice lament for themselves and for others, and in doing so, to manifest the grace of God, to become persons who can

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<sup>72</sup> William S. Sax, *God of Justice: Ritual Healing and Social Justice in the Central Himalayas* (New York: Oxford, 2009), 25.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.



recognize subjects who are made other by the doctrines, laws, and structures that would mask injustice.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I presented Jessica Benjamin's psychological theory of recognition and assertion and described their imbalances in the forms of submission and domination. I argued that her theory is helpful to understand the importance of recognition for subject formation. I critiqued her theory for relying too heavily on an assent to submission and a capability, understood as freedom, to mutually engage in the process of assertion and recognition. I used structural violence and political repression to make the case that asserting oneself in the midst of social suffering is challenged through conditioned forms of submission that become indifference. I argued lament is a practice to be cultivated in order to move from indifference to recognition and resistance.

In the next chapter, I consider another theory of subjectivity and recognition in the work of philosopher Judith Butler. As I describe her theory, she stands as an oppositional figure of sorts to Jessica Benjamin in that she draws out the limitations and binds of recognition. No doubt, there is hope for change in Butler's work, but it will require that pastoral theologians be willing to read signs of resistance to fixed identities.

## CHAPTER IV

### STRUCTURAL FORMATIONS AND PERSONAL IDENTITIES: RECONGINZING AND ASSERTING/PASSING AND CONFRONTING

Women experience violence of all sorts in which they are targeted because of their gender: sexual violence, domestic and intimate partner abuse, trafficking, and human rights abuses in the form of forced marriages. These are violent acts that contribute to a state of insecurity for women.<sup>1</sup> In addition, women experience economic inequities, and social, political, and religious blocks that prevent their participation and reception of the goods found in these systems. Taken as a whole, they are the symptoms of interpersonal, social, and structural relationships that are unjust and oppressive to women.

Symptoms call for diagnosis through analysis. As I have shown, gender is one helpful category to analyze suffering. Gender analysis helps us to determine strategic interventions for care. As an analytic category, gender functions to show us commonalities between those who suffers. However, gender, like other identities, is not the only means for analysis. What is needed in many analyses is the intersection of gender analysis with other identities that place women at-risk, such as race or sexuality.

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<sup>1</sup> Brooke A. Ackerly, *Universal Human Rights in a World of Difference* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 4. Ackerly uses ‘insecurity’ to describe complex political, social, and economic conditions that contribute to gendered human rights violations. For example, in Bangladesh violent crimes against women go unreported or underreported. When they are reported, the judicial arms of justice, e.g. the police and the judiciary, do not evenly enforce the law. Legal failures are linked to social practices of violence that violate women’s human rights, creating a “context of insecurity.”

Even then, analysis by identity, like gender, becomes less than helpful when we mistake the analytic category for an experiential formation of the subject.

In my initial research with hospital chaplains, I was critical of the chaplains' lack of an intersectional analysis of the women's identities and social locations, and how these factors impacted their experience of child loss or fetal demise. I saw this as a problem of misrecognition which impacted the kind of care a woman received. It was a problem of gendered care injustice. However, as I continued to research best pastoral care practices, I confronted the problem of recognition and assertion, again. This time, identity itself became a category for analysis. When I stepped back from my research, I was able to see that I asked about the category of identity as if it were something that the subjects did once and forever, instead of asking how they were done by, or submitted to, their identities. As a result, I missed a chance to analyze how they understood their subject formation through a socially-constructed identity and if they resisted their formation.

Furthermore, I faced a conundrum in trying to write about pastoral care through the lens of identity. Did I presume that all the women suffered emotional outpourings of grief because I assumed that females were more natural or 'in-touch' with their emotions? Did I presume that I could tell these women about the kind of care they needed because they seemed intelligible to me? Did I misrecognize them by fixing and solidifying identity even when assertions to the contrary were being made? By solidifying in my mind who counted as a woman in need of care, did I not recognize certain women, making them Other? In other words, I found myself in a Catch-22. I desired to analyze my findings through an intersectional approach using the categories of gender and race/ethnicity in order to give voice to the women whose suffering I thought

was compounded by health injustices that they might have experienced as a result of ethnocentrism, racism, and classism. Yet, I was aware that my attempts to do this kind of analysis, especially through a broad pastoral care lens, bordered on misrecognition and abstraction.

In the last chapter, I focused on unjust individual and social suffering in the form of domination. I explained how this suffering occurs from a psychological standpoint and explained how it shapes subjects. Without complex accounts of suffering and subjectivity, we cannot adequately think toward responses which enable recognition and assertion in intersubjective or socio-political relationships. I argued that lament is a theological practice that assists those who suffer, (and those who stand in solidarity with those who suffer), to assert themselves.

In this next chapter, I focus on how one suffers by who one is and what identities she occupies. Drawing from philosopher Judith Butler, I argue that it is vital to understand identity as a crucial element in the formation of one's subjectivity. Although recognition proceeds through relationships between persons, social institutions, and cultural and political regimes, it is mediated through identity. As well, identity is formed in relationship to persons, social institutions, and cultural and political regimes who confer recognition. Identity is not the whole and sum of a person; is it one aspect of a much fuller subjectivity that emerges in a future horizon. However, identity is a means by which we evaluate whether a subject is like us or not like us. Identity is also one means through which we seek recognition. We identify people who are like us in gender, race, sexuality, or ability in order to organize and advocate for ourselves. Thus, identities can be used to help achieve personal and social recognition. But at the same time, they

can cause suffering to a subject through non-recognition or misrecognition which effects harms.

### Social Recognition: Judith Butler and Performative Identities

On January 22, 2006, the indigenous people of Bolivia, who make up nearly sixty five percent of the population, celebrated a significant win for their social recognition and political representation when Evo Morales, an Amayran Indian coca grower and union leader from the Chapare region, was sworn in as the first indigenous president. Wearing a jacket embroidered with traditional Andean designs, Morales asked for a moment of silence for the fallen heroes of Bolivian rebellion, and then recounted in a booming voice how the indigenous peoples were subjugated for the past 500 years. He critiqued the capitalist and colonial systems that had looted the natural resources of Bolivia and the political leaders who had aligned their policies with those demanded by the International Monetary Fund's neoliberal policies, resulting in the oppression and economic exploitation of the indigenous peoples. Staring down former presidents, he announced that his government had come to power to change the historical situation of the indigenous people and put an end to the colonial state. Within the year, a new constitution for the plurinational state of Bolivia was approved and included safeguards to ensure social recognition for the plurality of indigenous groups and their languages, and their political representation in the National Assembly.<sup>2</sup> Despite the multiethnic

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<sup>2</sup> Luis A. Gómez, "Evo Morales Turns the Tide of History," *Dispatches from Latin America: On the Frontlines Against Neoliberalism*, eds. Teo Ballvé and Vijay Prashed (Cambridge, Mass: South End, 2006), 140-145.

indigenous population, this is a case in which organizing persons by a shared identity resulted in a level of social recognition that had been hampered by centuries of exploitation.

Like the indigenous people of Bolivia, second wave feminists of the twentieth century argued that women as a group of people had experienced centuries of oppression and subjugation through patriarchal culture, language, and philosophy. They argued that women needed to work together to achieve personal, economic, and political gains. Beginning in the early 1980s, third wave feminists brought attention to the fact that feminism was, like patriarchy, largely white and upper-middle class. In theology, womanists and mujeristas pointed out that feminist theology had not adequately accounted for the unique experiences of black and Latina women, thus presuming a universal white female subject. Recall from Chapter Two that in the last twenty years feminist pastoral theology has attended to the need for diverse voices to speak about the specifics of suffering from racist and sexist systems, and encouraged minority voices to identify culturally-appropriate care strategies. In addition to challenging essentialist definitions of womanhood that are racist, third-wave feminists include thinkers and activists who challenge us to think beyond binary categories of gender and sex, critiquing the idea that sex is biological and fixed while gender is variable and cultural.<sup>3</sup> In this next section, I explore the claims of gender performativity and its impact for social recognition drawing on the work of Judith Butler.

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<sup>3</sup> For discussions in feminist theology see Ellen T. Armour, *Deconstruction, Feminist Theology, and the Problem of Difference: Subverting the Race/Gender Divide* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1999); Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Changing the Subject: Women's Discourses and Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

Both critiqued and admired in the academy and in public life, Judith Butler is a third-wave feminist philosopher whose social theories cannot be ignored. Her writing examines broad and divergent topics including gender and sexuality, war and violence, and cultural politics. She draws from continental philosophy, literary theory, social and political theory, feminist theory, and queer theory, of which “she is regarded by many as *the queer theorist par excellence*” and a founder of the field.<sup>4</sup> She is the Maxine Eliot Professor in the departments of Rhetoric and Comparative Literature and the co-director of the program in Critical Theory at the University of California at Berkeley. She also holds the Hannah Arendt Chair at the European Graduate School in Saas-Fee, Switzerland, where she teaches a summer intensive. She is a prolific writer, authoring, co-authoring, and editing over twenty books, and authoring numerous book chapters and countless articles. She is the subject of the film *Philosophical Encounters of the Third Kind* (2006) and featured in the film *The Examined Life* (2008).

Judith Butler is best known for her influential book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) in which she questioned whether “women”, who it was assumed shared essential characteristics and interests, was the proper subject of feminism.<sup>5</sup> *Gender Trouble* not only pioneered new territory in feminist thought, but established itself as a foundational text in queer theory.<sup>6</sup> Working in a Foucauldian spirit, she destabilizes the account of gender through her theory of performativity which draws

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<sup>4</sup> Sara Salih, *Judith Butler* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville, eds., “Judith Butler in Theory,” *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler* (New York: Columbia UP, 2006), 1. Also see Salih (2004).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, viii.

from philosophers J.L. Austin and Jacques Derrida. In her account, gender is active; it is “a doing rather than a being.”<sup>7</sup> Cause and effect are reversed in this theory. I do not ‘do’ my gender; my gender does me. Gender, then, is not a performance that is freely chosen from myriad creative possibilities by the subject. Instead, gender performance is a constraint that may also become a site for its undoing.

*Gender Trouble* is a significant work of queer theory. Once a derogatory term for LGBT persons who challenged the heteronormative ideal, queer denotes a move away from binary categories such as gay/straight, woman/man, and connotes fluidity in sexual orientation and gender identity. Likewise, queer theory challenges the premise that sex and gender are essential categories that exist by genetic or divine decree. As anthropologist Tanya Erzen explains, “Instead, queer theory argues for the idea that identities are culturally and historically determined rather than fixed; sexual practices and desires change over time and do not consistently line up with masculine or feminine gender expectations.”<sup>8</sup> In broader academic discourse queer theory deconstructs normalizing practices and institutions. It does not signal a sexual identity as such, but indicates an outlook that challenges hegemony, dominating discourses (including that of identity), and knowledge-power regimes.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Sarah Salih, *The Judith Butler Reader*, ed. Sarah Salih with Judith Butler (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), 90.

<sup>8</sup> Tanya Erzen, *Straight to Jesus: Sexual and Christian Conversion in the Ex-Gay Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 2006, 14.

<sup>9</sup> Joretta Marshall, “Models of Understanding Differences, Dialogues and Discourses: From Sexuality to Queer Theory in Learning and Teaching Care,” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 19 (Winter 2009) : 37.



In the academic discourse of religion, Judith Butler and queer theory occupy an increasingly vital and critical place. In pastoral theology, care, and counseling, queer theory has not yet had a starring role in the extensive conversations about sexuality, gender, and difference. However, the conversation has begun. Feminist pastoral theologians Joretta Marshall, Pamela Cooper-White, and Elaine Graham have conversed with Butler's work by way of the topics of gender/sexuality, multiplicity and the self, and practice, respectively.<sup>10</sup>

The site of subjectivity as the site of agency is a theme in Butler's writing. She explores these themes of limitation in *Bodies That Matter* (1993), where she takes up the materiality and the intelligibility of the body, correcting and responding to critiques of her theory of performativity.<sup>11</sup> This same theme is also explored deeply in *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997). Butler draws on the Foucauldian paradox that one becomes a subject through being subjected and subjecting oneself to power relations, as well as a Freudian account of the psyche, to expand her theories of gender and sex. The implications demonstrate the limits of recognition in social and political life and the need for an ethic in which mourning displaces the fixity of identity, themes which she explores in *Giving An Account of Oneself* (2005), *Precarious Life* (2006), and *Frames of War* (2009).

In this section, I hope to extend the conversation by thinking about recognition in light of Butler's insights on gender performance and subjectivity, the materiality of the

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<sup>10</sup> See Marshall, 2009; Pamela Cooper-White, 2011; and Elaine Graham, *TP*, 1996.

<sup>11</sup> *BTM*, x-xii.

body and its implication for recognition, and the ethical implications of recognition and loss.

### Gender Performance and Subjectivity

It is not unusual to hear conversations in which sex is described as fixed and anatomical, and gender as socially constructed, with sexuality arising from the blend of these two descriptions. Judith Butler reverses this way of thinking and argues that sexuality privileges heteronormativity, misshaping how we understand gender and sex. In this next section, I explain how Judith Butler uses the concept of gender performance to deconstruct the feminist subject, and the implications for social recognition.

