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TOWARDS A NEW RADICAL FEMINIST VISION: NAVIGATING THE PASSAGE FROM OPPRESSION TO FREEDOM

By

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ABSTRACT

TOWARDS A NEW RADICAL FEMINIST VISION: NAVIGATING THE PASSAGE FROM OPPRESSION TO FREEDOM

By

Jennifer Lynn Benson

What would it mean to speak of a radical feminist conception of freedom? I ask this question amid the writings of María Lugones, Mary Daly, Sarah Hoagland, and Marilyn Frye. Their projects aim to theorize oppression and resistance, as well as liberatory feminist futures that are not characterized by forms of oppression. While these authors are not always writing with each others' work in mind, when taken together they form what is, I think, an extremely fruitful intersection. Yet, one thing that is conspicuously absent from the intersection is the concept of freedom. These philosophers are writing about oppression, resistance, liberation, world-traveling, and feminist communities—yet they do not articulate a radical feminist conception of *freedom*. It is a curious absence. After all, it would seem that the appropriate counter-concept of oppression is freedom. And we would surely think that a radical feminist future would be characterized by freedom.

In this dissertation I argue that the radical feminist focus on oppression and resistance yields a conceptual and political landscape wrought of resistance and incremental moves toward existence that is not characterized by oppression. As feminists, it is crucial that we are able to understand the operation of oppression and able to understand and formulate resistant action. Oppression and resistance are necessary categories of analysis because feminism currently functions within interlocking systems of oppression. Yet as feminists, we also require positive conceptions of existence beyond

the frameworks of oppression. By developing such positive conceptions we prepare ourselves for radical feminist futures, futures that are no so extensively configured by oppression.

In developing a radical feminist conception of freedom I first explore conceptions of subjectivity offered by Lugones and Daly. From Lugones I adopt the idea that subjects are inherently multiple, having literally many selves that exist in curdled relation to each other. From Daly I adopt the idea that subjects create themselves through their own ongoing ontological activity. I weave connections across these two conceptions of subjectivity and argue that curdled multiplicity can become a resource for ontological invention—for be-ing free. Radical feminist freedom is not a utopian construct. Rather, freedom is an ontological *activity*. I understand freedom as a specific mode of be-ing in which one works from cultivated curdled-multiplicity, opening possibilities for action while navigating our many social worlds. As subjects navigate their many social worlds, they are able to cultivate this curdled multiplicity and enact feminist projects that escape the reductive confines of patriarchal existence. Aided by my conception of freedom, radical feminists are in a better position to invent worlds that are not characterized by oppression.

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What would it mean to speak of a radical feminist conception of freedom? I ask this question amid the writings of María Lugones, Mary Daly, Sarah Hoagland, and Marilyn Frye. Their projects aim to theorize oppression and resistance, as well as liberatory feminist futures that are not characterized by forms of oppression. While these authors are not always writing with each others' work in mind, when taken together they form what is, I think, an extremely fruitful intersection. Yet, one thing that is conspicuously absent from the intersection is the concept of freedom. These philosophers are writing about oppression, resistance, liberation, world-traveling, and feminist communities—yet they do not articulate a radical feminist conception of *freedom*. It is a curious absence. After all, it would seem that the appropriate counter-concept of oppression is freedom. And we would surely think that a radical feminist future would be characterized by freedom.

This dissertation initiates a new conception of freedom: radical feminist freedom. In Chapter One, I will explore the landscape of radical feminism, especially the conceptions of oppression and resistance that figure prominently in the landscape. The geography of radical feminism contains signposts, where foresisters have specifically guided the radical feminist tradition away from conceptions of freedom available in the intellectual tradition of western patriarchy. I begin to conceptualize freedom while noting the warnings provided be earlier radical feminists. My initial characterization of radical feminist freedom will be brief in Chapter One, only enough to suggest the path of this dissertation project.

