Pedagogies

Perverse Modernities

A SERIES EDITED

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MEDITATIONS ON FEMINISM,

SEXUAL POLITICS, MEMORY,

AND THE SACRED

# of Crossing

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FOR YEMAYÁ

Paulo Bispo, Suzette James, Patricia James, Florence Jean-Joseph, Joan Noray, Verna St. Rose Greaves, Baba Henry White and my youngest brother Ngozi Obasi Umoja for that rare combination of unconditional love and spiritual likemindedness; the ceremonial fire-keepers and water carriers determined to honor Spirit: Cherríe Moraga, Celia Herrera-Rodriguez, Carmencita Vicente of the Saraguro Medicine Lodge, Ecuador, and Xochipala Maes Valdez; those committed to the search for cosmic truth without borders, Minister Marie Knight and members of Gates of Prayer, Harlem, New York; Mama Lola; Madrina Teresa Ramirez; Ojugbona Juanita Rodriguez; Norm Rosenberg and Ticia Roth of Pangea Farm; Luisa Teish; Mother Veronica; and Marta Morena Vega.

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INTRODUCTION

On Living the Privileges of Empire

I did not awake this morning to the deafening noise of sirens or the rocketing sound of nonstop bombs. I did not awake to the missiles that fall like rain from the sky, exploding on contact with land, staking out huge craters within the earth, collapsing people into buildings, trees into rubble, men into women, hands into feet, children into dust.[1] Two thousand tons of ammunition in three hours. Forty-two air raids in one day. Twenty-seven thousand air raids in a decade.[2] I did not awake this morning to the taste of desolation, nor to the crusts of anger piled high from decades of neglect. I did not awake to the familiar smell of charred flesh, which sand storms use to announce the morning raid. I did not awaken in Basra to the familiar smell of hunger, or of grief for that matter, residual grief from the last twelve years that now has settled as a thick band of air everywhere. Breathing grief for a lifetime can be toxic. Breathing only grief simply kills. I did not awake in Falluja, symbol of the post-election settlement wager: votes in exchange for bombs. I awoke this morning from a comfortable bed, avoiding the interminable queues for rations of fuel or food, because I have the privilege to choose to live, unlike many who have lost their lives in the insatiable service of imperialism.

What do lives of privilege look like in the midst of war and the inevita-

ble violence that accompanies the building of empire? We live the privilege of believing the official story that the state owns and can therefore dispense security, that war is over, that silence is a legitimate trade for consent in the dangerous rhetoric of wartime economy; the mistaken belief that we can be against the war yet continue to brand this earth with a set of ecological footprints so large and out of proportion with the rest of life on the planet that war is needed to underwrite our distorted needs;[3] to consume an education that sanctions the academy's complicity in the exercise and normativization of state terror; to continue to believe in American democracy in the midst of an entanglement of state and corporate power that more resembles the practices of fascism than the practices of democracy; to believe that no matter how bad things are here they are worse elsewhere, so much so that undermining the promises of American democracy is an eminently more noble and therefore legitimate undertaking, more so than the undermining of democracy in any other place in the world; to assume that the machineries of enemy production pertain to an elsewhere, not operating within the geographic borders of the United States of North America. One of the habits of privilege is that it spawns superiority, beckoning its owners to don a veil of false protection so that they never see themselves, the devastation they wreak or their accountability to it. Privilege and superiority blunt the loss that issues from enforced alienation and segregations of different kinds.

Pedagogies' central metaphor is drawn from the enforced Atlantic Crossing of the millions of Africans that serviced from the fifteenth century through the twentieth the consolidation of British, French, Spanish, and Dutch empires. At the time I conceived of the book in 2000, the world had not yet witnessed the seismic imperial shifts that characterize this moment. In one sense, then, *Pedagogies* functions as an archive of empire's twenty-first-century counterpart, of oppositions to it, of the knowledges and ideologies it summons, and of the ghosts that haunt it. The book has assumed such a consciousness, and necessarily so since we are living witnesses or casualties of empire's egregious practices. None of us now alive lived that first round, at least not in a direct way, but we can fill in the outlines provided by these contemporary excesses: in the return to a Republican-led militarized Reconstruction that polices the national body as it amplifies its global reach;[4] by the U.S. state's cynical deployment of