Judith Butler is often cited for her work on gender performance. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler argues that gender is an iterative performance, following from Simone de Beauvoir's statement that a woman is not born but made. In Butler's thought, the body is a permeable site where social and political systems of gender/sex signify themselves.<sup>12</sup> Whereas second-wave feminists wished to oppose biological determinism by showing that sex does not determine gender roles, for example that an anatomical female may become a powerful business person, or that an anatomical male may become a house husband, Butler collapses sex/gender distinctions.<sup>13</sup> According to Butler, masculinity and femininity as gender "masquerade as natural" by pointing to the body's primary and secondary sex organs "as their signature and guarantee."<sup>14</sup> However, sex is

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<sup>12</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 189. Henceforth *GT*.

<sup>13</sup> Armour and St. Ville, 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

no more natural than gender. Butler explains, “Gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which ‘sexed nature’ or ‘a natural sex’ is produced and established as ‘prediscursive,’ prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts.”<sup>15</sup> It is not our sex which determines our gender and sexuality, or the presence of the penis which illuminates masculinity and leads to heterosexual desire marked by absence as vagina and thus woman. Instead, “a social system of compulsory heterosexuality” shapes desire in such a way that it must be worked out through gender and sex as two distinct and binary aspects of our subjectivity.<sup>16</sup>

I do my gender correctly through my learned performance of ‘woman.’ To take on this role, I move a certain way with my body and wear certain kinds of clothes and shoes that reflect my gender. I react in certain kinds of ways to emotional overtones, such as caring for others at the expense of my own well-being. Additionally, my learned performance of ‘woman’ includes (or is suppose to include) heterosexual desire. Thus, I am constituted as a woman when the social and political systems of gender/sex have acted upon me sufficiently enough to render me intelligible, or recognizable, as ‘woman.’ I repeat this performance day-in and day-out and thus I become intelligible as a woman because I live up to the social law of woman as heterosexual.

Those who do not perform woman correctly are subject to othering, abjection, or expulsion. “Butch” women are too manly; black women are not white enough; and lesbians are not heterosexual. Their performances of ‘woman’ do not measure up.

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<sup>15</sup> *GT*, 10.

<sup>16</sup> Armour and St. Ville, 5.

According to Butler's theory, the ideology of woman cannot tolerate deviations and thus expels those who expose the ideology of the idealized woman. However, Butler argues that no person ever measures up to the ideal significations of gender, and this is the point where those who would perform woman can leverage their performances to undo systems of gender. Drag performances of women are one example.

In a drag performance, a biological male performs as woman. Butler explains that there are actually three distinct aspects of performing woman: anatomical sex, gender identity, and performed gender. A woman cannot be defined by gynecological category alone nor by how she identifies herself. These two aspects of being a woman are distinct, but also interpreted in light of how she inhabits her womanhood. A drag queen may have a penis and identify as a man, but his performance as a woman suggests that he is a woman. The result is a dissonance between these three distinct aspects. This dissonance asks us to unravel the illusion of gender as one, naturalized thing instead. Drag performances reveal that no gender identity is ever stable, but always a contested and contingent terrain. Butler explains,

As much as drag creates a unified picture of "woman" (what its critics often oppose), it also reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence. *In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency.* Indeed, part of the pleasure, the giddiness of the performance is in the recognition of a radical contingency in relation between sex and gender in the face of cultural configurations of causal unities that are regularly assumed to be natural and necessary.<sup>17</sup>

Butler's point here is that 'woman' should not be understood as something natural or given. Woman is not naturally heterosexual or even anatomically female. Instead,

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<sup>17</sup> *GT*, 187.

woman is a set of normative practices that are reiterated over and over upon subject, forming the subject into someone recognizable as a woman.

Due to the creative dissonance between anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance, drag performances in particular are locations where the lies of a ‘natural woman’ are revealed. Because every performance of woman is an iteration of signifying practices, every performance is radically contingent. A ‘woman’ can fail to do her gender correctly in all sorts of ways. A subject underperforms or overperforms woman and shows the contingency of gender. A drag queen or male-to-female transgendered person clothes herself in make-up, pantyhose, brassieres, and high heels, and ‘fools’ the man on the street. Were that man on the street to recognize the drag queen as a male/man ‘masquerading’ as a woman, we assume that he would judge her performance a failure. However, instead of judging her performance as a failure of woman, we are urged to consider how no one ever measures up to the heterosexual (and white, able-bodied, and upper-middle class) ideologies that constitute woman. Every body is a gender outlaw.

Becoming a woman is a subject formation by repetition and failure. It is a “regulated process of repetition.”<sup>18</sup> Social recognition of oneself as a woman is conditional. It hinges upon the subject’s performance of discursive codes. Butler writes, “Indeed, to understand identity as a practice and as a signifying practice, is to understand culturally intelligible subjects as the resulting effects of a rule-bound discourse that inserts itself in the pervasive and mundane signifying acts of linguistic life.”<sup>19</sup> To be a

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<sup>18</sup> *GT*, 198.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

woman is to consciously and unconsciously assert one's participation in the matrix of social gender codes and await the response. Though we cannot determine our success or failure at meeting social norms, recognition from discursive, social, and political systems confers intelligibility as a "yes," a "no," or a "maybe".

### Recognition of Intelligible Bodies: Passing As

In Butler, to become a subject one is subjectivated to constellations of power that map themselves upon the body. Rule-bound discourse shapes something into somebody—on the one hand, somebodies who are intelligible and recognizable, but also, on the other hand, somebodies who are not intelligible and are misrecognized or not recognized at all. Because all bodies acts in light of this idealized image of the gendered subject, no body ever performs its gender perfectly. In fact, there are innumerable opportunities for performance failure: "The injunction *to be* a given gender produces necessary failures, a variety of incoherent configurations that in their multiplicity exceed and defy the injunction by which they are generated."<sup>20</sup>

Gender failures are not performances for which we ought to chide ourselves or feel ashamed. Instead, Butler instructs us to see failed performances as sites of agency that challenge the ideological systems that dominate the subject. However, she also warns that challenging ideological systems is risky and can cause harm to those who do so through personal violence—think of Matthew Shepard's violent death because he challenged the normative heterosexual matrix—or through structural violence—think of

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 199.

the impact of political systems in Bolivia that punished the indigenous to fit the ideal of the colonized subject. I explore these claims below.

Performances are not costumes or clothes. Gender/sex identities cannot be taken on and off, like sweaters or shoes or pantyhose. They are constructed but also given. So, while I may choose to enact a gender performance of a certain type, there are limits to my intelligibility. Like the drag queen's Adam's apple or the humiliated, bent-over posture of the Harijan, my body may give me away in all sorts of ways I had never imagined possible. As such, performativity is a delimiting concept rather than one which allows for the making and unmaking of all gender, as if all gender and sex options were available in the fictional closet. Butler explains,

There is a tendency to think that sexuality is either constructed or determined; to think that if it is constructed, it is in some sense free, and if it is determined, it is in some sense fixed. These oppositions do not describe the complexity of what is at stake in any effort to take account of the conditions under which sex and sexuality are assumed. The "performative" dimension of construction is precisely the forced reiteration of norms. In this sense, then, it is not only that there are constraints to performativity; rather, constraint calls to be rethought as the very condition of performativity.<sup>21</sup>

As a delimiting process, performativity maps power and constraints. However, it also opens up possibilities through deviation.

Performative possibilities are deviations—intentional and more often unintentional. Deviation of a correct gender or sex performance makes possible alternatives for doing and undoing gender/sex. However, deviation from reiterated norms comes at a price. A subject may become unintelligible and unrecognized at multiple levels of scale, or worse, may experience violence, injustice, and oppression as a consequence of lack of recognition.

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<sup>21</sup> *BTM*, 94.

When subjects do not perform their gendered, sexual, or racial identities correctly, they reveal the ideological construction of a normative identity. Heteronormativity, racism, sexism, and classism are ideological products that work through identity to delimit, fix, and make static a subject. When a woman claims that she could never be a lesbian, she stabilizes and fixes her subject position as a heterosexual woman. She removes a possibility.

When the removal of a possibility is mourned, greater psychic self-cohesion is possible. When the removal of a possibility is not mourned, the subject experiences sexuality as split between good and bad. She unconsciously chooses between all good—heterosexuality—or all bad—homosexuality. When heterosexuality (and heterosexuals) is posited as all good, and homosexuality (and homosexuals) is posited as all bad, the lives of heterosexuals are blessed while the lives of homosexuals are denigrated. This line of thinking shows us that theories and practices of gender/sex and care ought to be carefully examined for ideological norms contained within them that bless some lives and denigrate other lives.

Subjects who occupy multiple planes of identity are also confronted by the ideological apparatus that may confer recognition if the subject performs correctly enough, deny recognition, or enable misrecognition in the form of passing. Categories of identity cannot be neatly unpacked and deideologized because the subjects who inhabit and are inhabited by identities do not live their lives as separate categories of existence. To do so can cause harm, as critical race theorist and UCLA School of Law and Columbia Law School professor Kimberlé Crenshaw has shown.



In her article “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” Crenshaw argues that when policymakers and social organizations do not attend to structural, political, and representational intersectionality women of color are hurt by mutually reinforcing policies of racial and sexual subordination, as I mentioned in Chapter One. For example, Crenshaw shows us that white women who experience rape access better interventions for assistance than women of color. She informs us that information about rape crisis centers is distributed more in white communities than communities of color, that rape counselors assist women of color with housing and needs other than the emotional and physical trauma of rape, and that although resources are allocated to have professionals accompany victims of rape to court, women of color are less likely to pursue their cases in the criminal justice system.<sup>22</sup> She argues that “intervention strategies based solely on the experiences of women who do not share the same class or race backgrounds will be of limited help to women who because of race and class face different obstacles.”<sup>23</sup>

Like Crenshaw, Butler urges us to consider to how the collusion of race and gender form the subject. While intersectionality examines the formation and deformation of the subject at the nexus of systems of gender and race, Butler argues that the systems of identity articulate the conditions “*for* each other.”<sup>24</sup> She asks,

How is raced lived in the modality of sexuality? How is gender lived in the modality of race? How do colonial and neo-colonial nation-states rehearse gender relations in the consolidation of state power? How have the humiliations of colonial rule been figured as emasculation (in Fanon), or racist violence as

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<sup>22</sup> Crenshaw, 1251.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 1246.

<sup>24</sup> *BTM*, 117.

sodomization (Jan Mohammed); and where and how is “homosexuality” at once the imputed sexuality of the colonized, and the incipient sign of Western imperialism (Walter Williams)?<sup>25</sup>

Here we are to notice that the collusion of social systems of normative identity not only effect the interventions possible in a racist, sexist, classist, ableist, colonial society, but shape how subjects must recognize other subjects according to the discursive law. As well, we are to notice the presentation of deformed, partially intelligible, and misrecognized subjectivities by those who do not live up to the ideal performance of intersectional identity.

In the essay “Passing, Queering: Nella Larsen’s Psychoanalytic Challenge,” Butler argues that identities are not to be read as distinct listings to be set off by commas—gender, sexuality, race, class—but as signifiers upon signifiers of power, agency, and recognition that are visible and hidden at the same time. Like intersectionality, we must analyze power at the points of identity convergence to reveal harms. In addition, analyzing power at the point of convergence yields information about the ways that identities work together to mask what the ideological law would hold as a less than good-enough performance of the ideal. Butler shows us how to do this when she rereads Nella Larsen’s short story *Passing*.

In Larsen’s short story *Passing* the narrative raises questions about the visible and the hidden. “The question of what can and cannot be spoken, what can and cannot be publicly exposed, is raised throughout the text, and it is linked with the larger question of the dangers of public exposure of both color and desire.”<sup>26</sup> Clare is a character who

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 169.

passes in several senses: first she passes as white and second she passes as straight. In fact, she passes better as white because she passes as straight. Moreover, her passing in both senses “signifies a certain freedom, a class mobility afforded by whiteness.”<sup>27</sup>

Butler argues that her passing in white circles must be considered in light of her straightness and class assumptions. “Clare passes not only because she is light-skinned, but because she refuses to introduce her blackness into conversation, and so withholds the conversational marker which would counter the hegemonic presumption that she is white.”<sup>28</sup> But even more, in those same circles her blackness is not called to account because her body cannot be read “because what can be seen, what qualifies as a visible marking, is a matter of being able to read a marked body in relation to unmarked bodies, where unmarked bodies constitute the currency of normative whiteness.”<sup>29</sup> To say it another way, because Clare acts white and appears white, there is no question of her whiteness. Her body is perceived as an unmarked body. She passes.