In Chapter Two, I will ward off some potential misunderstanding of radical feminist freedom. I view the liberal tradition as a potential distraction, a vast and highly seasoned tradition that might divert the reader from my own project. In order to forestall the distraction, I will specify key differences between the traditions of radical feminism and liberal political philosophy. As I will show, radical feminists departed from the older liberal tradition for important reasons. They depart because radical feminist projects locate women within a context of oppression. This starting place necessitates feminist theory and practical activity that understands agency as a feature of the oppressed. Meanwhile the classical liberal authors saw agency and freedom as linked features of rational men [sic]. Radical feminists also demonstrate a marked preference for existentialist styles of thought that allow one to reformulate the women's ontology as a process of ongoing invention, rather than remaining wedded to a liberal conception of man's inherent nature.

My own radical feminist conception of freedom will emerge from within a confluence of radical feminist ideas. I begin with a certain approach to metaphysics and subjectivity. In Chapter Three, I argue that the key concept for retaining libratory potential, an insight from Lugones, is that radical feminist theory and practical activity should operate in a framework of ontological multiplicity, "curdled multiplicity" to be exact. In this framework, categories are never pure, reality is continual shifting, and any discernible boundaries are temporary landmarks. Most importantly, subjects are themselves understood to be curdled multiplicities; they experience ever-shifting identities that may be simultaneously empowered and oppressed, serious and playful,

reckless and pragmatic. An ontology of curdled multiplicity makes resistance and invention both possibilities for daily existence and metaphysical reality.

My question becomes this: What is freedom for subjects who are curdled and always in process? I ask about freedom from within a framework of curdled multiplicity. Here, any one subject is inherently multiple, fashioned of multiple selves that are palpably distinct yet never fully separated from each other. Curdled multiplicitous subjects are formed and reformed in the many complex worlds they navigate.

In this radical feminist conception of freedom, freedom will be explored as a mode of activity, ontological activity. The activity is the creative work of cultivating multiplicity and possibilities for action while navigating our many social worlds. Daly, Frye, Lugones and Hoagland do not use the term 'freedom.' But Daly and Hoagland do employ an existentialist metaphysics. Daly, as will be clear in Chapter Three, uses the concept of 'be-ing' to help envision feminist realities and futures that are not characterized by oppression. She uses the term 'be-ing' to help conceptualize the project of inventing the future of radical feminism. It is reality understood as dynamic and creative process. By the end of Chapter Three, it will be clear that the combination of existentialist metaphysics and ontological multiplicity open radical feminists toward an as yet barely theorized conception of freedom.

Chapter Four will explore be-ing free, a positive conception of freedom that helps radical feminism move towards worlds that are not characterized by oppression. Such future worlds are remote, obscured by patriarchal practices and even our own attempts at forward thinking. As a consequence, we are not well served by drawing up plans for a radical feminist utopia. Yet we are in need of conceptual tools that will help foster a

positive conception of life beyond the frameworks and mind-binds of patriarchy. As radical feminists, we shall be well served by a conception of be-ing free that provides a *positive* account of existence apart from patriarchy. I will argue for a mode of ontological activity—be-ing free. The activity is the daily work of radical feminism. Be-ing offers the capacity to create paths out of the patriarchal foreground experience in which women are defined, reduced, fragmented, and alienated from each other by the oppressive customs, institutional practices, and languages of patriarchy. Be-ing free is the activity of opening possibilities for existence while not targeting a final and specific goal. Instead, be-ing free is an ongoing process that is both a matter of practical activity and metaphysical disposition. Radical feminist freedom is an activity, and the axis of value around which freedom is organized is one of feminist process, not permanence or certain utopia.

A Note about Terms and Style

I am focusing on a specific domain within contemporary radical feminist activism and theory. The principal figures that mark the landscape of this inquiry are Marilyn Frye, Maria Lugones, Sarah Hoagland, and Mary Daly, though I also rely upon Simone de Beauvoir, Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Wanda Warren Berry. These four are members of the large network of radical feminist activists and scholars and they are crucial figures for my project. Their writings on oppression, resistance, and feminist futures frame my own examination of freedom. When I use the term 'radical feminist' one may assume it is shorthand for the intersecting ideas of these four philosophers.