tradition in a way that upholds the heterosexualization of family and of morality so as to eclipse any apprehension of the immorality of empire; in the recirculation and rearticulation of myths of (American) origin and destined might through an ideological force-field that manufactures and feeds an enemy made increasingly by the day more grotesque, while purveying a faith-based politics tied to the oxymoronic "armies of compassion";[5] in the disappearance of immigrants and the increased incarceration of women and people of color, drawing sharp fault lines that continue to make of citizenship a more fragile, highly contingent enterprise—the requirements of citizenship for empire are disturbingly antithetical to those requirements of citizenship for collective self-determination;[6] by the way this moment presses up against what democracy has been made to mean, since empire requires sacrifice—the sacrifice of consent—unable to function, as William Pitt suggests, within the slow, cumbersome machine of constitutional democracy on its back;[7] by the fact that this moment not only challenges but also undermines epistemic frameworks that are simply inadequate to the task of delineating these itineraries of violence that are given other names such as democracy and civilization; by probing our function and location as radical intellectuals (and I intend the term intellectual in the broadest sense of a commitment to a life of the mind whether or not one is linked to the academy) along the lines that Stuart Hall suggests—that is, our ethical commitments, the contours and character of our class affiliations and loyalties, and the interpretive frameworks we bring to bear on the histories to which we choose to be aligned; and, importantly, how we assess the size and scope of the wager involved in displacing collective self-determination with corporate institutional allegiances. We can fill in the outlines of empire since its multiple contradictions are everywhere seen in the hydra-headed quality of violence that constitutes modernity's political itinerary as its ideological cognates, militarization and heterosexualization, are exposed. We can fill in the outlines of empire since we have seen the ways in which freedom has been turned into an evil experiment—that is, in George Lammings's words, "the freedom to betray freedom through gratuitous exploitation."[8] We can fill in the outlines when we see how empire's ruthless triumph demystifies the corruptibility of the self, without respect for those who believed themselves incorruptible. Perhaps empire never ended, that psychic and mate-

rial will to conquer and appropriate, twentieth-century movements for decolonization notwithstanding. What we can say for sure is that empire makes all innocence impossible.[9]

Why Pedagogies, and Why Pedagogies of Crossing?

This book spans what feels like a lifetime compressed into a decade. It is an inventory of sorts of my multifaceted journey with(in) feminism, an inventory that is necessarily pluralized by virtue of my own migrations and the confluence of different geographies of feminism. In this volume I am concerned with the multiple operations of power, of gendered and sexualized power that is simultaneously raced and classed yet not practiced within hermetically sealed or epistemically partial borders of the nation-state. I am also concerned with the unequal diffusion of globalized power variously called postmodernism or late capitalism, yet understood in these pages as the practice of imperialism and its multiple effects. Put differently, one of my major preoccupations is the production and maintenance of (sexualized) hegemony understood, in the Gramscian sense, as a map of the various ways that practices of dominance are simultaneously knitted into the interstices of multiple institutions as well as into everyday life. To understand the operation of these practices I traveled to various sites of crisis and instability, focusing to a large extent on the state, whose institutions, knowledges, and practices stand at the intersection of global capital flows, militarization, nationalisms, and oppositional mobilization. While differently located, both neo-imperial state formations (those advanced capitalist states that are the dominant partners in the global "order") and neo-colonial state formations (those that emerged from the colonial "order" as the forfeiters to nationalist claims to sovereignty and autonomy) are central to our understandings of the production of hegemony.[10] The nodes of instability include heterosexuality's multiple anxieties manifested in the heterosexualization of welfare and the defense of marriage in the United States and the criminalization of lesbian and gay sex in Trinidad and Tobago and in the Bahamas; the consolidation of the military-industrial-prison complex that both promotes the militarization of daily life and the most contemporaneous round of military aggression and war; the ideological production

of various hegemonic identities: the soldier, the citizen patriot, the tourist, and the enemy on the part of state institutions and corporate capital; the integration of the corporate academy into the practices and institutions of the state at this moment of empire and therefore made integral to the machineries of war; knowledge frameworks, particularly those that bolster and scaffold modernity's practices of violence that signify as democracy, such as cultural relativism; the global factory and its naturalization of immigrant women's labor; and the moments and places where apparently oppositional social locations and practices become rearticulated and appropriated in the interests of global capital, as is the case of white gay tourism. These nodes of instability form, as well, the base for the thematic organization of the seven chapters in this volume.