However, her passing is an act of misrecognition of her bodily performance of a raced woman. Yet, she benefits by misrecognition in terms of her social status. Further, in her misrecognition she receives recognition from her overtly racist husband, who claims that he would never associate with blacks. Paradoxically, his ability to recognize her as white is fueled by his vehement racism. In his psyche he experiences blackness as bad and whiteness as good, a dangerous psychic split that enables him to embody his whiteness as a pure identity. Butler explains, Bellow “cannot be white without blacks

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 170

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 170.

and without the constant disavowal of his relation to them. It is only through that disavowal that his whiteness is perpetually—but anxiously—reconstituted.”<sup>30</sup>

Passing does not remove the inhabited identities that constitute the subject, but instead enlists intersubjective misinterpretation and misrecognition for the sake of mutually upholding the normative ideal. For example, Butler implies that Clare’s body is not fully under her own control, even in its passing. Though her blackness becomes visible to her racist husband Bellew when he sees her in the company of other black-skinned persons in a Harlem salon, there are intimations of her blackness from Bellew before this time. He calls her “Nig” as a pet name; he says that she is becoming more dark-skinned day by day.<sup>31</sup>

Yet Bellew does not actively name her blackness. To do so would mean that the distinct categories of black as bad and white as good that he desires are not possible in the body of the one he loves without exposing his investment in that dichotomy. When Bellew does not consciously allow himself to see Clare’s blackness, he can unconsciously desire her as his fetish object. He desires her blackness even when he says he does not want it. His denied desire eroticizes Clare and makes her more and more an object, something to be conquered and dominated. Her subjugation as an exotic object is made possible by his perceptions of her racial ambivalence. Like many acts of recognition and misrecognition of the things that one’s body cannot hide, this game of recognition is serious. Bellew sees her in the all black Harlem salon and he internally must confront his racism. Her passing as white, which is also her passing as

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

heterosexual, is sustained by Bellew's misrecognition. He cannot see in her what he cannot consider for himself. Butler writes:

Even as it appears that Clare's veneer of whiteness is shattered, it is Bellew's as well; indeed, it is the veneer by which the white project of racial purity is sustained. For Bellew thinks that he would never associate with blacks, but he cannot be white without his "Nig," without the lure of an association that he must resist, without the spectre of a racial ambiguity that he must subordinate or deny. Indeed, he reproduces that racial line by which he seeks to secure his whiteness through producing black women as the necessary and impossible object of desire, as the fetish in relation to which his own whiteness is anxiously and persistently secured.<sup>32</sup>

As the veneer of Clare's whiteness disintegrates, so too does her assumed heterosexuality. Sitting next to her, on the precipice of the window, is Irene, another light-skinned black who passes, but with great self-ambiguity. With equal ambiguity, Irene both desires Clare and denies her very same desire. As Butler reads Larsen, "Clare embodies a certain kind of sexual daring that Irene defends herself against...and Irene finds herself drawn by Clare, wanting to be her, but also wanting her."<sup>33</sup> When Clare falls out the salon window to her death, we are to wonder what role Irene played in Clare's death by defenestration. In her denial of what she cannot have, what she may never been able to dream of having, does Irene push Clare so far away that Clare falls to her death?

Along with her theory of gender performativity, Butler makes a significant contribution to our understanding of recognition and subjectivity in her interpretation of *Passing*. With her we learn that intersubjective recognition is not guaranteed, even by those who say they love us and with whom we have committed ourselves as partners.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 169.

We also learn that our being recognized by another correlates to their understanding of our intersectional performance of gender/sex, race, and class. Yet, our recognition is also in part based on that other's ability to reckon with their disavowal by bringing it from unconsciousness to consciousness through the work of mourning, as I explore more thoroughly below. Additionally, as we learned earlier, our performances are contingent and subject to failure of the idealized norm. Thus, when recognition is not positively conferred, our subjectivity borders on misrecognition in its search to overcome non-recognition.

In comparison to Benjamin, Butler's theory of recognition demonstrates the confines of subjectivity. Assertions by individuals are not guaranteed recognition, even when men and women make the difference. Social groups who press claims for cultural recognition are subject to misrecognition even as they move from a non-recognized status. Social mechanisms do us (and our psyches) in such a way that we are limited in our ability to imagine other horizons of gender/sex, race, or class. Yet, horizons stretch forward as we perform and fail, calling into question the hegemonic ideal through our deviations from the norm. Butler's theory calls us to question what hegemonic ideals shape our attention to certain subjectivities in feminist pastoral theologies of care, which bodies are misrecognized (or pass) in hopes of a positive conferral of recognition, and whether formation as a feminist pastoral theologian invites self-introspection of the subjectivities we might not consider for ourselves.

## Mourning and Recognition

As Freud has shown us, psychic loss is inevitable. Mourning, however, does not always follow from loss. Further, a lack of emotional response to loss is a loss in itself. Our ability to mourn the lives of others is directly tied to our ability to mourn our own lives. Judith Butler has explored these themes in several of her recent books, including *Giving An Account of Oneself* (2005) and *Precarious Life* (2004). In this next section, I will show how recognition, mourning, and loss are intertwined processes that affect subject formation.

In *Giving An Account of Oneself*, Butler argues that recognition is an ethical project based on failure and opacity.<sup>34</sup> Remember that for Butler the descriptions we give of ourselves are contingent. They are predicated upon norms into which we have been born. Thus, while we might insist on saying that we have ‘chosen’ to become something, this choosing is illusory. At the same time, deviations in our performance make room for new possibilities. Every time that we say we have chosen an identity, we reveal the limitations of the making of that identity even as our performances fail and show the making of norms. Even more, certain ways that we give accounts of ourselves, such as the way Clare tells about herself (both by what she says and cannot say, both by what she performs and what she cannot perform) show how identities are maps of power, but also how they might be recharted. But more than this, identities and stories are the ways that we tell others as well as ourselves about who we are and who we are becoming.

Yet, Butler makes the point that to give a full account of ourselves is impossible. We do not fully know ourselves in the present moment. Nor do we fully know the selves

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<sup>34</sup> Judith Butler, *Giving An Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham UP, 2005), 21. Henceforth *GAO*.

of our becoming in the future. Nor do we know if the language, and social and political structures available to us will render us unintelligible to others, maybe even to ourselves.

And yet, we are called to account for ourselves. She writes,

Although we are compelled to give an account of our various selves, the structural conditions of that account will turn out to make a full such giving impossible. The singular body to which a narrative refers cannot be captured by a full narration, not only because the body has a formative history that remains irrecoverable by reflection, but because primary relations are formative in ways that produce a necessary opacity in our understanding of ourselves. An account of oneself is always given to another, whether conjured or existing, and this other establishes the scene of address as a more primary ethical relation than a reflexive effort to give an account, by which we make ourselves intelligible to ourselves and to others, are not of our making. They are social in character, and they establish social norms, a domain of unfreedom and substitutability within which our “singular” stories are told.<sup>35</sup>

Our accounting of ourselves is imperfect, and even perhaps impossible. We recognize that our own imperfect or unknown self-knowledge may result in a failure to be understood when we try to give an account of ourselves. When we try to give accounts of others, we are even more stymied. For Butler, this conclusion leads to ethics.

Given the sustained failure to know the selves that we are becoming and the selves that others are becoming, we must suspend judgment of self and of others. Because there are pieces of one’s self that have become othered through the process of splitting, the suspension of self-judgment calls into being a destabilized and reflexive self. She is a subject who pauses in the midst of her assertions and petitions for recognition because she acknowledges the limitations of fully knowing herself. If she cannot fully give an account of herself, then giving a full account of another is equally

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.



difficult. Thus, an ethic of recognition “obligates us to suspend judgment in order to apprehend the other.”<sup>36</sup>

In the last chapter, I recounted how domination oppresses subjects through personal and social relationships. Psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin argued that domination and submission is a twisting of the bonds of love that roots in the psyches of both individuals. Likewise, recognition and judgment are relational. The acts presuppose some kind of relationship between the knower and known. While interpsychic phenomena are important, Butler urges us to consider the ethics of rhetoric. Judging is enacted by the mode of address. The words spoken tell us something about the nature of the relationship between selves and the relationship one has with one’s self. Take condemnations as one example. Condemnation, denunciation, and excoriation as forms of address “posit an ontological difference between judge and judged....Condemnation becomes the way in which we establish the other as nonrecognizable or jettison some aspect of ourselves that we lodge in the other, whom we then condemn.”<sup>37</sup> Like domination, condemnation limits self-knowledge by creating greater disparity between the disavowed and the judger. If the judger can see no commonality between herself and another, then her own self-knowledge becomes even more opaque.

Like domination, condemnation enacts violence against another subject. It purges and externalizes one’s own opacity, so that it is not part of one’s own self but instead removed. For example, Bellevue’s projects his vehement racism outward in his inability to

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 46.

understand his desires. He judges and condemns the personification of blackness that desires but that he will not acknowledge in himself. Butler writes, “Judgment can be a way to fail to own one’s limitations and thus provides no felicitous basis for a reciprocal recognition of human beings as opaque to themselves, partially blind, constitutively limited.”<sup>38</sup> As such, recognition is based on the awareness of self-limitation, which provides an ethical basis for an awareness of another’s limitation. Judgment is misrecognition and stems from a failure to know that we are limited in our knowledge of ourselves and others who surround us.

Like other limitations and failures, lack of self-knowledge calls for grief work and lamentation. However, by its very nature, the inability to mourn our lack of self-knowledge is difficult. In order to mourn what we are not due to foreclosure of possibilities—the straight man who will never be gay—requires self-reflexive knowledge and terrible self-insight. As such, we cannot grieve that which we do not wish to acknowledge in ourselves. We cast internal otherness outward in judgment and misrecognition resulting in oppression and domination in our personal and social relations.

However, it is also the case that internalized otherness is not cast-out, but instead goes unrecognized and unacknowledged. Instead of misrecognition, it is non-recognition. Non-recognition, like misrecognition, is an injustice to one’s self and to another. Non-recognition results in an inability to grieve one’s life or another’s life. It is a state of deep opacity in which one no longer stretches out her hands to feel for another,

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

but surrenders to the inky darkness in which no emotions of grief or injustice can reinstate an ethical relationship.

In her 2004 book *Precarious Life*, Butler asks, “What makes for a grievable life?”<sup>39</sup> We may ask her question differently: Why are some lives ungrievable? She indicates that subjects become ungrievable by prohibitive speech acts. She reports that in 2002 a Palestinian citizen of the United States submitted obituaries of two families killed by Israeli troops. The *San Francisco Chronicle* refused to run the obituaries without proof of death. In lieu of obituaries, they stated that memoriams could be submitted to the paper. After revision, the memoriams were rejected as well “with the explanation that the newspaper did not wish to offend anyone.”<sup>40</sup>

Butler argues that the refusal to acknowledge the deaths publicly in speech is the violence of non-recognition enacted on those who were killed. It is not their deaths that are offensive to others, but their lives, which will not be written as ‘lost.’ Butler writes,

Is it that these deaths are not considered to be real deaths, and that these lives not grievable, because they are Palestinian, or because they are victims of war? What is the relation between the violence by which these ungrievable lives were lost and the prohibition on their public grievability? Are the violence and the prohibition permutations of the same violence? Does the prohibition on discourse relate to the dehumanization of the deaths—and their lives?<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), 20. Henceforth *PL*.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

In this case, the “refusal of discourse”<sup>42</sup> dehumanizes the subject. They are made victims twice-over, first in their deaths and again in the public’s inability to be confronted by their deaths. Their lives are erased in a physical and literal sense.

The lack of an ability to identify lives lost as fellow subjects is a particularly egregious form of violence. It is violence by omission. Butler writes, “Violence against those who are already not quite living, that is, living in a state of suspension between life and death, leaves a mark that is no mark. There will be no public act of grieving.”<sup>43</sup> The inability to publicly grieve, to recognize a loss, points to the limits of public discourse and silence as a key concept in understanding structural violence. “It is not just that a death is poorly marked, but that is it unmarkable. Such a death vanishes, not into explicit discourse, but in the ellipses by which public discourse proceeds.”<sup>44</sup>

Public grief work is important for social and political life. A refusal or inability to grieve forecloses moments of vulnerability when one may be truly challenged, rearranged, or transformed.<sup>45</sup> Undergoing grief, mourning the loss of another’s life, and mourning what never was in our lives reveals the ties that “constitute what we are...that compose us.”<sup>46</sup> Grief interrupts the carefully constructed narrative that we give of ourselves-in-relationship. Butler writes, “What grief displays...is the thrall in which our

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 21. “One mourns when once accepts that by the loss one undergoes one will be changed, possibly for ever. Perhaps mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation (perhaps one should say submitting to a transformation) the full result of which one cannot know in advance.”

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 22.

relations with others hold us, in way that we cannot always recount or explain, in ways that often interrupt the self-conscious account of ourselves we might try to provide, in ways that challenge the very notion of ourselves as autonomous and in control.”<sup>47</sup> The I that I was before loss is different from the I that I am now. I recognize that I am different somehow through the loss, through the foreclosure, of the other’s life. I am also made different in the foreclosure of how our lives together might have been, reflecting the relationship with others that constitute us as subjects opaque to ourselves.

It is our ability to mourn and to grieve that elicits the conditions for recognition. For recognition is not only about the present, but also about the future which holds both possibility and foreclosure. Butler writes, “To ask for recognition, or to offer it, is precisely not to ask for recognition for what one already is. It is to solicit a becoming, to instigate a transformation, to petition the future always in relation to the Other.”<sup>48</sup> To become a recognized subject requires that one mourn and grieve in order to allow space for intrapsychic self-in-relation transformation. It is an assertion of loss.

We assert our losses because they reflect the poverty of our relationships. When we mourn the unjust death of a vulnerable person who experiences multiple jeopardies of interlocking oppressions and structural violence, we signal that we are unwilling immediate participants who actively seek transformation. We petition the future (and the others of the future) to recognize subjects who are misrecognized or non-recognized because I am formed, informed, and deformed by my ethical relationships with others.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 44.