Exploring and articulating a radical feminist conception of freedom is tricky work. It requires acknowledgement that 'freedom' has been largely "owned" by liberal theory. But more importantly, it requires a feminist conviction that the language of 'freedom' need not be restricted to the domain of liberal politics. One has to remake 'freedom' such that it is not irrevocably tied to liberal politics and theory. The tradition of radical feminism has been extensively developed and refined over the last few decades, but the concept of 'freedom' is new to this tradition. I will demonstrate that an inchoate conception of freedom has lingered within the writings of radical feminist since the 1970's. I will show that radical feminist freedom is emerging from its own tradition. One should expect chapters of this dissertation to reveal a budding conception of freedom, one with promise of stature. However, this dissertation alone is but the early story. I will not endeavor to demonstrate how a radical feminist conception of freedom should displace liberal conceptions of freedom or justice.

As I articulate a radical feminist conception of freedom, metaphor and analogy each serves as a medium for analysis. Carefully chosen metaphors often convey the tone of a chapter or section. They communicate my interests and occasionally hint at humor. Analogies are my preferred device, however. A well-placed analogy mediates the distance between experience and incisive conceptual frameworks and back again. This is not a new idea: it is merely a statement about how thought develops. We use detailed analogies to illustrate ideas, adding richness and depth to the explanation at hand. Certainly no analogy is perfect and their imperfections are often helpful as well. The best use of an analogy involves describing the points of likeness and the points of contrast.

Noting the details of an imperfect analogy helps unpack an idea or concept in its richness and detail.

Radical feminists have a knack for metaphor and analogy, particularly analogies grown of the commonplace. One marker of radical feminism, and feminism generally, is that the discipline has great confidence in the mundane experiences of women as sources for knowledge. New analytical concepts are cultivated from the hands-on experience of living a woman's life. Feminists have learned self-reliance in the production of knowledge. The nuts and bolts, yeast and flour, of daily life are a source for developing frameworks of analysis uniquely suited to addressing and remaking worlds of sense.

In my writing and in the writing of many feminists, metaphor and analogy are used to good effect when they are explored even to their boundaries. Though I confess to finding many analogies irresistible, and I willingly spend pages on certain analogies, my expansive treatment is justified. Analogies are at their most instructive when they convey a new idea and when we see them in rich detail, and especially when we see where they leave off. Thus, one should expect analogies and metaphors in the pages that follow—analogy and metaphor in abundant detail.

Chapter One
Oppression, Resistance, and Freedom

Introduction

In this chapter, I will examine the prevalence of 'oppression' and 'resistance' as concepts that have framed much radical feminist literature. Why are oppression and resistance the concepts that have been privileged with such extensive analysis? In the process of answering this question, I will show why it is also necessary to have a radical feminist conception of freedom that complements the analysis of oppression and resistance.

A Context of Oppression

Living amid convoluted and immense oppressive structures, immersed in the absolute necessity for resistance—this is the place where feminism begins. Living, surviving, even thriving is possible when we know our environment and its dangers. Thus, one of the tasks in feminism has been to articulate the contexts in which women live. Audre Lorde knew this when she wrote of the silence and fear that characterize the lives of those who live "in the mouth of this dragon," whether they are black women or not (42). Sarah Hoagland knew this as she worked to explain dominance and subordination, the bone structure that sustains heterosexism (21). Simone de Beauvoir knew this when, in the Second Sex, she detailed the ways women are not born but made.

The opening chapter of The Second Sex details the context of women in fierce and painful terms. Beauvoir describes how white, Anglo, and European women exist in a context of thoroughgoing exploitation and domination. These women and virtually all feminine characteristics found in this complex of related anglo-European cultures stand in contrast with men and masculinity. Beauvoir finds that masculinity carries the vast

majority of social virtues. Meanwhile femininity is a liability, an automatic form of weakness, a quality that disadvantages women in social and political arenas where femininity is presumed to mean one lacks reason and thus access to rights of full citizenship. The result, notes Beauvoir, is that women are subject to men. Men position women so they can be dominated and exploited by men. It is a condition that pervades public life, home life, the gynecologist's office, and especially the intimate relationships of husbands and wives. Beauvoir does not mince words; rather, she generates a distilled account of the totalizing injustices and brutality imposed on women by men. Though it was written in 1950's France, The Second Sex continues to be influential. It is a rousing critique of contemporary middle-class relations between anglo-European men and women.