In this book I am disturbed by these products of domination and hierarchy, particularly the psychic products that fossilize deep in the interior, forcing us to genuflect at the altar of alterity and separation, the altar of the secular gods of postmodernity, experienced as hypernationalism and empire. Physical geographic segregation is a potent metaphor for the multiple sites of separation and oppositions generated by the state, but which are also sustained in the very knowledge frameworks we deploy and in the contradictory practices of living the oppositions we enforce: the morally consuming citizen versus the morally bankrupt welfare recipient; the patriot versus the enemy; the loyal citizen versus the disloyal immigrant; "us" versus "them"; the global versus the local; theory versus practice; tradition versus modernity; the secular versus the sacred; the embodied versus the disembodied. And disturbance works as a provocation to move past the boundaries of alienation, which explains why *Pedagogies* is centrally concerned with the promise that oppositional knowledges and political mobilizations hold and with the crafting of moral agency.

If hegemony works as spectacle, but more importantly as a set of practices that come to assume meaning in people's everyday lives (that is, the ways in which ordinary people do the work of the state and the work of war), then all spaces carry the potential for corruptibility. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and two spirit-communities, transnational feminist constituencies, women of color political mobilizations, and subordinated knowledges within the academy that have traded radicalism for

institutionalization all carry these reciprocal antagonisms and contradictions. Thus, for this reason, but not for this reason alone, the stakes are quite high. Building oppositional practices within and across multiple simultaneous sites is imperative in political struggle as is the cultivation of the discipline of freedom and collective self-determination in terms that supercede those of free-market democracy. Yet, oppositional consciousness is a process rather than a given before the fact of political practice. And further, we cannot afford to be continually, one-sidedly oppositional.

Pedagogies is intended to intervene in the multiple spaces where knowledge is produced. I have deliberately chosen to interrupt inherited boundaries of geography, nation, episteme, and identity that distort vision so that they can be replaced with frameworks and modes of being that enable an understanding of the dialectics of history, enough to assist in navigating the terms of learning and the fundamentally pedagogic imperative at its heart: the imperative of making the world in which we live intelligible to ourselves and to each other—in other words, teaching ourselves. Because within the archaeologies of dominance resides the will to divide and separate, *Pedagogies* points to the reciprocal investments we must make to cross over into a metaphysics of interdependence. In the same way in which Paulo Freire narrated our ontological vocation to become more fully human, these pedagogies assemble a similar ontological imperative, which pertains to learning and teaching.[11] And since there is no crossing that is ever undertaken once and for all, this ontological imperative of making the world intelligible to ourselves is, of necessity, an enterprise that is ongoing.

Since the central metaphor of this book rests in the tidal currents of the Middle Passage, we should want to know why and how this passage—The Crossing—emerged as signifier. If here I am concerned with embodied power, with the power derived from the will to domination, I am simultaneously concerned with the power of the disembodied and the stories that those who forcibly undertook the Middle Passage are still yearning to tell, five centuries later. One such story is that of Kitsimba, who numbered among those who through the door of no return were shuttled from the old Kôngo kingdom to the Caribbean, circa 1780. Kitsimba unexpectedly showed up in this collection, so unabashedly bound up with materialism, that my aim is not so much to tell the story of her

capture but to convey a particular meaning of pedagogy. Indeed, her emergence is pedagogy in its own right: to instruct us on the perilous boundary-keeping between the Sacred and secular, between dispossession and possession, between materialism and materiality—the former having to do with the logics of accumulation, the latter with the energy and the composition of matter. She has traveled to the heart of feminism's orthodoxies to illustrate that the personal is not only political but spiritual, to borrow Lata Mani's felicitous formulation.[12] She is here to meditate on the limits of secular power and the fact that power is not owned by corporate time keepers or by the logics of hegemonic materialism. As I show in chapter 7, within Kitsimba's universe reside the very categories that constitute the social, the most crucial of which is Time. Yet in the world she inhabits, dominant corporate, linear time becomes existentially irrelevant. Indeed it ceases to have any currency at all.