The ethics of recognizing other subjects requires that we name the binds in which we find ourselves. In primary relationships with caregivers, deformation to the subject occurs in relationship to physical and psychosocial needs. The infant becomes an I through recognition of self-worth by another. And yet we know that not all infants have the mother or primary caretaker whose face reflects joy and delight upon meeting face to face with the human infant. Instead, they experience emotional paucity or emotional abuse, often alongside additional co-factors of economic vulnerability, political instability, and social misrecognition or non-recognition, as well as oppression and injustice. Butler writes, “This bind of radically inadequate care consists of this, namely, that attachment is crucial to survival and that, when attachment takes place, it does so in relation to persons and institutional conditions that may well be violent, impoverishing, and inadequate.”<sup>49</sup> At the socio-political level, we also find ourselves in binds when we do not know whom to mourn because we do not know of their existence. Butler urges us to identify “the cultural barriers against which we struggle when we try to find out about the losses that we are asked not to mourn.”<sup>50</sup>

Informed by a Butler, a theory of subjectivity requires an account of recognition that presumes loss and failure as a condition of its occurrence. Mourning our losses makes recognition possible. As we petition the future, potential arcs in the relationships of our lives open and close against a horizon that we cannot predict or know fully. Thus, mourning requests an increased consciousness of the relationships that move us in order to inform an ethic which refrains from judgment, on the one hand, and on the other

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 46.

hand, resists the cultivation of cultural blinders that disable responses of recognition. In developing accounts of subjectivity, a Butlerian account of recognition reminds us to consider opacity as potentially operative in the most hopeful of attempts to *care-fully* engage persons who suffer and call for intersubjective and/or social recognition.

### Critiques of Butler's Subject

In the above passages, I presented three areas of Butler's work that speak to subject formation and recognition: gender performance as indicative of the instability of a subject position, passing and the intelligibility of the body, and mourning as an ethic of recognition. She has received criticism, especially from feminists and womanists who interpret gender performance as removal of an agentic self for personal, social, and political change. I explain these critiques and others below.

#### Removal of the Feminist Subject's Agency by Language

Philosopher Martha Nussbaum's 1999 article, "The Professor of Parody," in *The New Republic* is well-known, perhaps because it is considered to be particularly mean-spirited. In it, Nussbaum parallels Butler's dense writing style with the style used by ancient sophist rhetoricians. She argues that Butler's writing obscures the line of argument and "bullies" the reader into accepting the propositions and their conclusions. In addition to writing in a difficult to understand style, Nussbaum argues that Butler's theorizing hurts women by removing any normative turn toward a feminist ethic of

“social justice and human dignity.”<sup>51</sup> What Butler offers is quietism and retreat from the most pressing problems that face women; her stance “collaborates with evil,” Nussbaum argues. In short, her work is morally vacuous.

While Nussbaum’s attack was particularly vitriolic, it captured a sentiment shared by feminists who linked theorizing with social action: how does the claim that ‘woman’ or “lesbian” as a series of citational performances help those who suffer in material ways and who do not yet possess sufficient power to make social and political changes that translate into changes in their everyday life? Does not this claim in fact strip women of their agency to create, if not their hope for, significant social and political strides? Are parody and difficult prose real tools for social change?

Butler engages these critiques in her subsequent writing projects. In her 1999 preface to *Gender Trouble*, Butler informed the reader that her theories were informed by social experience and social concern. “Despite the dislocation of the subject that the text performs, there is a person here: I went to many meetings, bars, and marches, and saw many kinds of genders, understood myself to be at the crossroads of some of them, and encountered sexuality at several of its cultural edges,” she writes.<sup>52</sup> Likewise, after the publication of *Gender Trouble*, she heard from many persons outside of the academy who, though conceding it is a difficult read, “also felt that something was at stake in that

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<sup>51</sup> Martha Nussbaum, “The Professor of Parody,” *The New Republic*. 22 February 1999. Online <http://www.tnr.com/archive/0299/022299/nussbaum022299.html>. Accessed 23 October 2011.

<sup>52</sup> *GT*, xvi.



theoretical work that made the reading worthwhile.”<sup>53</sup> In an interview, Butler explains that reading her theoretical work is difficult because it destabilizes everyday usage of language.<sup>54</sup> In this way, language may become a tool for social action by opening up linguistic possibilities of refutation, leading us to imagine a different world and to take pragmatic political action to call this world into being.<sup>55</sup> However, a fundamental question remains: if language is destabilized to make odd what was once normal, is the remaining destabilized (and complex!) language available to those who are subjectivated at the psychological and material level?

Likewise, Butler is prescient of feminist political anxiety. If the feminist subject cannot be said to exist as such, how can any political praxis which seeks to rectify perceived gendered injustice persist? Butler responds to this anxiety by reiterating that subject construction does not remove agency. “Construction is not opposed to agency; it is the necessary scene of agency, the very terms in which agency is articulated and becomes culturally intelligible.”<sup>56</sup> Gender performances that stretch the limits of intelligibility are possible critical interventions. Rather than globalize the subject through use of imperial strategies, strategies which “feminism ought to criticize,”<sup>57</sup> the political

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<sup>53</sup> Margaret Soenser Breen and others, “There is a Person Here”: An Interview with Judith Butler” *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies* 6, no. 1/2 (2001) : 23.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Robert Alan Brookey and Diane Helene Miller, “Changing Signs: The Political Pragmatism of Poststructuralism,” *Internal Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies* 6, no. 1/2 ( 2001) : 139-153.

<sup>56</sup> *GT*, 201.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

subject who is aware of the construction of gender is an agent who can utilize the tools of gender inscribed through the body to contest the matrix of an idealized gendered woman: heterosexual, anatomically female, and white. These are subversive acts of an agent whose subjectivity is unstable from the first. Through repetitive performances, the subject both does and undoes gender and him/herself at the same time.<sup>58</sup> Performances are variations on the idealized subject and thus can potentially make visible the cultural apparatus that inscribes the rules of a good or bad gender performance and enables subjects to do their performance another way.

#### Theology, the Void, and Gender Injustice

Academics have explored how to put Butler's theory to work in politics. They argue that bodily-linguistic performances and ongoing performance failures ought to be understood as resistance, and by resistance, hope for personal and political change that works by coalition rather than as assumed identity by gender, race, ability, etc. However, this conclusion does not necessarily follow from Butler's writing in *Gender Trouble*, a point that Nussbaum makes in her scathing critique. Nussbaum writes, "There is a void, then, at the heart of Butler's notion of politics. This void can look liberating, because the reader fills it implicitly with a normative theory of human equality or dignity. But let there be no mistake: for Butler, as for Foucault, subversion is subversion, and it can in principle go in any direction."

Nussbaum, like many critics of deconstruction, is anxious about the void and its results for the subject. Three questions arise that I think are worth exploring with

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 195.

theological thinkers who draw on Butler. First, is this void an empty space for Butler that can be filled within anything? Second, is there some kind of ethical vision that this space holds open? Third, what does the void of gender/sex and additional analytic categories of identity mean for subjects who experience injustice? To the first and second, Butler's later writing articulates an ethos that critiques exclusion.<sup>59</sup> Empty space exists, but it exists for the future possibilities that we cannot yet imagine but which we petition by attending to the present's dimensions of othering. The void is not empty, but full of contingency and possibility, which can never rule out the possibility of failure or exclusion.

British theological ethicist Susan F. Parsons elaborates an eschatological ethos of the void in her article, "The Boundaries of Desire: A Consideration of Judith Butler and Carter Heyward" in the journal *Feminist Theology*. She writes that Butler's gender theorizing is "a move beyond ethics, of after ethics, into what is a spirituality of living towards an open horizon."<sup>60</sup> She explains that if we accept the proposition that even the best attempts at ethical reasoning are shaped by and reinforce the hegemonic imagination and law which excludes, there is a need to think through matters differently. Different thinking leads to different living—temporal living, transcendent living, living with Nothing according to Parsons. At the edges of transcendent living is the acceptance of contingency, "an awareness that the orders in which we find ourselves might not be as

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<sup>59</sup> Butler writes in *Bodies That Matter*, "The task is to refigure this necessary 'outside' as a future horizon, one in which the violence of exclusion is perpetually in the process of being overcome" (53).

<sup>60</sup> Susan F. Parsons, "The Boundaries of Desire: A Consideration of Judith Butler and Carter Heyward," *Feminist Theology* 8 (January 2000) : 103.

they are.”<sup>61</sup> Parson concludes that transcendent living touches relationships with friends where we hold open space for becoming, and living in such a way is closely tied to the “deep wisdom of Christian prayer.”<sup>62</sup>

The third question I articulated about the dissolution of an ontological feminist subject asks us to assess its validity in the face of oppression and injustice. Womanist theologian Karen Baker-Fletcher offers critique: “While White feminists are busy deconstructing self, Black women are still claiming the selves that a racist, sexist, classist society relentlessly essays to render invisible.”<sup>63</sup> However, pastoral theologian Pamela Cooper-White offers a positive take on the dissolution of the essential woman. She writes, “[I]t is precisely because these categories are finally constructs, and not immutable facts of nature, that gaps and inconsistencies within them may provide spaces from which both women and racialized, subaltern, and queered subjects can speak.”<sup>64</sup> The voices from the gaps cast doubt on the working of the idealized norm making machine. As such, “subjugated voices can erode and ‘jam the machinery’ of dominance much the way fluids can erode seemingly solid rock.”<sup>65</sup> The implication of a stance like Cooper-White’s requires that we hold loosely universal moral imperatives and instead contextualize them through the intersections of the life of the subject, intersections which

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Karen Baker-Fletcher, “The Erotic in Contemporary Black Women’s Writings,” *Loving the Body: Black Religious Studies and the Erotic*, eds. Anthony B. Pinn and Dwight N. Hopkins (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 199.

<sup>64</sup> Pamela Cooper-White, “Complicated Woman,” *Braided Selves* (Eugene: Cascade, 2011), 149.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

are constituted in and through their performance and petitioning of the yet-unknown. This stands in contrast to ethical and pastoral projects that begin in the assumptions of moral imperatives for sexual or gendered conduct.<sup>66</sup>

### Fundamentally Hostile Relationships

For philosopher Kelly Oliver, Butler's theory of subjectivity is problematic because it assumes a hostility between persons as the condition for recognition. Hostility begets an alienation in which transformation of power structures is made impossible.<sup>67</sup> Oliver writes, "By insisting that the structure of subjectivity is one of subjection and subordination, Butler builds oppression and abuse into the foundation of subjectivity."<sup>68</sup> Oliver's critique hinges upon a different reading of primary attachments in the family of origin.

Per Oliver, in *The Psychic Life of Power*, Butler normalizes the trauma caused by subordination to a child's primary attachments. Oliver writes, "Trauma is the essential feature of these formative familial relations that set up the possibility of subjectivity. It is the trauma of original subordination that is repeated in all performances of

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<sup>66</sup> Queer theory is perceived from some theological and institutional church circles as promoting a permissive, anything goes sexuality based completely on acts of pleasure of the individual. I believe that they misinterpret queer theory more generally as a theory without ethics rather than pointing to the ways that exclusion and binary codes function. For example, see Christian sexual ethicist Kathy Rudy, *Sex and the Church* (Boston: Beacon, 1997), 123-125.

<sup>67</sup> Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis, 2001), 76.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

subjectivity.”<sup>69</sup> The problem for Oliver is that subordination and dependency are not synonymous; dependency need not result in subordination. Oliver explains,

Why does dependency have to be figured as violent, alienating, subjugating, and dominating? Only if we start with the ideal of the self-possessed autonomous subject is dependence threatening. If, however, we give up that ideal and operate in the world with a truly interrelational conception of subjectivity, a subjectivity without subjects, then dependence is seen as the force of life, as the very possibility of change, rather than as the paradoxical life bought at the expense of violence and death (Oliver 1998). Subjectivity need not be the Faustian bargain struck by Butler.<sup>70</sup>

It does not follow that the need for primary caretakers results in subordination, nor that subordination by primary caretakers is necessary for subjectivity. Instead, Oliver asks us to envision subject formation made possible by witnessing, a process which can be destroyed or damaged through subordination and trauma.<sup>71</sup> However, as Butler has noted in recent work, the bind of radically inadequate care must be considered in light of subject formation.

### Resilient Performances, Hopeful Participation, and Confrontation

Judith Butler assures us that there is a person behind her theorizing. The question for pastoral theologians is whether this notion of the person is adequate. Butler’s critics have implied that it is not. Nussbaum reminds us that descriptions of persons ought to enable their capacity to live better, free from poverty and violence. Oliver reminds us

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 65. See Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997), 7-9.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 7.

that childhood trauma ought not be the cause for our becoming subjects. However, Parsons sees the potential for transcendent living in Butler's work. Cooper-White describes subaltern, minority, and oppressed subjects of a Butlerian stripe whose voices confront dominators.

I believe that Butler's account of how one becomes a subject does not adequately explore intentionality. Butler's theory of the subjectivity forgets that a subject's becoming also hinges on the subject's interpretation of what she is doing in performance, as well as what she cannot control. Subjectivity does not hinge solely on an endless recitation of failed performances that seek conferral of external recognition alone; performances can be acts of hope and resilience, even when our performance is initially understood to be one in which identity recognition is sought and conferred. Therefore, performances which destabilize discourse—which are always happening, both intentionally and unintentionally—should also be read through the lens of resilient performances and hopeful participations.