The Second Sex interests me because it offers such a clear example of how contemporary feminism makes certain methodological moves. Living, surviving, and thriving are possible if one knows one's surroundings. Thus, the first move is to become conscious of and articulate the complex character and scope of oppression. The goal is to understand oppression in order to prepare the imagination for resistance, survival, and even the thriving of feminist communities. The preferred method for accomplishing this is to begin with an analysis of oppression. To see this methodological step more clearly, consider a contrasting methodology found in liberal political theory. Classical liberalism and the contemporary tradition initiated by Rawls both assume freedom as a starting place. The goal of liberal theory is to argue for social organization that is appropriate to the character of free men. The classical device was an imaginative exploration of the state of nature, a mythic domain where men [sic] live without the mitigation of social

convention or governmental regulation. If one reads classical liberal reflections on the state of nature, one finds a romantic allegory that describes negative freedom. Further, one can decipher important instructions on method and on basic human nature. For classical liberals, negative freedom marks the essential character of men. The appropriate method for locating a social order suited to such beings will necessarily begin with an analysis of man's natural freedom.

Rawls' use of the veil of ignorance (136-140) delivers a similar methodological message: start with freedom. Behind the veil of ignorance one occupies a position of freedom from any specific social and economic position. To conduct the experiment behind the veil, one is urged to imagine becoming a person who faces a variety of social challenges, yet to imagine being completely uncertain about the social goods one might possess after the veil is lifted. In presenting and exploring this thought experiment, Rawls argues that one would naturally avoid reasoning from specific interests except for preserving freedom and fair treatment of the citizenry. The method begins by disengaging one from the contextual burdens of life that might foster support for social privileges and might even allow the exploitation of other citizens. One is asked to reason out the sort of social order that would maximize fairness. As with the more classical state of nature, the veil of ignorance announces method and then describes individuals as reasonable, able to freely choose the appropriate social order. We are instructed to begin without presuming anything of social location, yet all who follow through with the experiment are assumed to be essentially reasonable and free.

What of Beauvoir's starting place and method? "Women are not born but made." Beauvoir's initial statement of this problem is followed by a detailed description of how

women are positioned in the fundamental dichotomy of consciousness: Self and Other (xxii). Women, femininity, weakness, irrationality, these compose the Other for that which is Self: Men, masculinity, strength, and reason. Given this situation, Beauvoir sets to work investigating how women have come to be 'Other,' how this subordination has been held in place, how it might be overcome. She argues that, unlike colonized peoples, women have no memory of a time in which they, as a group, directed their own destiny. She traces this lack of memory back to the very prehistory[1] of human existence, where she lingers over the fundamental dichotomy of consciousness, Self and Other, the invention of private property, and the patriarchal family. These three ancient factors conspired, and conspire still, to reinforce women's positions as subservient, focused on the production of the family rather than pursuit of transcendence.

Men have no actual memories of the state of nature; however, the mythology of unmitigated freedom has been an influential device in the imagination of patriarchal liberal thinkers. Women have no memories of unmitigated freedom either. But the interesting difference is that we have found the liberal's state of nature mythology unpersuasive. The mythology of unmitigated freedom has proven inadequate for the challenge of moving women to transcend their position as Other. Effecting social change requires a consciousness of ones situation, and for Beauvoir, this means a consciousness of women's subordination. The method for accomplishing social change requires that one first investigate women's lives and imaginations within oppression.

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[1] One might argue that Beauvoir is doing her own version of the state of nature when she writes of a prehistory and the early development of Self and Other. Yet if one offers such an argument, the crucial issue to remember is that Beauvoir thinks women *cannot* posit themselves as 'originally' free. By contrasts, in the classical approach, positing 'original' freedom is the primarily methodological step for justifying the move towards a liberal social order. Therefore one misunderstands Beauvoir in claiming that her investigation of pre-history is analogous to classical investigations into the state of nature. The two imagined contexts are precisely dissimilar.

The starting place of theory is important. The memory of freedom, the myth of freedom—such classical devices are not incomprehensible to feminists. They are simply ill-suited to the work at hand. Taking oppression as the starting place means radical feminists ask different questions than those asked in tradition of liberal political theory. I highlight this difference because it partially explains why radical feminists, and feminists generally, have been particularly conscious of oppression as an analytical concept. Radical feminism begins with the challenge of oppression.