Put differently, pedagogies that are derived from the Crossing fit neither easily nor neatly into those domains that have been imprisoned within modernity's secularized episteme. Thus, they disturb and reassemble the inherited divides of Sacred and secular, the embodied and disembodied, for instance, pushing us to take seriously the dimensions of spiritual labor that make the sacred and the disembodied palpably tangible and, therefore, constitutive of the lived experience of millions of women and men in different parts of the world. Once Kitsimba appeared to claim the book's closing chapter, the title of this entire collection surfaced. Thus, I came to understand pedagogies in multiple ways: as something given, as in handed, revealed; as in breaking through, transgressing, disrupting, displacing, inverting inherited concepts and practices, those psychic, analytic and organizational methodologies we deploy to know what we believe we know so as to make different conversations and solidarities possible; as both epistemic and ontological project bound to our beingness and, therefore, akin to Freire's formulation of pedagogy as indispensable methodology. In this respect, *Pedagogies* summons subordinated knowledges that are produced in the context of the practices of marginalization in order that we might destabilize existing practices of knowing and thus cross the fictive boundaries of exclusion and marginalization. This, then, is the existential message[13] of the Crossing—to apprehend how it might instruct us in the urgent task of configuring new

ways of being and knowing and to plot the different metaphysics that are needed to move away from living alterity premised in difference to living intersubjectivity premised in relationality and solidarity.

Pedagogies cannot be adequately assembled, however, without attention to the social relations of teaching in the multiple makeshift classrooms we inhabit, and so it is no accident that the gestation period for this collection coincides with much of my life as a teacher. *Pedagogies* thus pertains to what we are prepared to teach, the methodologies of our instruction and the particular challenges that arise in the task of demystifying domination. Still, the classroom is Sacred space. In any given semester a number of Souls are entrusted into our care, and they come as openly and as transparently as they can for this appointment.[14] To be sure, resistances develop as serious engagement morphs into confrontation with inherited nationalisms and their conceptual and identity structures. But outside of courses for which there is mandatory matriculation, the desire to show up stems from our curriculum that brings a promise to satisfy some yearning, as faint or as well-formed as it might be, to imagine collectivities that can thrive outside of hegemony's death-grip. I have not always been successful in simply teaching in order to teach, to teach that which I most needed to learn. More often I intended my teaching to serve as a conduit to radicalization, which I now understand to mean a certain imprisonment that conflates the terms of domination with the essence of life. Similar to the ways in which domination always already confounds our sex with all of who we are, the focus on radicalization always already turns our attention to domination. The point is not to supplant a radical curriculum. The question is whether we can simply teach in order to teach.

The Crossing is also meant to evoke/invoke the crossroads, the space of convergence and endless possibility; the place where we put down and discard the unnecessary in order to pick up that which is necessary. It is that imaginary from which we dream the craft of a new compass. A set of conflictual convergences of my own migrancy, rendered more fragile under empire, and the genealogies of feminist, neocolonial, and "queer" politics that are simultaneously transnational, all reside here. It is a place from which I navigate life, using the foot I keep in the Caribbean, the one I have had in the United States since 1971, the arithmetic of which continually escapes me, and yet a third foot, desirous of rooting itself deep in the forest of Mayombe in the Kôngo. Living and thinking this dialectic means refusing to insist on two feet, which would be the recipe for sheer imbalance. It means turning my three legs into the legs of the deep, round cooking pot used to prepare medicine on the open fire. Three feet make the stretch more necessary, more livable, more viable. Yet none of the preoccupations of these pedagogies could have surfaced in the absence of these very genealogies: a regional feminist movement in the Caribbean, which by the mid 1980s had begun to chart the failures of anticolonial nationalism, implicating capitalism and colonialism in the unequal organization of gender, and by definition, charting the terms of how feminism would be understood and practiced; a movement of black women in Britain whose political consciousness as excolonial subjects produced a series of political campaigns that implicated the British state in colonialism at home (practices around immigration and racism in housing and hiring) and colonialism abroad ("we are here because you were there"); and the political movement and theory of collections such as *This Bridge Called My Back, Home Girls,* and *Sister Outsider,* which squarely brought dominant U.S.-based feminism to its own crossroads, challenging it to a personal and epistemic self-reflection out of which feminism has never been the same.[15] These same texts provided some of the context in which I came to lesbian feminist consciousness as a woman of color in the mid-1980s. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty and I wrote in *Feminist Genealogies,* we were not born women of color but rather *became* women of color in the context of grappling with indigenous racisms within the United States and the insidious patterns of being differently positioned as black and brown women.[16] Thus, the analytical elements that comprise this volume intimate my own intellectual and political history, marking its convergence with cross-currents of different feminisms and belatedly with "queer" theorizing both inside and outside the academy, both elsewhere and here.