In the essay "Unconforming Becomings: The Significance of Whitehead's Novelty and Butler's Subversion for the Repetitions of Lesbian Identity and the Expansion of the Future," Christina K. Hutchins problematizes her participation in a denominational conference meeting of the United Church of Christ.<sup>72</sup> She recounts being anxious and troubled by the structure of the meeting, which was called to address multiculturalism and identity. The planners of the meeting had asked her to participate as 'the lesbian representative'. She argues that though their intentions came from a place of

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<sup>72</sup> Christina K. Hutchins, "Unconforming Becomings: The Significance of Whitehead's Novelty and Butler's Subversion for the Repetitions of Lesbian Identity and the Expansion of the Future," *Bodily Citations*, eds. Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville (New York: Columbia University Press), 2006, 122-123.

engaging diversity, they othered gay men and lesbians by asking them to speak as if their primary identity was limited to their sexuality. She explains,

While the planners of the multicultural discussions had some sensitivity to issues of race, sexual orientation, and other “isms,” the fact was that there were a designated “gay” and “lesbian” but no “heterosexual” representative. All other participants of various ethnic and social categories were presumed to be heterosexual, an unexamined operation of heteronormativity in which gay men and lesbians were defined as “Other.”<sup>73</sup>

Hutchins thoughtfully and graciously turns a potential interpersonal and pastoral conflict into a learning opportunity. When it was her turn to speak, she introduced herself and stated that she “was asked to participate as a lesbian.”<sup>74</sup> She did not say, ‘I am a lesbian.’ She offered the persons gathered two gifts that lesbians bring to the church. The first is an attention to the embodied nature of faith. The second is a realization that identities are cultural constructs and fluid in their nature, with the outcome that “the categories themselves and act of categorization, while often helpful, are also restrictive.”<sup>75</sup> Her decision to verbalize herself as a participant and not an identity reflects a hope-filled consciousness of doing an identity over being identity. As well, her second gift points to the resilience of subjects in spite of categories that limit.

Doing an identity is a hopeful participation.<sup>76</sup> Participation in an identity acknowledges the fluidity and ad hoc nature of an identity without taking away from the fact that identities can wound us as well as bolster us. Participation is an action which draws us toward hope. In participation we come to see that claims of “I am...” do not

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> McClure, 203-213.



define the whole of who we are, that identities need not be fixed, that growth and transformation are possibilities. Further, participation has the ability to give rise to hope, just as hope gives rise to participation. Pastoral theologian Susan Dunlap identifies five qualities of hope. She writes that it is an *action*, that it is *specific*, that it “*means patience*,” that it is *rebellious*, and that it is *communal*.<sup>77</sup> Participation in an identity—which is given and chosen, done and undone, a cause and rising of subjectivity—ought not be separated from hope, even in the face of systems and persons which cause our subjection.

Our hope-filled participation is performed resilience. In the face of setbacks, domination, oppression, and injustice, we perform resilience in the everyday practices of our lives. We pursue the big picture items of our lives—health, healing, good and paying work, spirituality, loving families of origin and choice—but we also mourn and lament the people that we cannot be in a particular time and place because of structures that would dominate us. Yet, we resist and become more resilient. Like exposure to a disease through vaccination, exposure to ideologies whose normal operations cause harm builds up our immunity. Immunity does not mean that the infection cannot invade our bodies and our lives; it can and does. Immunity means that our bodies and our lives are learning how to be unsuitable hosts to diseases that cause personal, social, political, or pastoral subordination and oppression.

Performances of resilience, like some gender performances, are intended to elicit discomfort. In face of everyday violence which forms, deforms, and informs subjectivity, hope-filled participation must make room for confrontation of systems and persons who

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<sup>77</sup> Susan Dunlap, *Counseling Depressed Women* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 122-125.

would avert their gaze of recognition.<sup>78</sup> Confrontation is a key piece of a performance of resilience. When a subject confronts, she gazes at herself as well as another subject. Like Butler's mourning, confrontation employs self-reflexivity. However, it can be carried out in various emotional keys, often with layers of dissonant chords: longing and desire, love for self and other, and anger and frustration.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, psychoanalyst and postcolonial theorist Frantz Fanon shows us the power of confrontation as a performance of resilience. He begins by describing the binds of recognition when he petitions the very same dominator who has bound him by his race and gender to recognize him as a black man.

Locked in this suffocating reification, I appealed to the Other so that his liberating gaze, gliding over my body suddenly smoothed of rough edges, would give me back the lightness of being I thought I had lost, and taking me out of the world put me back in the world. But just as I get to the other slope I stumble, and the Other fixes me with his gaze, his gestures and attitude, the same way you fix a preparation with a dye.<sup>79</sup>

Fanon asks the Other to recognize him as a black man in order to rehumanize him, and when that happens, the Other fixes him in his subject position, and makes it impossible for him to be anything except black. He is dehumanized again. He is not even a man because he is black.

Yet, Fanon implies that he, like O, participates in his objectification through non-resistance. He writes, "Disoriented, incapable of confronting the Other, the white man,

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<sup>78</sup> Scheper-Hughes, 272. Scheper-Hughes describes the averted gaze as "the turning away of the state and its agents in their failure to see, to acknowledge what should be right before their eyes." The averted gaze is juxtaposed with Michel Foucault's hostile gaze of the state (1975, 1980) which surveys, punishes, and disciplines the sick and deviant population.

<sup>79</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 89.

who had no scruples about imprisoning me, I transported myself on that particular day far, very far, from my self, and gave myself up as an object.”<sup>80</sup> Rather than an active participation in his own subjection, the systems of coloniality, race, and gender enlist his desire for recognition. “There were some who wanted to equate me with my ancestors, enslaved and lynched: I decided I would accept this.”<sup>81</sup> Like O, his becoming a man in the eyes of Others, requires his submission. Yet, he cannot become a man in their eyes because he gives the appearance of submission, an act that cannot constitute his subjectivity as male. This is an unconscionable bind.

Unlike O, Fanon has an epiphany. Despite his submission, “the white world, the only decent one, was preventing me from participating.”<sup>82</sup> He recognizes the bind of recognition and decides “to make [him]self known” through confrontation.<sup>83</sup> He confronts the systems and those would dehumanize him through non-recognition and misrecognition. He gives us a short dialogue to demonstrate: “Look how handsome that Negro is,” he writes. “The handsome Negro says, ‘Fuck you,’ madame.”<sup>84</sup> He aggressively asserts himself and restores some sense of his own agency. He desires recognition, but goes about it by exposing his objectification vis a vis the mechanism of

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 94.

the white gaze. This is the lie that Fanon actively deconstructs in his performance—that “what is called the black soul is a construction by white folk.”<sup>85</sup>

Pastoral theologians and ministers ought not shy away from confrontations or aggressive assertions, whether we are the ones making them or the ones hearing them. As feminist pastoral theologian Kathleen Greider notes, aggression is neither inherently negative or positive, but is part of “human createdness,” important to psychospiritual health, and indispensable to justice-making.<sup>86</sup> Our ability to be effective change-agents and caregivers requires our ability to listen for testimonies of resilience and to then support persons in their resistance to harmful personal and social relationships and the effects of structural violence.

As pastoral theologians, we know that this is work for the long-haul. Further, we know that it requires communal spaces to facilitate resilience and hope. In the essay “Resistance Is Not Futile” Church of God in Christ minister and psychotherapist Cedric C. Johnson argues for a heterotopic praxis to enable “the identification and creation of communal spaces of alternate ordering outside of social control.”<sup>87</sup> A heterotopic space is central to caring for those who are dispossessed, subaltern, or oppressed. While church

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<sup>85</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, foreword to *Black Skin, White Masks*, by Frantz Fanon (New York: Grove Press, 2008), xviii.

<sup>86</sup> Kathleen J. Greider, “‘Too Militant’? Aggression, Gender, and the Construction of Justice,” *Through the Eyes of Women*, ed. Jeanne Stevenson Moessner (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 124.

<sup>87</sup> Cedric C. Johnson, “Resistance is Not Futile: Finding Therapeutic Space between Colonialism and Globalization,” *Healing Wisdom: Depth Psychology and the Pastoral Ministry*, eds. Kathleen J. Greider, Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, and Felicity Brock Kelcourse (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 167.

communities can be natural places for this work,<sup>88</sup> I urge us to resist the making of new heterotopic spaces that care, welcome, or serve marginalized subjects. The making of new programs and new spaces by systems of power, including pastoral power, does not guarantee their use as a heterotopic space of cultural resistance nor do they always provide the creative and playful resources that build up resilient selves. In pastoral theology, what is first needed are modes to enable recognition between subjects. In my next, and last, chapter I outline these modalities and qualities of encounter.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I presented Judith Butler's theory of subjectivity, drawing on key concepts of identity performance, their articulation through each other, interpersonal and social recognition, and mourning. Likewise, I presented strong critiques of her theories which argued that she normalizes familial and social oppression as necessary conditions for agency. I critiqued Butler for not accounting for intentionality and reframed claims for recognition as resilient performances and hopeful participations. In my final chapter I summarize conclusion and reflect on a feminist pastoral theology and praxis of recognition.

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<sup>88</sup> There are two considerations. First, congregations can be heterotopic spaces, especially those that develop by, with, and for an oppressed community such as the black church. Yet, even within these communities, experiences of oppression vis a vis sexuality are taboo (Anderson, 2004; Douglas, 2004). What are the spaces where queer black folk gather for resistance and resilience? Second, congregations in the United States have taken proactive steps to become welcoming communities for queer folk (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex). Faith-based organization Reconciling Ministries Network works with congregations in the process of becoming a community that does sex/gender justice through inclusion and participation. The language of welcome and hospitality is a first step, but continues to reify the otherness of sexual minorities.

## CHAPTER V

### RECOGNIZING OTHER SUBJECTS: TO ENCOUNTER EACH OTHER

In the preceding chapters I described theories of recognition to understand problems in effecting just care. I showed the possibilities and limitations in interpersonal and social-political recognition and how that affects who a person becomes. I wove my argument by describing how recognition proceeds and how it mutates into destructive and harmful conditions for the subject. I described who and what is recognized in light of identity formations.

Those who suffer from structural violence, political repression, domination, and interpersonal and familial injustice ought to be afforded recognition. Yet, this is precisely the problem. Despite the desire to recognize and affirm persons, we all are subject to blindness. Appeals to identity are one way to ensure recognition. The power of indigenous people, LGBTQ activists, racial justice activists, and feminists bears testimony to the fact that economic misdistribution is not the sole cause of injustice and oppression, but in fact is deeply tied to the perception of one's identity by a dominant majority and the ability of persons to become self-determining, flourishing selves.

We cannot rid ourselves of identity. It would be folly for those who suffer injustice in relationship to their chosen and given identities. It would be hubris on the part of those whose chosen and given identities uphold destructive ideologies. The failures of recognition urge us to identify ways to recognize other subjects in ways that are not domination, submission, or repression. In this chapter I propose practices of

encounter after drawing conclusions from the previous chapters. While aimed at encountering subjects that are not ourselves, practices of encounter nonetheless are transformative to the self and enable self-reflection on the ghosts of our own subjection with hope for our personal transformation into agents of change.

### Project Summary and Conclusions on Recognition and Subjectivity

In this dissertation I argued that attending to theories of recognition provides insight into subject formation, claims for justice, and care interventions for feminist pastoral theology. In this section, I review my major arguments and draw preliminary conclusions for a feminist pastoral theology that reflects on recognition in its construction of the subject. I conclude that a feminist pastoral theology of recognition examines multiple levels and modalities of suffering which inform subjectivity and, further, that this theology must inform a praxis of just care.

#### Overview

In Chapter One I reflected on problems I encountered while researching decision-making in ritualized pastoral care practices. I observed that my chaplain informants offered little analysis about how their perception of identity shaped the kind of care they gave nor about how their care was received given an (or multiple) identities, especially for women who experienced multiple intersecting jeopardies. I also wondered about the limits of knowledge when identity is the primary category of analysis. I found that the literature of feminist pastoral theology, care, and counseling echoed the feminist

movement's examination of gender from a single point of identity (e.g. woman/patriarchy) in second wave feminism to multiple points of identity (e.g. woman of color/racist and sexist society) in third wave feminism. I identified challenges to proliferation of identity, including the question of recognition. Recognition is a challenge at both an interpersonal and social level. Yet, recognition (and its counterpart, assertion) is also a human need that when gone awry contributes to oppression at every ecological level of the psychosocial world. I argued that feminist pastoral theology ought to be in dialogue with theories of recognition because it constructs theologies of care and subjectivity for those who suffer. Lastly, I briefly outlined a revised critical correlational and feminist method.

In Chapter Two I argued that the concern about the subject is at the heart of feminist pastoral theology. Using the themes of paradigms, pastoral functions, and human experience, I gave an overview of key texts in the discipline of pastoral theology, care, and counseling to narrate the important role that the person plays to the subject matter of the discipline. Next, I examined five examples of contemporary feminist pastoral theologies for their understanding of the subject: Joretta L. Marshall on sexuality and lesbian identities; Carroll A. Watkins Ali on racial injustice and poverty; Barbara J. McClure on a social self; Elaine Graham on cultural discourses that create Others; and Pamela Cooper-White on theological anthropology and multiplicity. I situated my work within the scope of feminist pastoral theology.