Oppression and Resistance

For radical feminism the starting place of theory is oppression. In the early 70's Marilyn Frye began writing the essay "Oppression." The essay remains a staple in feminist classes, discussion groups, and the libraries of English-reading feminists. It is indispensable because it provides a clear and incisive means of defining oppression and locating the operation of oppression in social worlds.

In Frye's article, oppression is uncovered and articulated through a combination of linguistic analysis, empirical examples, metaphors, and abstractions. Taking each experience of being thwarted individually, from a microscopic and myopic perspective, one can examine the extent to which it operates as a seemingly small inconvenience, an isolated obstacle, an accidental trauma, a sad bit of experience. The careful investigation of each incident never reveals the actual nature of any sort of oppressive social world. The question becomes: What does it mean to speak of oppression? Frye explains it thus:

> The experience of oppressed people is that the living of one's life is confined and shaped by forces and barriers which are not accidental or occasional and hence avoidable, but are systematically related to each other in such a way as to catch one

> between and among them and restrict or penalize motion in any direction. It is the experience of being caged in: all avenues, in every direction, are blocked or booby-trapped (4).

She suggests the metaphor of a bird in a cage. We might be tempted to think that the barriers and forces that form the cage of oppression are violent and visceral forms of control. Sometimes oppressors do inflict violence. But barriers can be subtle and often take the form of a nagging double bind.

Consider the situation of a young black feminist faculty member in a department committee meeting. The agenda item under discussion is the need to increase minority enrollments in a school that is largely white. Although there is plenty of money for scholarships, and the school has been willing to provide lucrative offers to students of color, few students of color choose to enroll. During the meeting several senior faculty members have already offered their exasperation and concluded that there must not be that many qualified students of color. The young black feminist faculty member recognizes that this is a cop-out, especially in a context where the school supports only a limited amount of "progressive" content in the classroom and only occasionally invites visiting speakers to lecture on "diversity." Does she point out their racism or not? There are really two options here, neither of them all that good. She can, as Audre Lorde says, betray herself into this small silence (41). Although silence might keep her out of trouble in this meeting, she must swallow the racism. Further, her silence may be interpreted to mean the other committee members are behaving acceptably because she has not offered an objection. For her, this small silence is revolting. By contrast, she can speak forcefully about how the school is engaged in institutional racism and that the faculty members present are complicit in this malfeasance. It is dangerous to be a troublemaker,

especially as a junior faculty member without a community of allies, whether they are black women or not. She risks being seen as hostile, disloyal to the school, a "lawsuit waiting to happen" and she still has tenure to worry about.[2] This is a double bind.

Double binds are often small features of daily life. Interestingly, they exhibit a feature of oppression, namely that one can be caught between systematically related outcomes. Here, I am focusing on the double binds in women's lives. If we only look at individual double binds that happen to appear in our daily lives, one after another, we might never finish the examination. More importantly we might never learn how oppression works. To examine one double bind is to examine an individual wire, under a microscope, as it were. We might notice that the double bind presents two bad outcomes. Yet, this one bind doesn't seem like a barrier, just a small inconvenience that one can negotiate around. Oppression is not visible at this microscopic level of analysis. As Frye notes,

> ...people can fail to see the oppression of women because they fail to see macroscopically and hence fail to see the various elements of the situation as systematically related in larger schemes. ...But when you look macroscopically you can see it—a network of forces and barriers which are systematically related and which conspire to the immobilization, reduction, and molding of women and the lives we live (7). ... Mold. Immobilize. Reduce (4).

I'm interested in reductions. We mold and reduce the size of a thing, changing its shape in the process. We rework the significance of a thing by pressing it into a less obtrusive location. We minimize the range of effects or actions possible for a thing by

[2] Upon reading this case it may seem that double binds are the same as ethical dilemmas. Though the two may occasionally overlap, double binds may not necessarily involve the conflicting ethical principles characteristic of ethical dilemmas. A double bind could be faced by a woman who has only the choice of being bored in the available form of "women's work" or being bored by keeping a house for one's husband. There don't seem to be conflicting ethical principles here, but neither choice holds much appeal.

creating barriers to action. I'm interested in the processes through which one affects a reduction. The *reduction* process has ontological significance.