If I Could Write with Fire: A Word on How to Read

Heuristically speaking, each chapter in this book possesses its own analytic integrity and as such could be made to function and be read on

its own. Intersecting thematics are restated under apparently different frameworks in the hopes of sharpening the analytic agility we bring to understanding a world, an event, a life that is infinitely encrusted and layered and that ultimately demands different modes of intelligibility. For instance, all of the chapters that critique capitalist and state practices foreground the ideological imperatives that are deployed to function as truth or otherwise naturalize violence. Yet in chapter 4, there is a particular insight I gleaned from using apparently normative categories, such as speech and rights, to trace the ways in which the putative race-neutral market of diversity discourses of the corporate academy masked coercions of different kinds and how speech became acts that carried the capacity "to rank, legitimate, discriminate and deprive."[17] It was instructive to put this formulation to work, so to speak, so that it could attend to the interstices of power and show that the vocabularies of rights and truth could be made to disrupt dominant regimes, particularly when the claimants are not the ones imagined to formulate the operating discourses of power.

With essays written at different times, spanning the ten years from 1994 to 2004, the organization of this book is not necessarily linear. For instance, a version of chapter 3, "Whose New World Order? Teaching for Justice" was first delivered as an address to the Great Lakes Women's Studies Association in 1994. Its discursive sensibilities, however, bring it into closer ideological proximity to the contemporary imperatives of empire-building that have been engineered by the ideologies of the U.S. national security state apparatus. The Gulf War of 1991, one of the immediate precursors of "the new world order," staged a cynical dress rehearsal for the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and even that starting place is contingently arbitrary. Furthermore, the methodological template for the book as a whole unfolds not in chapter 1 but in chapter 5. Yet the preoccupation in chapter 5 with modernity's traditions and violences would have been nearly impossible had I not waded through the points of confluence between the neocolonial and the neo-imperial, the hegemonic and the oppositional, and the reciprocal traffic among them, or had I not understood cultural relativism's analytic and political intransigence—the thematics of earlier chapters. Thus, the placement of chapter 5 is intended to bring methodological rather than chronological coherence

to the book's framing. In what follows I touch briefly on the content of each chapter, after which I discuss what is at stake in assembling these particular pedagogies.

Three interlocking themes frame this collection. In part 1, "Transnational Erotics: State, Capital, and the Decolonization of Desire," I include two chapters to serve as a foreground to the sexualization of subjectivity on the part of the heterosexual neocolonial state and white gay capital, both of which mobilize lesbian and gay bodies for their sex: one in the service of the heterosexualizing imperatives of nation-building and imperial tourist consumption, the other in the service of a sexual economy of gay desire where "native" bodies are made to assume, as in satisfy, the anxieties of colonial scripts and gay capital accumulation simultaneously. The meeting ground occupied here by the hegemonic and the oppositional is a troublesome one. Chapter 1, "Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization," which was first published in 1997, focuses on the ideological rescue of heterosexuality through the passage of the 1991 Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act in the Bahamas. This legislation criminalized lesbian and gay sex, while ostensibly protecting some women against domestic violence, rape in marriage, and different forms of sexual harassment. I examine in this chapter how citizenship is premised in heterosexual terms and how lesbian and gay bodies are made to bear the brunt of the charge of undermining national sovereignty, while the neocolonial state masks its own role in forfeiting sovereignty as it recolonizes and renativizes a citizenry for service in imperial tourism. In the process of this examination I map the profound crisis of legitimation, which the feminist movement provoked for the state, and I chart what was at stake in the heterosexualization of the nation and the lengths to which the state was willing to go to protect itself and heteropatriarchy at the same time.

In chapter 2, "Imperial Desire/Sexual Utopias," first published in 2000, I shift the site of analysis from the neocolonial state to the practices of white gay corporate tourism, while I attend to the conditions of miscegenation between heterosexual and gay capital. Here neocolonialism is made to assume a form different than that premised in chapter 1. Its agents are not the indigenous, anticolonial, nationalist class but the heirs of imperialism residing in imperialism's centers, who are involved in

rewriting the colonial script that sexualizes and fetishizes the "native" back into tradition. I provide a sobering note on the dangers of offering up sexual freedom alone on the broken platter of U.S. democracy in order to secure or ostensibly guard the boundaries of modernity, and ultimately I urge queer studies and queer movements to take up questions of colonialism, racial formation, and political economy simultaneously.