In Chapter Three, I articulated Jessica Benjamin's theory of subjectivity through recognition and assertion. I showed how submission becomes habituated into one's psyche through interpersonal relationships and is perceptible in social structures, like



patriarchy. Benjamin argued that the tension between assertion and recognition must be regained in order to end the cycle of domination and submission. I argued that her theory does not adequately take the effects of structural violence into account, citing the cultivation of a subject's passivity and indifference in the face of ongoing suffering and the effects of political repression that dismantle consent through bodily and psychic violence. I suggested that theological lamentation is an assertion of resistance to domination and oppression. For those who are unable to lament, solidarity in lament is needed.

In Chapter Four, I presented Judith Butler's theory of subjectivity through recognition using identity performance, bodily intelligibility, and mourning. I offered critical and constructive responses to Butler's theories, including worries about the dissolution of gender, obscure language, and normative claims for agency through subordination. I expanded Butler's arguments by advocating for attention to intentionality. While our gender and other identities do us, as Butler suggests, subjects are also agents who participate with hope in their chosen and given identities and perform resiliently through confrontation.

In the previous four chapters I advanced my overarching thesis that feminist pastoral theologians and theorists of recognition have much to converse about in terms of subjectivity, domination, suffering, and violence. Following a feminist revised critical correlational method, I identified practical problems in caring for women and elaborated on them conceptually. I reviewed pertinent literature and situated my research, informed by colleagues in feminist pastoral theology. I argued that the theories of recognition developed by Jessica Benjamin and Judith Butler provided insight on subject formation

through interpersonal and socio-political forces. I dialogued with additional theorists and concepts in psychology, theology, and philosophy to expand theories of recognition.

### A Feminist Pastoral Theology of Recognition

As I argue in this dissertation, feminist pastoral theology contains implicit and explicit reflections on the subject, how harms affect human and social development and their impact on subject formation, and what kinds of interventions are possible to enable a subject's flourishing. Feminist pastoral theology has been particularly attentive to the role of difference and identity in thinking through subjectivity and care. In this next section I add my voice to feminist pastoral theological reflections, drawing conclusions from the material I presented in the previous chapters. Below, I describe a feminist pastoral theology of recognition in five parts.

First, a feminist pastoral theology of recognition attends to the making of subjects at the porous and historical peripheries of the intrapsychic, interpersonal, and social-political. It asks about the subject, her recognition, and conditions that thwart flourishing. Major theorists Jessica Benjamin and Judith Butler showed us that the interplay between intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social relations are dynamically co-constructive of subjectivity. Further, each element is both historically situated, materially embodied, and influential in creating the internal and external psychosocial environment of subjects. Persons who are denigrated at a social level absorb that denigration intrapsychically and may engage in interpersonal relationships where that denigration is played out again, often between persons of opposite gender. These are conditions by which oppression and subjugation are made possible. With other feminist pastoral

theologians who have contributed to linking the interpersonal and social realms, a feminist pastoral theology of recognition attends to the spiraling levels of complexity while making connections between the individual and larger socio-political issues of injustice.

Second, a feminist pastoral theology of recognition is critically aware of how human needs and capabilities are enlisted to oppress and subjugate persons. At the same time, a pastoral theology of recognition is aware that even when needs and capabilities go unmet and unrealized, they are still at-play and can be used by the one who seeks recognition. With Jessica Benjamin we learned that persons are capable of recognition and assertion. Because the circuits of recognition and assertion are both capabilities and needs, the desire for recognition can morph from circuits to shackles. Reading *The Story of O* with Jessica Benjamin, we saw that, in some cases, withheld recognition creates a psychic need which is filled by submission to an external source of authority. In reading Nella Larsen's *Passing* with Judith Butler we saw that Clare's need for recognition is fulfilled through her misrecognition and subsequent passing as a white woman. Rather than ask for an external authority to confer recognition and interpret her performance as 'correct' or 'incorrect,' Clare games the system that would expose her body as black, and thus an incorrect performance, and passes as white. A pastoral theology of recognition looks toward all these dimensions in order to articulate how a subject is constituted by needs and capabilities, but also possesses the ability to subvert systems.

Third, a feminist pastoral theology of recognition identifies critical interventions, practices, and programs that are attentive to the affective dimensions of life as they are expressed in relationships, verbally, and through the body. We are called to rewire the

shackles of domination and submission so that they become circuits of recognition and assertion. Rewiring requires that both genders participate in the work of recognition and assertion by balancing the tension. For pastoral theologians, this work occurs at interpersonal and social levels. As pastoral theologians have noted, the practices of one-on-one pastoral care and pastoral counseling provide opportunities to recognize persons who seek confirmation of their assertion of selfhood. At the social level, when communities of care and persons of faith stand in solidarity with those who are dominated, they assert the need for recognition, especially when structural violence and political repression would have us mistake silence or indifference for consent. In these tasks, the ‘negative’ affective dimensions of life, such as lamentation and aggressive assertion, are indicators of injustice and ought to be cultivated by caregivers who seek to end oppression and domination.

At the same time, lament and aggression are not only verbal activities. Like submission and oppression, they are also visible on the body of the subject. Grinding poverty and structural violence leave their traces on stooped bodies, ill bodies, and emotionless bodies that are gendered and raced, often feminized, colonized, or colored. Bodies speak when words fail. Thus, a feminist pastoral theology of subjectivity is attentive to the physical, material body as a means of communicating the need and capacity for recognition and assertion when emotions caused by experiences of injustice and expressed verbally are disabled.

Fourth, a feminist pastoral theology of recognition is attentive to the particularities of differences of gender, sexuality, ability, and race/ethnicity, but not constrained by the categories of identity. Some histories of abuse and oppression must be

told through the lens of identity, for example the history of unnecessary hysterectomies on women of color. Other times, collective (and coalitional) action in support of identities (e.g. gay rights), which we may or may not individually share, begets necessary social change. And at wholly other times, our identities do us in ways beyond our control. With Judith Butler we learned that we cannot trust that being a certain gender affords us recognition. One's gender is made and remade through a series of repeated norms—norms which call us to account for ourselves and which give us a mandate to do gender correctly. Those who do not do their gender correctly, or any of the other identities we inhabit, may be condemned for their failure. A feminist pastoral theology of recognition is keenly aware that identity cannot be forgotten in analysis, but also navigates with intention and skill through uses of identity that would fix or make stable a subject's position.

Fifth, a feminist pastoral theology of recognition reflects on and enables just caring practices. Rethinking gender as an unstable category ought to give us pause as pastoral theologians. While it opens wide a veranda of possibility, the instability of gender also asks us to develop an ethic of just care to attend to subjects who have been elided by misrecognition, unintelligibility, or non-recognition. While feminist pastoral theologians cannot ensure that every subject or social group is recognized, as this is an impossible task, we can practice and teach a certain self-reflexivity that is based on participation in systems which are imperfect and unjust but which we change through assertion of resilient agency in the face of harmful structures, as we come to understand what these things are.

Additionally, as pastoral theologians, we must veer away from well-mapped out routes in order to encounter subjects who are not us. A self-reflexive ethic hopes that we learn about their own, and our own, becoming. When major newspapers and other media sources of information refuse to speak about some kinds of lives, like the murdered Palestinian family, we seek out sources who will speak to us about the frailty and the resiliency of subjects caught in the webs of interpersonal, religious, social, and political relationships so that we may know more about the human condition and think toward infrastructural and superstructural change. When we seek out sources unlike ourselves we enable our capability to mourn the things that we are not and will never be; we enact an ethic that asks us to confront the sources of our self-making. As theologians we approach this kind of endeavor with a spirit of humility in order to resist participation in a reification process that vilifies, condemns, or others subjects. Like Anton Boisen's decision to have theology students serve persons with mental illness, a feminist pastoral theology of recognition seeks exposure to othered subjects.

Still, this ethic acknowledges the limitations and the incommensurability of knowing. This too—the frustration of not being able to connect, the frustration of not being understood, the frustration of never fully knowing or understanding a person—spurs moments of self-reflexivity. Thus, it remains a vital part of a feminist pastoral theology of recognition.

Additionally, Butler, with Crenshaw, urged us to think about identity without reducing identity to a series of markers which must be attended to individually. In Butler individual identities map social power, and are constituted through each other and through the repudiation of the external and/or internal other. Therefore, providing just

care requires analysis of that which is repudiated in a construct of identity. So, for example, the ‘most’ ‘straight’ ‘man’ can only be straight by his vehement denial of a feminized homosexuality. He must close that door—and foreclose any future relationships that seem to take on ‘homosexual’ qualities—in order to be straight. His denial of a possible homosexual future makes the present irrevocably straight. His disavowal and repudiation of a potential self-identity is thus projected outward. He must disdain, or even hate, that which he fears could be part of himself. Theologies of care and the person must examine these components of subjectivity. Pastoral theologians, in particular, are called to show the linkages between the disavowed and feared other and the subject’s formation through harmful religious ideology. Moreover, pastoral theologians play a central role in creating and disseminating new theological visions in response to harmful ideologies.

Further, a feminist pastoral theology of recognition, while serious, should encourage imagination and play in order to resist a limiting or fixed identity discourse.<sup>1</sup>

For persons who are already conscious of their own interpersonal or socio-political

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<sup>1</sup> Sherry B. Ortner, *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996). I use the terms ‘serious’ and ‘playful’ following anthropologist Sherry Ortner’s theory of practice as “serious game.” She writes, “I want to propose a model of practice that embodies agency but does not begin with, or pivot upon, the agent, actor, or individual....The idea of the ‘game’ is meant to capture simultaneously the following dimensions: that social life is culturally organized and constructed, in terms of defining categories of actors, rules, and goals of the games, and so forth; that social life is precisely social, consisting of webs of relationship and interaction between multiple, shiftingly interrelated subject positions, none of which can be extracted as autonomous ‘agents’; and yet at the same time there is ‘agency,’ that is, actors play with skill, intention, wit, knowledge, intelligence. The idea that the game is ‘serious’ meant to add into the equation the idea that power and inequality pervade the games of life in multiple ways, and that, while there may be playfulness and pleasure in the process, the stakes of these games are often very high. It follows in turn that the games of life must be played with intensity and sometimes deadly earnestness” (12).

oppression and subjugation through ethnicity/race, gender/sex, or capitalist forces, playful but serious “tactics” of resistance give rise to alternative, sometimes intentional, visions of living as a subject of interpersonal and social forces and as an agent within those very constraints.<sup>2</sup>

### Social Geography Themes for Feminist Pastoral Theology

Feminist pastoral theologians are well-posed to continue to make significant contributions to theories of recognition and subject formation. Our work of caring for subjects and communities organized by identity and affiliation ensures that our theological constructions of subjectivity are never too far away from the lived experiences of persons. Our commitment to care for marginalized and oppressed persons ensures that we continue to seek out those who visibly suffer at all psychosocial levels.

However, as I noted, the problem of recognition is precisely that there are subjects who are misrecognized or non-recognized. Recognizing other (and othered) subjects of care requires psyche driven acts of assertion that manifest in voiced or embodied claims for care and justice. When subjects are habituated into their own submission or oppression, their voiced or embodied claims of assertion are misinterpreted for consent or indifference. This is misrecognition and requires thoughtful mechanisms to correctly hear and interpret claims for interpersonal and social recognition.

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<sup>2</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California, 1984), 34. Certeau invokes “strategies” and “tactics” as one example that holds in tension cultural symbolic systems and the actions of participants in these systems (xi).



In addition to subjects who are misrecognized, there are subjects who are not recognized at all, especially at the social-political level. In interpersonal relationships with persons unlike themselves, these subjects may also experience non-recognition of the specific conditions of difference that affect their experience of suffering. Non-recognition of subjects and groups of difference at the social-political level indicates the state of political-moral discourse within a given society. That is, social recognition is conferred by a public that supports organized social groups who articulate and assert their claims of inequity. While the task of building a social movement is crucial for large scale conscientization, it does not ensure recognition of persons and groups who suffer injustices that have not reached the level of mass perception. Social theorist Axel Honneth reflects on this problem, writing,

Only experiences of suffering that have crossed the threshold of mass media attention are confirmed as morally relevant, and we are unable to advocatorially thematize and make claims about socially unjust states of affairs that have so far been deprived of public attention...It is all too easy to abstract from social suffering and injustice that, owing to the filtering effects of the bourgeois public sphere, has not yet reached the level of political thematization and organization.<sup>3</sup>

Non-recognition means that a subject's claims for care and justice have not yet been heard by those with authority to recognize; it does not follow the subject is failing to assert herself.

Reaching a level of political thematization and organization requires interventions that demonstrate how psychosocial harms of misrecognition and non-recognition are not only perpetuated through structural violence, political repression, and ideological machinations, but concretely through social practices located in space. This is the field of social geography which links social phenomena and spatiality by bringing social theory

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<sup>3</sup> Honneth, 115.

into dialogue with physical sites, cartography, and geography. Social geography is an unusual dialogue partner for pastoral theology, but one that provides a critical reflection in thinking about recognition and subjectivity as *located* processes, not only intersubjective or social processes. Additionally, I believe that the conversation between social geography and pastoral theology can be mutually beneficial when we consider the situatedness of religious practice. Would the cult of Bhairav have such influence on another group of low-caste people in a different region? In this section, I argue that in order to adequately cultivate the theo-social practices of lament, resiliency, and confrontation that enable a pastoral theology of recognition, as well as the practice of encounter that I develop in what follows, we must understand them as actions in situated spaces that invoke an imperfect openness toward the other.