Consider practices that reduce a thing's size and altering its shape. When we press things—clothes, fall leaves, grilled cheese sandwiches—we cage a particular substance between related barriers and thus reduce the size and alter the shape of the object. When I was young, one of the first things I was allowed to cook on a stove was a grilled cheese sandwich. My mother had a set of irons that would make perfectly round grilled sandwiches. In retrospect, the grilling process is a useful comparison for seeing how a reduction in size and shape is an important component of oppression.

Two long handles attach to a pair of hinged iron plates. Because the plates are dished out slightly in the center and positioned to face each other, they close to form a seal as soon as one clamps the hinge shut. My mother would allow me to lightly butter two pieces of bread, lay one piece of bread on the iron plate, layer the cheese and second piece of bread, fasten the irons shut, cut away the scraps of bread pinched nearly in two by the pressure, and lay the irons on the stove burner. Since the handle was always a good twelve inches from the actual iron plates, this was pretty safe stove work for a kid.

There were many advantages to using the irons for making a grilled cheese sandwich. The iron plates, because of their shape, would clamp the hot cheese tightly within the sandwich. The sandwich would be effectively sealed shut through the pressing and heating processes. Once it was cooked, the sandwich could be tipped out and handled with little risk of getting burned by the molten cheese. The edges would be stiff, seared to a slight crispy from the butter. The grilled cheese irons had aesthetic benefits

too. They created a pattern of concentric scorch marks radiating out to the edge of the round sandwich. It was all quite delightful to the hands and eyes of a six-year old.

The act of pressing molds, reduces, shapes the substance under pressure. Floppy square pieces of bread, cheese that might escape its sandwich—these are reworked through opposing forces that compress, seal, and render useless the excess scraps of crust. The reduction that one effects in this instance not only shapes the material pressed within the irons, is also changes the material so as to make it more manageable and appealing. The reduction process is a necessary component of ontological reconfiguration.

Frye only briefly notes the significance of reductions in the process of oppression. Dwelling on images of reduction has helped me to understand something about oppression. In the process of living within oppressive social structures, women are reduced. It is an ontological reduction. Patriarchal values, tools, and practices reduce women's possibilities for existence. The point I make is not merely that women can be subject to a reduction that reconfigures their agency so they only have a range of actions that facilitate their own exploitation. I'm asserting that there is a necessary link between the reduction and oppression. In the logic of oppression, the reduction is a necessary condition. Oppression requires that an otherwise crafty, inventive creature be reduced to a "grafted" substance (Frye 65), a conduit for bringing about patriarchal realities.

One obvious reduction example is the American/anglo obsession with women's bodies having particular qualities and a particular physical shape. For many women the social demand for thinness or "fitness" influences diet regardless of whether the diet may damage one's health, regardless of how one's metabolism works, regardless of how one may be made miserable through the dieting process, regardless of how the intended

physical shape may endanger one's life, and regardless of how rarely the intended effect is achieved and maintained. In the case of women's bodies, the reductions are literal—on a daily, hourly, minute-by-minute basis, women are urged, ridiculed, chastised, coaxed to shrink. The much-anticipated result is a body that meets with social perceptions of feminine beauty and "health." This is a patriarchal standard of feminine beauty and health. Certainly there could be other current standards for patriarchal beauty and health. One could be reduced to a plump sex object. Obesity too could be a patriarchal standard of feminine beauty and health. The problem is not that thinness is the required bodily configuration; the problem is patriarchal configuration of women through ontological reductions. This is one component of a larger pattern in which women are crafted into objects for patriarchal use. As Mary Daly explains, women are reduced to patriarchal vessels, emptied of their own possibilities so they may be more effective for men who use them (Gyn/Ecology, xxvi).

I am also interested in less obvious forms of reduction. Consider how one's significance, choices, available forms of action may be reduced through structurally related barriers. How do we constrain or reduce the importance of a particular group of people? One common method is to repeatedly de-legitimize demands and claims; as when Woodrow Wilson patronizingly remarked that women were intelligent enough not to want the vote, though plenty were demanding it; as when a woman makes a feminist remark at work and her boss immediately cuts across her conversation to say, "We are not getting into that here;" as when a woman is told she can't complain about being raped since she asked for it by wearing "that sort of skirt;" as when a woman is chastised for being publicly rude to a man who has abused her, as if she owed him such public respect

but he need not respect her in private. A pattern of undercutting the claims of one group on the basis that they cannot be authorities on their own experience is one way to effect an ontological reduction.