In part 2, "Maps of Empire, Old and New," I illustrate how the itineraries of empire are organically linked by virtue of the substantial amount of ideological trafficking that occurs among them. The political economies of corporate capital within the global factory and those of the state in which the academy figures centrally draw a great deal of sustenance from each other. The ideological fodder for both is provided by analytic traditions developed within the academy itself. In chapter 3, "Whose New World Order? Teaching for Justice," I interpret the manufacture of the "new world order" as a mechanism on the part of neo-imperial states to manage the global crisis of the 1980s and 1990s. If neocolonial states managed internal rupture by using heterosexuality in defense of nation, as I show in chapter 1, neo-imperial states covered their own internal ruptures by managing what they produced as the new world order, deploying it as an ideological and material anchor to secure a range of corporate and state interests, particularly interests in militarization. In this chapter I point to corporate restructuring in the shift to a service economy and to the processes through which the academy becomes one such industry by participating in its own kind of downsizing and in the rewriting of knowledges that comport with the imperatives of empire. What is the academy's role in an era of globalization? The genealogies of consciousness and political organizing among women workers in global factories in places ranging from Mexico and the Caribbean to India and Canada, who foreground the fact of their hunger for justice ("tenemos hambre de justicia"), are juxtaposed with the urgency of teaching for justice in the academic factory, thus challenging us to develop radical pedagogies that do not erase the knowledges of these very women who redefine "survival" to mean collective self-consciousness.

In chapter 4, "Anatomy of a Mobilization," I build on chapter 3 as an archaeology of just what transpires in the academy when downsizing and fiscal conservatism morph into curricular conservatism. The site of this

examination is the New School for Social Research (now the New School University), which is renowned for its traditions of progressivism. The moment is 1997, when a political mobilization that involved a coalition of faculty, staff, and security guards challenged the hiring and epistemic practices of the School that produced a climate of exile—the very circumstance that prompted scholars to flee European fascism and American anti-Semitism and establish the School in the first place. Because my own temporary position there sharpened the contradiction between hypervisibility and a rotating-door policy that erased the knowledges of women of color, this chapter charts the failures of normative multiculturalism, liberal pluralism, and the eclipse of the white liberal Left in the context of the schism that emerged between the School's liberal public identity and its regressive internal practices. In light of this, I track the sizable stakes that are attached to the diffusion of radical transnational feminist frameworks in a corporate context that requires an instrumental diversity so as to better position white bodies only as knowledge producers.[18]

In chapter 5, "Transnationalism, Sexuality, and the State," I provide the analytic grounding for the first four chapters. To do so I exhume the ghost of cultural relativism and the traditions that mark the itineraries of modernity by offering a way to theorize violence that does not fix violence in tradition alone. By taking the regulatory practices of heterosexualization within three social formations—the colonial, the neocolonial, and the neo-imperial—I push up against the limits of linearity by arguing instead for the ideological traffic (in the words of Payal Banerjee) that occurs within and among them. In conjoining discourses that have been internally segregated and temporalities that have been simultaneously distanced—the colonial is oftentimes never imagined to traffic within the neo-imperial, for instance—I make it possible to see that there can be no good heterosexual democratic tradition over and against a bad heterosexual primitive tradition. There also can be no false deduction that democratic heterosexualization is simply more benign in its alignment with modernity than traditional heterosexualization, which in its alignment with backwardness is simply more pernicious. Within this frame it is analytically impossible to position heterosexualization and the attendant discourses and violences of homophobia as imbricated within tradition

only—in the presumably cordoned-off geographies of sexuality in the Caribbean. This chapter shows how they are simultaneously constitutive of the practices of modernity as well.

The third and final theme is charted in part 3, "Dangerous Memory: Secular Acts, Sacred Possession," where I position memory as antidote to alienation, separation, and the amnesia that domination produces. Chapter 6, "Remembering *This Bridge*, Remembering Ourselves," which was first published in 2002 in *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*, is an excavation of the costs of a collective forgetting so deep that we have even forgotten that we have forgotten. Twenty years after the initial publication of *This Bridge Called My Back*, this chapter returns to the moment of my first encounter with that book in order to weave a discontinuous thread to the present through the examination of several questions: Who are we now as women of color twenty years later? Have we lived differently? Loved differently? Where do we come to consciousness as women of color and live it, at this moment? Have we crossed into a new metaphysics of political struggle? Did *This Bridge* get us there? Did it coax us into the habit of listening to each other and learning each other's ways of seeing and being? Who are we now, twenty years later? Why do we need to remember?