Social geography is closely linked to the major sub-discipline of human geography in the discipline of geography. While human geography maps people, communities, and cultures in relationship to human activities (health, politics, population, economy, development), social geography appropriates qualitative research methodologies to site and critique structural inequalities. For example, well-known social geographer Manuel Castells uses a Marxist framework to show that “cities, as we see and experience them, inscribe in concrete the history of contested power, successes, failures, and compromises within capitalism.”<sup>4</sup> Radical cartographers perform social geographies by physically mapping political, social, and personal realities that, echoing Butler, we are asked not to see, like subjects who are misrecognized or not recognized at

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<sup>4</sup> Ida Susser, ed, *The Castells Reader on Cities and Social Theory* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 2002), 3.

all.<sup>5</sup> Two themes of social geography are valuable tools for analysis to feminist pastoral theology as we grapple with the complex realities of personal and social suffering and their effects on a subject's being and becoming. First, social geography expands care of the living human web to encompass ill- or mis-charted locations of the marginalized and oppressed subjects who we are asked not to see. Second, social geography reads the living texts of persons and bodies on the street and in the neighborhood to legitimate and illuminate local knowledge, including lived knowledge on the complexity of subjectivity.

Social geography navigates the relationship between social space and physical space. As a corollary, intrapsychic and interpsychic space may also be charted by accounting for the relationship between subject formation as an iterative socially constructive and localized process, though, as we explored above, subject formation is not reducible to a predetermined result that would constrict agency. Instead the space of subject formation is the place where agency is made possible and exercised in innovative and unpredictable ways. As I have argued, if one aspect of intersubjective recognition gone awry masks the assertions of persons and populations, and if pastoral caregivers are to stand in solidarity with lamentation or confrontation to structural violence which influences personal capacities for self-determination instead of submission, then tools are needed to improve visibility of persons in social-spatial settings. Said another way, subject formation through recognition is also, in part, spatially determined; as such spatial interventions are critical loci for practices of pastoral care that attend to those who have yet to press claims for recognition in socially acceptable ways as well as for those whose intersectionality results in unmitigated misrecognition or non-recognition.

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<sup>5</sup> Lize Mogel and Alexis Bhagat, eds. *An Atlas of Radical Cartography* (Los Angeles: Journal of Aesthetics and Protest Press, 2008).

Spatiality as a lens to view intrapsychic, intersubjective, and social suffering reinforces and expands a central concept in feminist pastoral theology: that the living human web is also a physically situated web. In the multi-authored text *Weight of the World*, sociologist Pierre Bourdieu elaborates the relationship between the personal, social, and spatial. He writes, “Because social space is inscribed at once in spatial structures and in the mental structures that are partly produced by the incorporation of these structures, space is one of the sites where power is asserted and exercised, and no doubt, in its subtlest form, as symbolic violence that goes unperceived as violence.”<sup>6</sup> The effects of spatial neglect mark a region, and the people who live in it, as *verboten*: tough neighborhoods, dangerous neighborhoods, spaces filled with others who are expelled from social-political discourse as full subjects and denied parity of participation. Accounting for subjectivities in feminist pastoral theology will require attention to personal and social identity as well as how these categories (both positive and negative) are maintained by seemingly impermeable boundaries.

Additionally, spatialization contributes to the numbing effects of structural violence that suffocate assertion and deaden imaginative possibilities through self-reflexivity. The example that I cited in chapter 3 of the female favela resident who scoffed at Scheper-Hughes’ tears is one example. As Scheper-Hughes narrates in her lengthy ethnography, the production of indifference to child death is not just located in the favela, but produced by the space of the favela. She writes that “the ‘600,000 square miles of suffering’ ...that constitute the pockmarked face of the Brazilian Northeast” are

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<sup>6</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, “Site Effects,” *Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, trans. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, Susan Emanuel, Joe Johnson, and Shoggy T. Waryn (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999), 126.

plagued by diseases once thought to be eliminated and which claim the lives of children.<sup>7</sup> She argues, however, that the contraction of diseases, like typhoid, dengue, malaria, polio, and tuberculosis, are the diseases of “disorderly development” or poverty, not the result of a tropical climate mixed with human ecology. Long-term suffering which impairs circuits of assertion and recognition is produced through abandoned and mal-developed spaces. Yet, the role of religious practice and ecclesial institutions is not sufficiently or systematically charted in this territory. I ask, how might the development of pastoral theology and praxis in conversation with the aims and methods of social geography open new ministries of care, new visions of care, new kinds of definitions of who is constituted as a pastoral caregiver? Likewise, how might charting what religious practices and ecclesial institutions do within a space to effect change at the intrapsychic, intersubjective, and social level open dialogue with social geographers and others committed to social justice?

As a field of study and a research practice, social geography questions the marking out of the *verboden* regions through situated social analysis. Further, it has the possibility of dismantling the moralistic geography that judges before intellectual analysis or affective engagement. Situated as a response to the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina and urban disasters through the lens of human geography, geographer James C. Fraser uses the phrase “moral geography” to critique how FEMA officials framed relocation from the 100-year floodplains as a responsibility to mitigate the risks for self and others. Fraser argues that such an argument is “individualistic and focuses on rationalizing people’s decision making to create a moral geography of sorts that

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<sup>7</sup> Scheper-Hughes, 31.

legitimizes the dismantling of state protection for social welfare.”<sup>8</sup> Fraser’s claim points to Bourdieu’s insight that spatiality, socio-political identities and locations, and intersubjectivity shape subjects and affect their self-determinative capabilities for flourishing. For a pastoral theology of recognition, spatial analysis urges us to consider how the “silent riots of everyday life” are habituated and inhabited through claims made by space on agents, and agents on that very same space.<sup>9</sup> Again, pastoral theology can also play a role in thinking through theologized space.

One result of social geography in pastoral theological practice might encourage the reading of the living texts of persons and bodies on the street and in the neighborhood, not just those in the hospital room, the church nave, the caregiver’s office, or the counselor’s private room, in order to legitimate and illuminate local knowledge, including lived knowledge on the complexity of subjectivity and potential pastoral responses. Though not a far cry from the practice of visiting the faithful as pastoral care or peripatetic spiritual practices such as pilgrimage, I am suggesting that social geography for pastoral practice encourages contact with the ‘non-faithful’, the other who may illuminate modes of lived subjectivity that ought to be examined.

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<sup>8</sup> James C. Fraser, “The Relevance of Human Geography for Studying Urban Disasters,” *Space and Culture* 9 (February 2006) : 16.

<sup>9</sup> Loïc J.D. Wacquant, “America as Social Dystopia: The Politics of Urban Disintegration, or the French Uses of the ‘American Model’”, *The Weight of the World : Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, trans. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, Susan Emanuel, Joe Johnson, and Shoggy T. Waryn (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999), 133. Regarding high poverty urban communities, Wacquant observes, “The media stampede after the 1992 outburst of rage in Los Angeles following the acquittal of the white policemen guilty of beating Rodney King must not divert attention away from the *silent riots of everyday life*. Though such low-grade, routine, interpersonal violence is less spectacular, it is no less destructive....”

Samuel R. Delany, Professor of English and Creative Writing at Temple University, writes a performative social-spatial walk-about in the first essay of his book *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*. As a long-time visitor to the peep shows, porn theaters, and bars as well as shish kebab vendors and electronic stores along Forty-second Street in New York City (before its complete redevelopment), Delany invites the reader to stroll with him as he reads the streets. Along with photographic images, Delany's prose speaks to complex subjectivity in space. With him we meet Darrell Deckard, a hustler and "a *good*-looking black man of twenty-six."<sup>10</sup> We learn that Darrell has been hustling for two years and that today's concern is "the Public Morals Squad", e.g. the police, who, according to street wisdom, are hiding in theaters to make arrests. Neither sentimental about the vices of Forty-second Street—drugs, violence, prostitution, sexual public health risks and HIV/AIDS specifically—nor condemning of his subjects, including himself as subject, Delany walks a fine line to bring to our attention to those whom the machinations of recognition would confer a "yes, if...", "maybe," or "no". His method invokes an epistemology that favors movement into and through the subjectivity of those whose lives are foreclosed or denigrated in social space. In the next section, I come back to Delany and his proposal of 'contact' as a social good.

In summary, when pastoral theology enlists social geography, care of the living human web includes explicit attention to the spaces inhabited by persons-in-community. Ill- or mis-charted locations of the marginalized and oppressed subjects who we are asked not to see become available for pastoral theological reflection. We gather more data on human flourishing and suffering that enables our engagement in and mutual critique of

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<sup>10</sup> Samuel R. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York UP, 1999), 10.

the public square, the church, and the academy. In my last section below, I develop a feminist pastoral praxis of encounter and the image of the street journalist to flesh out what a feminist pastoral theology of recognition might look like.

### A Feminist Pastoral Praxis of Encounter

Feminist pastoral theology ought to make stakes with and for those whose suffering is filtered through interests that would absorb and obscure the commonplace atrocity of suffering. Following an incarnational theology that pays attention to social geography, we pitch our tents with those who are marginalized in society, accompanying each other in a world where brokenness abounds but where grace also lives. In this way, a feminist pastoral theology of recognition is concerned with praxis as well as theoretical and ethical considerations. Next, I outline a feminist pastoral praxis of encounter.

As I wrote earlier, the problem of recognition is also the solution: recognition. When caring lay or ordained ministers offer solace or comfort to persons who hurt, they are afforded the opportunity to hear claims for recognition. Likewise, when communities of faith encounter persons and groups of difference, they are afforded the opportunity to use their social capital, privilege, and whatever power and assets are available to them to make change in the church and the public. Theological educators, and especially feminist pastoral theologians, play a very specific role in this schema as they teach a transformative pedagogy that integrates the wisdom of the ages, intellectual acuity, and practical know-how for the sake of just caring. However, just as the ‘filtering effects of the bourgeois public sphere’ make it so that claims for recognition go unheard in media, a



disheartening corollary also exists in the church. Claims of recognition are misheard, underheard, and unheard. Additionally, some claims for recognition are not mis-, under- or unheard, but heard and made other through vilification masked as orthodoxy or orthopraxis. Examples are too numerous to fully explicate, but a small list will suffice: the denial of women's ordination in some denominations; the exclusion the LGBTQ community from rites and sacraments of the church, such as marriage; and the infantilization and exclusion of persons with cognitive and physical disabilities.

In Chapter 4, I hinted, with Cedric C. Johnson, that heterotopic spaces of resistance assist misrecognized and nonrecognized subjects to build movements of assertion. Heterotopic spaces enable the physical nature of existences: place where we gather to recognize truths within ourselves and with each other about the particularities of suffering due to injustices, whether interpersonal, structural, or political. In heterotopic spaces of resistances, movements of assertion can be addressed through empathic care, collective power, political will, and a theo-social imagination. Heterotopic spaces of resistance may be militantly antiracist, antisexist, anticolonial, and/or anticapitalist, and thus inherently political, but they are also liminal spaces where care and theology are worked out, sometimes antagonistically, sometimes in more relational ways. While I support the cultivation of heterotopic spaces of resistance, I argued briefly that pastoral ministers and theologians ought to resist the urge to 'create' a heterotopic space. Heterotopic space resists 'creation' by persons in authority, whether authority is conferred by dominant culture status or religious bodies. As such, creation of a heterotopic space would be unattainable and pure folly—the reification of homogenizing projects of domination and submission through colonization, occupation, and infiltration.

Heterotopic space cannot be created; however, it can evolve from a praxis of encounter that bears witness to the difficulty and possibility of recognition.

Encountering an other subject, whether internal or external, is fraught with the possibilities of both conflict and mutuality. Taken from Latin *in + contra*, encounters are meetings in which our face-to-face contact may pit us against another, whether internal or external. Yet, encounters are also unexpected or chance happenings. With the right kind of dispositions—generosity, humility, curiosity, prudence—encounters can also be fruitful.

A praxis of encounter is built on the internal goods of interclass, interethnic, interreligious, intergender/sex contact, and all other potential contacts with difference. Samuel R. Delany argues that “life is at its most rewarding, productive, and pleasant when large numbers of people understand, appreciate, and seek out interclass contact and communication conducted in a mode of good will.”<sup>11</sup> Delany uses the redevelopment of New York’s Times Square as his prime illustration of the power and the displacement of contact as a social practice. Prior to its ‘Disneyfication’, Times Square was a place where interclass contact was possible among gay men seeking sex. Peep shows, sex shops, bars, and movie theaters were the physical spaces where sexual contact between two men of different classes could occur over and against the social practices that would encourage class warfare between them. According to Delany the happenstance nature of contact—similar pleasurable pursuits conducted within a geographic area—produces unexpected goods. He gives the example of connecting a recent ex-Jesuit priest to a job opportunity in publishing as well as a chance encounter with a man who became a long-

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<sup>11</sup> Delany, 111.

term partner. His point is that interclass contact encourages “important or dramatic” occurrences as strangers with various social goods and social needs interact with each other in public space.<sup>12</sup> Public spaces which encourage homogeneity and remove ‘dangerous’ elements—homosexuals, anarchists, persons of color, religious minorities—disable encounters which may become transformative, either psychically or materially. A feminist pastoral praxis of encounter encourages the goods of contact with difference.