A second method for reducing the ontological status of a group is to erase or punish specific cultural practices that are deemed central to the community's identity. This has been a historical favorite in contexts of imperialism: as when a border state (like Texas) or an immigrant state (like Florida) insists on English only public schools; as when U.S. government paid physicians are permitted and encouraged to "provide" hysterectomies to Native American women once they have been anesthetized or just after they have given birth; as when housing projects close people of color off from more affluent communities so as to turn the communities' righteous anger, and potential civil disobedience, back on itself and thus cultivate internal, horizontal violence.

Oppression as a social phenomenon is a system of related barriers. The barriers are arranged by oppressors to capture a category of people who are identifiable in virtue of some perceived trait. This category of people is then made to live surrounded by barriers, many barriers, systematically related so as to restrict their choices, reduce their options, and facilitate their exploitation. My argument here is that these affect an *ontological reduction*, a reduction of options and possibilities for existence, and that such reduction is a necessary component of effective oppression.

Double binds are important clues in the attempt to locate and understand oppression. Certainly double binds are experienced on a daily basis and may be merely frustrating.[3] Yet if one locates a double bind that is shared by others who are similarly

[3] The mere experience of an occasional double bind does not indicate that one lives within an oppressive context. If this were true, then fully employed, white, upper class reasonably happy men would be

situated, this is a clue to a widespread social barrier that reduces the options of a specific group of people. Recognizing the existence of such barriers is important because it is how one begins to gauge the potential operation of oppression. Double binds, when they constitute a larger pattern, when they capture and reduce the options of a specific group of people, are the signature of oppression. After spotting double binds, the questions to ask are: Is this double bind part of a pattern? Does the pattern foster one group's mobility while restricting another groups mobility? Who is served and who in injured by such double binds? Is something being extracted from the immobilized group and consumed by the other groups?

One of the most important features of Frye's account of oppression is its ability to facilitate the examination of small barriers as strategically coordinated parts of a comprehensive system. The cage of oppression becomes visible in its complete and totalizing character. It is a useful analytical tool. The ability to explain and articulate the structure of oppression in its most thorough instantiation is the means by which one may analyze and critique forms of social life.

Total and Inescapable

From this radical feminist analysis we learn that oppression is designed to be highly effective and also inescapable. Through the elaborate molding of women's existence, women are to be engineered to become purely reduced beings. Oppression is,

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oppressed merely by the fact that they too are asked to comment on whether a friend's ridiculous new affectation is supposedly the best thing since sliced bread. But such men are clearly not oppressed, argues Frye. "If one is looking for an excuse to dilute the word 'oppression,' one can use the fact of social structure as an excuse and say that everyone is oppressed. But if one would rather get clear about what oppression is and is not, one needs to sort out the sufferings harms and limitations and figure out which are elements of oppression and which are not" (10).

structurally, a totalizing machinery. Women are to become appendages of men. Understanding oppression in a sophisticated analytical way is a valuable step towards combating and dismantling oppression. Through such analytical tools women have the ability to shift their perception, trace the cage of oppression, and develop an incisive feminist critique. This is why Frye's analysis of oppression has proven so useful in feminist analysis. This is also why Frye's analysis has been used in so many Women's Studies classrooms. The article helps reveal the operation of oppression.

Interestingly, María Lugones points out, this much-needed understanding of oppression is a critical tool that simultaneously obscures the possibility of liberation. Drawing from her own life, and the lives of other people of color who have struggled against forms of oppression, Lugones remains aware that in addition to the crush of oppression, resistance is plentiful. Further, one has but to note Frye's writings on separatism to find her working towards the idea of not being oppressed.[4] Both Frye and Lugones practice resistance. Nevertheless, the analysis of oppression reveals that oppression is intended as inescapable for those totalized beings who live within the cage. Liberation isn't just experientially remote, as Beauvoir finds when she explores why women have no memory of existence before oppression. What we learn through Frye's analysis is that robust oppression erases the possibility of liberation.