In this chapter I focus on certain contentious relationships between African American and Caribbean women who share a similarly fractious history of racism, but whose differential forgetting of colonization and slavery has occasioned a contemporary politics of blame. I deal explicitly with heterogeneity within the seemingly homogeneous category of woman of color by seeking to determine what residency in adopted homes might teach us about the continuities between home and exile. In doing so I confront the challenge of using rememory to take account of the effects of suspicion and betrayal. There is a great deal of urgency in reimagining wholeness as a necessary part of a pedagogy of crossing, the very point of the book's final chapter.

Chapter 7, "Pedagogies of the Sacred," gets squarely at the question of transgenerational memory. There I engage memory not as a secular but rather as a Sacred dimension of self. I examine how sacred knowledge comes to be inscribed in the daily lives of women through an examination of work—spiritual work—which like crossing is never undertaken

once and for all. Spiritual work is different from the category of domestic labor or of cheapened migratory labor in the exploitative capitalist sense, although the spiritual workplace is usually constituted as home. Drawing on my own position of priest in two African-based spiritual communities of Vodou and Santería, of mixed gender and sexualities, I trace the ways in which knowledge comes to be embodied and made manifest through flesh, an embodiment of Spirit.

All of the elements with which feminism has been preoccupied—including transnationalism, gender and sexuality, experience, history, memory, subjectivity, and justice—are contained within this metaphysic that uses Spirit knowing as the mechanism of making the world intelligible. But primarily because experience has been understood in purely secular terms, and because the secular has been divested of the Sacred and the spiritual divested of the political, this way of knowing is not generally believed to have the capacity to instruct feminism in the United States in any meaningful way, in spite of the work of feminist theologians and ethicists. It is a paradox that a feminism that has insisted on a politics of a historicized self has rendered that self so secularized, that it has paid very little attention to the ways in which spiritual labor and spiritual knowing is primarily a project of self-knowing and transformation that constantly invokes community simply because it requires it. In spite of the work of Gloria Anzaldúa, Cornel West, bell hooks, and the more recent work of Lata Mani, Leela Fernandes, and others, there is a tacit understanding that no self-respecting postmodernist would want to align herself (at least in public) with a category such as the spiritual, which appears so fixed, so unchanging, so redolent of tradition. Many, I suspect, have been forced into a spiritual closet. Ultimately, then, I argue that a transnational feminism needs these pedagogies of the Sacred not only because of the dangerous diffusion of religious fundamentalisms, and not only because structural transformations have thrown up religion as one of the primary sites of contestation, but more importantly because it remains the case that the majority of people in the world—that is, the majority of women in the world—cannot make sense of themselves without it. We would all need to engage the Sacred as an ever-changing yet permanent condition of the universe, and not as an embarrassingly unfortunate by-product of tradition in which women are disproportionately caught. Moreover,

many individuals would not have survived the crossing without it; many have been persecuted because of it. Pedagogies in this universe of the Sacred are ongoing.

On Writing, Memory, and the Discipline of Freedom

Different voices inhabit this text. The ideological "I" (to use a term by Sandra Paquet)[19] that wrote "Erotic Autonomy" in 1997 is not the same "I" writing here in this introduction, nor the "I" that wrote "Pedagogies of the Sacred." Rather, that "I" has shifted and transformed, so much so that different voices emerge. Audre Lorde would have us believe that this shift in voice is that of the poet bringing faint yet decipherable whispers of freedom, a conjunction of the aesthetic of creation, the beauty of the Sacred and the flight of imagination. Modulations in voice, therefore, are not solely speech—perhaps not about speech at all—but instead are about an opening that permits us to hear the muse, an indication of how memory works, how it comes to be animated. But whose memory, whose voice, and whose history?