A feminist pastoral praxis of encounter is also built on the uncertainty of possessing a space, and thus relies on mobility. Encounters are tactical in nature, and therefore are full of uncertainty and mobility. Social theorist Michel de Certeau writes that a tactic is “a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus.”<sup>13</sup> A tactic is a play made by those who do not hold strategic powers. Tactical encounters are not premeditated or planned. Those who engage in encounter employ tactics to outmaneuver the structural systems that do violence by rendering other all persons who do not live up the normative ideal. In addition to those who work through programs and policies toward the psychological and social recognition of vulnerable populations whose suffering is intelligible, practitioners of encounter “seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment.”<sup>14</sup> Tactics of encounter are timely, and thus resist being overtaken by systems, institutions, or persons who exercise power. Time cannot be possessed, only passed. Because encounter resists homogeneity and stability, uncertainty and mobility are key elements in a feminist pastoral praxis of encounter.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>13</sup> Certeau, 37.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

How might a praxis of encounter be embodied and cultivated in ministry and theological education? Let me suggest one image for ministry that pushes beyond the traditional boundaries of pastor, pastoral care specialist, or faith-based activist and which responds to the interpersonal and social need to assert and to recognize as well as the constraint of achieving these ends. The image I have in mind is the street journalist. This image trades on the cultivation of skills and practical know-how that epitomize the feminist pastoral theological endeavor—listening, empathy, mutuality, justice, care, attention to difference—and put these skills sets to use through images that encourage their deployment in extra-pastoral temporal and spatial locations.

Acts of recognition and assertion occur from person-to-person, person-to-social-political institutions, group identities-to-social-political institutions, and group identities-to-person. I have argued that claims for recognition are being made even when there is silence or pressure to consent in systems that would oppress and subjugate a person. For example, submission in sexual partnerships is a claim for recognition, but it destroys psyches by whittling away a subject's self-determination. Political oppression colludes with the desire for recognition and turns to violence to facilitate it. Structural violence subverts claims for recognition by wearing down and numbing subjects. If it is true that claims for recognition are silenced and obscured, not that there is a failure of assertion, then it follows that one response to this dilemma is the cultivation of persons who are capable of hearing assertions even when social practices and institutions would silence or obscure those claims. The street journalist is a person who can do so as a roving listener and a social critic.

As roving listeners, street journalists form relationships with situated individuals. A roving listener engages in “heart-to-heart” conversations to strengthen relationships between persons and institutions.<sup>15</sup> A roving listener appreciates the assets, or gifts, of a community in order to build social and economic opportunities. A roving listener encounters subjects in the hopes of building relationships where dreams and hopes can be shared. A roving listener listens closely to the stories of frustration, anger, mourning, and lament, as well as the stories and half-told stories of oppression that are stated without emotion. As roving listeners, street journalists are peripatetic, walking along the paved streets and sidewalks as well as carving through the unsanctioned routes that those who do not hold power use to move through territory. They encounter other subjects at a grassroots level that promotes inter-difference contact.

However, street journalists are also social critics. They actively engage in analysis and criticism of “values, practices, and norms” in their daily life that silence or make voices go unheard and unrecognized.<sup>16</sup> Street journalists as social critics gather knowledge about those silenced voices. Though they attempt to make social change, the work of the street journalist is not guaranteed success. Political theorist Brooke Ackerly writes, “social criticism is one way to counter, mitigate, or undermine power inequalities, but whether a particular effort will be effective is a matter of politics.”<sup>17</sup> As such, street

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<sup>15</sup> Susan Rans and Mary H. Nelson, Asset-Based Community Development Faculty Seminar, Institute of Pastoral Studies, Loyola University Chicago, November 16, 2011. See <http://broadwayumc.info/publications/Miracle-RovingListener.pdf>. Broadway United Methodist Church of Indianapolis, Indiana, employs a roving listener in their asset-based community development initiative, Miracle on 29<sup>th</sup> Street.

<sup>16</sup> Brooke Ackerly, *Political Theory and Feminist Social Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 13.

journalists as social critics “promote inquiry, opportunities for deliberation, and institutional changes that facilitate broadly informed and inclusive deliberations.”<sup>18</sup> They are self-reflexive, and potentially multi-sited, moving between communities to develop critical edges necessary to call attention to inequalities in social decision-making.<sup>19</sup>

The street journalist deftly maneuvers amongst persons, neighborhoods, and institutions to hear and recognize the complexity of subjects living under constraints, which they may or may not have the ability to choose freely, but which nonetheless are, in part, determinative of their becoming. Street journalists tell these stories in their complexity, moving between personal experiences of misrecognition or non-recognition to indictment of social-political systems, and from message to action. The venue and mode of analysis and action is largely dependent upon the skill set and artistic vision of the street journalist. She may be a printmaker, a writer, a filmmaker, a musician, a theologian-minister. A street journalist is a way of life more than a profession; she pursues leads that come from the people and frames them as claims of injustice that must be rectified through personal and social transformation as well as mutual love and care.

One example is that of hip-hop duo Rebel Diaz, brothers Rodrigo Venegas (Rodstarz) and Gonzalo Venegas (G1). In one lyric they call themselves *periodistas de la esquina*, or street journalists, and as such, they make normative assertions for recognition with and as subjects who suffer injustices, especially from the everyday violence of capitalism, racism, and xenophobia, and visible in police brutality,

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 155 and 151.

deportations, and the incarceration of persons of color.<sup>20</sup> Their music is timely, speaking to social movements of resistance and liberation, like the execution of prisoner Troy Davis and the Occupy Wall Street movement in their most recently released mixtape, *#Occupy the Airwaves*. While the sound itself is unique, the lyrics of the bilingual duo offer social critique. In the song “Guilty” they perform a lyrical trial of systems and institutions that do harm to persons of color.

(Male voice): The US has the fastest growing prison population in the world. It’s like the real estate boom. (Chuckle.) Except of course the problem with real estate is that eventually you run out of land. You never run out of people to put in prison.

(Female voice): Guilty (repeat)

(Rodstarz): The capitalist system of America (guilty). The US military (guilty). The FBI, CIA, AFT, ICE, Homeland Security, and the neighborhood police (guilty). (Let’s go.)

They stole  $\frac{3}{4}$  of Mexico in 1848, abducted Africans and then sold into slaves, genocide against the natives and for that we give thanks, wrote the history books and made themselves great.

There are two types of crime: power and survival. Crimes that deal with power are the ones you might not find. Look at the trillions that were stolen from the Wall Street bail out and Mumia still stuck in the jailhouse.

They sick. They killed little Aiyana Jones, she was seven years old, man, the story gets old. Look at the wars, look at colonialism, look at the trade agreements, and the problems and the prisons.

We know the aggressor. They train them in Georgia at the School of the Americas where they teach torture. My father’s a survivor. He talks about it often, thousands disappeared, no funeral, no coffin. And I can’t harm them without the charge of terrorism but they the terrorists. I charge the whole system. From the filthy politicians to the lying professor—guilty as charged. We convict the oppressor.

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<sup>20</sup> Rebel Diaz, “Que’Sta Pasando! (Featuring Divine of the D.E.Y.)” *Otro Guerrillero Mixtape*, Vol. 2, 2008, Compact Disc.

We plead our case, they (guilty)  
To the crooks, throw ‘em the book, they (guilty)  
In the court of the people, we deem them (guilty)  
Pay their debt to society, return what they were robbing (guilty, guilty)  
To the racists hating ethnic studies (guilty)  
To the rich cutting school funding (guilty)  
To the bosses denying our right to unionize (guilty)  
We say they are (guilty)<sup>21</sup>

These performed lyrics are bold assertions in response to oppressive systems and persons who are complicit in misrecognition and non-recognition. They posit their assertions as convictions of multiple oppressors and systems of oppression. In another song, they sample the civil rights freedom song, “Which Side Are You On?” and use this question to outline an extensive list of whose side they are on based on claims for human rights: “I’m on the side of the workers, the teachers and lunch ladies, on the streets with brown mummies raisin’ our brown babies. I’m with youth organizers cleaning up the Bronx River. I’m with Jaime Escalante when I stand and deliver.”<sup>22</sup> As street journalists, they listen and critique, but they also act for transformations of situated selves. Settling in the Mott Haven area of the South Bronx, the duo and their former partner, Lah Tere, established the Rebel Diaz Arts Collective (RDACBX). Using a former warehouse, the RDACBX builds community through the arts, especially hip-hop and multi-media. They teach youth how to use hip-hop as a tool for social commentary, developing programs and curriculum for critical thinking and political education.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Rebel Diaz, “Guilty” *#Occupy the Airwaves*, 2011. MP 3.

<sup>22</sup> Rebel Diaz, “Which Side Are You On?” *Otro Guerrillero Mixtape*, Vol. 2, 2008. Compact Disc.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Beekman, “Hip-hop won’t stop in the South Bronx at the Rebel Diaz Arts Collective,” *New York Daily News*, March 3, 2011. Available



While their lyrics are political, and sometimes accusatory, as in the lyrics above, they perform a praxis of encounter that is based in the knowledge that encounters are not always pleasant. On June 18, 2008, Rodstarz and G1 witnessed a street vendor selling fruit being harassed by police from the 41<sup>st</sup> Precinct. They went over toward the vendor and the police. According to witnesses, when the brothers asked the police officers for their badge numbers, the police officers became agitated, beat them with billy clubs, and charged them resisting arrest and assault.<sup>24</sup> This face-to-face meeting was an encounter of conflict. At the same time, this encounter had ripple effects beyond the control of the police officers or the brothers. After their arrest 150 people gathered outside the precinct to demand their release, and a year after their arrest the charges were dropped by Judge Darcel Clark who cited their impressive community involvement and urged them to “keep up the good work.”<sup>25</sup>

I have described the elements of encounter and the image of the street journalist but have yet to speak as to why encounter is a needed image *and* praxis for a feminist pastoral theology of recognition. Acts of recognition and assertion require an engagement. To witness is only a first step when we seek to know something about the subject whose suffering is mutually reinforced by psychological, social, and spatial forces. To witness is not enough when so many forces inside of ourselves and external to

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[http://articles.nydailynews.com/2011-03-03/local/28669521\\_1\\_hip-hop-immigration-law-factory](http://articles.nydailynews.com/2011-03-03/local/28669521_1_hip-hop-immigration-law-factory).

<sup>24</sup> Davey D and Jenny on the Block, “NYC Police Beat Up Rap Group Members Rebel Diaz,” *NYC Indymedia* June 18, 2008. Available <http://nyc.indymedia.org/en/2008/06/98039.html>.

<sup>25</sup> Jaisal Noor, “Judge dismisses case against Rebel Diaz, says ‘Keep up the good work’,” *The Independent*, June 22, 2009. Available <http://www.independent.org/2009/06/22/rebeldiazfree/>.

ourselves keep us from recognizing subjects who stand with us, and even within us. And yet, our finitude and the nature of the future keep us from every fully plumbing the depths of another. In fact, without that distance recognition and assertion are not possible.

It is the impossible but hopeful task of recognizing other subjects that our pastoral feminist praxis asks of us. When we encounter other subjects we are offered opportunities to learn to love in a way that acknowledges our human frailty and conditions of social sin that we did not choose, but continue to live through. As Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa has written,

One never loves another,  
One loves what there is of oneself in them  
Or what one thinks there is.<sup>26</sup>

Though love beckons us to recognize, to care, to attend to the othered parts of ourselves and of subjects outside ourselves in intersubjective recognition, we also know that our capacity to do so fails. It would be easy to harbor disillusion deep in our beings while living between suffering and flourishing.

Disillusion and disenchantment cannot be undone by maintaining the stories that run as an undercurrent through the American Christian mythos: hard work brings equal opportunity; dutiful prayer invites divine abundance; emotions are weak; diversity, so long as it does not challenge the status quo, is a celebration of God's love for all people. We need new stories from the people themselves that incite metanoia, revolution, laughter, tears. New stories (and very old ones, too), provide metaphors and images for caring, justice, and love that are not beholden to the stasis that impairs recognition.

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<sup>26</sup> Fernando Pessoa, quoted in Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., trans. Adrian Jackson (New York: Routledge, 2002), 135.

Theologian Laurel Schneider writes, “Once upon a time, poets told stories and theologians explained the stories. Once upon a time, theologians explained their own dreams and visions, and poets gave them wings....It is therefore past time for theologians, storytellers, and poets to listen again to each other and inspire one another.”<sup>27</sup> Feminist pastoral theologians who inhabit encounter have the opportunity to tell the stories of people, and the stories of God, again.

### Conclusion

In this final chapter I reviewed my major arguments and drew conclusions. I concluded that a feminist pastoral theology of recognition is attentive to the historical and psycho-social formation of a subject, and aware of how human needs are put to work in oppression. It identifies critical interventions, practices, and programs, knowing that they are specific, targeted, and not universal. It is attentive to particularities and differences, but not constrained by them. A feminist pastoral theology of recognition reflects on and enables just caring practices. Lastly, I proposed the practice of encounter and the image of the street journalist as a way to deploy the feminist pastoral theology of recognition I described.

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<sup>27</sup> Laurel C. Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 111.

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