In a fundamental sense *Pedagogies of Crossing* moves from the betrayal of secular citizenship and dispossession to sacred citizenship and possession, from alienation to belonging, from dismemberment to rememory. And it does so not in any discrete, noncontradictory, linear way, not in any way that suggests that there is no traffic between and among them, but rather as a way to indicate that possession can be a guided, conscious choice. Perhaps that muse emerges at the cusp of the vise between dispossession and possession, but she would have been refused entry had surrender and stripping not occurred. Had I not been stripped to the elementals and made to see that the experience of wartime, for instance, at the seat of empire (whose effects are starkly divergent even as immigrant from the external casualties of war), made its own cumbersome demands including provoking the fear of deportation from a site of neglect; had I not been thrown up against the underbelly of capitalism's insecurity in the absence of full-time employment; had I not been forced to enroll in the never-ending school where Spirit as teacher is determined to use a curriculum in which the syllabus is given at the end of each lesson and then, only partially so; and had I not been forced to enter fire to tap

the roots of its capacity to change the shape of things the muse would have been denied entry, turned back at the border of self-pity, cowardice, and the knowledge of corruptibility—the borders of the self—to inhabit another, more receptive land. I was neither author nor mediator of that stripping even as I was being required to own it, to possess it and be possessed by it, to wear it as an indispensable something that belonged to me, yet not only to me. Stripping is a methodology in the most literal, perhaps mundane, sense of constituting the practices through which we come to know what we believe we know. At stake is not only whether emotion is made to count in the knowledge process, but *how* it is made to count. I leave it to Kitsimba's narration in chapter 7 to fill in the details of that telling.

So what does possession mean after all at this time of empire in the United States? How would it be possible to annul the psychic legacy of an earlier contract that premised U.S. freedom and democracy in manifest destiny? To oppose freedom to violence is to sharpen the fault line where democracy butts up against empire. It begs also for new definitions of both freedom and democracy. What is democracy to mean when its association with the perils of empire has rendered it so thoroughly corrupt that it seems disingenuous and perilous even to deploy the term. Freedom is a similar hegemonic term, especially when associated with the imperial freedom to abrogate the self-determination of a people. How do we move from the boundaries of war to "the edge of each other's battles"?[20] How many enemies can we internalize and still expect to remain whole? And while dispossession and betrayal provide powerful grounds from which to stage political mobilizations, they are not sufficiently expansive to the task of becoming more fully human. I do not mean here the sort of partial, contingent humanism on which Enlightenment rationality rested, but rather one that dares to cultivate a moral imagination that encompasses the full, unromanticized dimensions of human experience. Some of us undertook that perilous journey of the Atlantic Crossing only to jump overboard to escape the intolerable. Others of us arrived at Ibo Landing in the Carolinas and intuited the conditions of our would-be capture, turned around and walked right back on the water. Still others of us have forgotten the call, choosing instead to be accountable to the imperatives of affirmative action, torn between the desire to build fleeting

careers and the practice of freedom. And still pedagogies that are derived from the Crossing are not chattel or moveable property to be selectively owned by Africa's descendants alone. Such ownership can only rely on use value to determine the structure of relationships to self and collectivity. We would have to practice how to disappear the will to segregation. The terms of this new contract will have to be divined through appropriate ceremonies of reconciliation that are premised within a solidarity that is fundamentally intersubjective: any dis-ease of one is a dis-ease of the collectivity; any alienation from self is alienation from the collectivity. It would need to be a solidarity that plots a course toward collective self-determination. Among its markers will be the knowledge that "all things move within our being in constant half embrace: the desired and the dreaded; the repugnant and the cherished; the pursued and that which [we] would escape."[21] It will entail the courage to reimagine the patriot along the lines that Adrienne Rich suggests in *An Atlas of the Difficult World*, where a patriot is one who wrestles for the Soul of her country, for her own being; where a patriot is a citizen trying to wake from the burned-out dream of innocence to remember her true country.[22] It will entail a freedom whose texture consists of honesty and discipline, the kind of which Howard Thurman speaks when he defines freedom as moral choice pertaining both to the character of one's actions and the emotional and spiritual quality of one's reactions.[23] Accountability is indispensable to both. It will entail the desire to forge structures of engagement, which embrace that fragile, delicate undertaking of revealing the beloved to herself and to one another, which James Baldwin sees as the work of the artist. "The artist does at [her] best what lovers do, which is to reveal the beloved to [herself] and with that revelation to make freedom real."[24] It will entail gentle determination and Pablo Neruda's idea of a burning patience to choose freedom so as to better build archaeologies of freedom, which, in the first and final instance, can only be lived.[25] This is the Spirit in which I offer this book.

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TRANSNATIONAL EROTICS

State, Capital, and the Decolonization of Desire