That sexist oppression is structured to be inescapable, Lugones notes with ambivalence. She is similarly troubled by Marx's investigations of oppression. Marx's analysis of class oppression portrays the capitalist exploitation as inexorable. Both

[4] See Frye. "In and Out of Harms Way" Politics of Reality page 52-53. She writes of the instructive clues gleaned from understanding how women are shaped by the machinations of patriarchal exploitation. One gains clues for thinking about characteristics that would not be present were it not for the imposition of oppression. From such clues may the imagination struggle towards feminist vision. Later in the same text, "Some Reflections on Separatism and Power" describes resistant possibilities inherent in separatism.

convinced of the reality of thoroughgoing oppression, and convinced of the simultaneous and contradictory reality of ever-present resistance, Lugones argues that the contradictory realities must both be acknowledged. She writes:

> It is a desideratum of oppression theory that it portray oppression in its full force, as inescapable, if that is its full force. I shall not critique Marx's account of class oppression or Frye's account of sexist oppression because they depict these forms of oppression as inescapable. I think much of the explanatory power of these theories of oppression resides in their depiction of the oppressions as inescapable.
>
> But I also consider it a desideratum of oppression theory that the theory be liberatory. The ontological or metaphysical possibility of liberation remains to be argued, explained, uncovered. If oppression theory is not liberatory, it is useless from the point of view of the oppressed person. It is discouraging, demoralizing.
>
> So I recommend contradictory desiderata for oppression theory. This recommendation, as well as the ontological possibility of oppression, depends on embracing ontological pluralism (55).

Hoagland, Daly, Frye and Lugones are all intimately aware of resistance. They know that the cage of oppression seldom perfectly captures and perfectly reconfigures women into appendages of men. They know this because they are themselves stubborn and resourceful feminists with similarly inventive *compañeras*. Out of this knowledge, they each write of the various strategies and ways of living that resist oppression. A concept of oppression facilitates social criticism; however, Lugones argues that we must also have a theoretical framework that allows one to see that resistance is always possible. We require both frameworks, though the resistant framework may not

adequately represent the perspective of domination and the framework of oppression may never countenance resistance.

Lugones moves from the personal insight that there is always resistance; that resistance is real, commonplace, and exists in a fantastic abundance. Notice that this is a hopeful and stubborn stance. Wrapped within extensive systems of oppression, the recalcitrant activity of resistant women keeps alive the notion of existence that is more than that of a reduced being configured as a mere tool in the oppressive social order. Resistance is invented from within the ordinary lives of stubbornly resourceful women. Knowledge of this reality helps motivate Lugones' willingness to have two contradictory claims—that real oppression is totalizing and that resistance is almost always at hand.

The Problem and the Preview

Why have 'resistance' and 'oppression' been the dominant concepts in radical feminism? Why these concepts but not the concept of freedom? As I have argued, oppression and resistance have taken center stage with good reason. Radical feminists needed and continue to need a concept of 'oppression' as part of an incisive feminist critique. Meanwhile, 'resistance' is a necessary concept because as feminists we must be able to complement our social critique with liberatory strategies.

The focus on resistance, in particular resistance as understood by Lugones, puts forward a specific type of feminist future. The imagination remains riveted on the immediate necessity of resistance and the ground before us, as far as one can imagine possibilities, is a landscape to be negotiated by resistance and slow steps towards an existence that is not characterized by oppression. In so far as resistance remains

analytically related to oppression, oppression continues to be a constitutive factor in the landscape. Analytically, we might note that the concept of 'resistance' always references something to stand against. In the current context, that something is oppression. If one lived in a world for which systematic oppression were not a political problem, then 'resistance' would likely take on a different meaning. From my perspective, the emphasis on 'resistance' is immensely important and yet inadequate. Something is missing when our attention is drawn mainly to 'resistance.' We obscure the possibility of imagining a world, of living in a world, which is not characterized by oppression. An existence without oppression, a world of be-ing free, is never contemplated. For this reason I think it is important that radical feminist writing and practice draw the possibility of freedom into the foreground. This is my project—drawing a radical feminist conception of freedom into focus, into the foreground of theory and activism.

As feminists, we cannot write of oppression without tacitly believing there is an alternative. To describe oppression without ever believing there is another option is to solidify the hierarchies of the fathers and to disable our own politics. Frye, Lugones, Hoagland, and Daly all recognize this. Each figures resistance as a prominent part of her feminist work. Ultimately, the emphasis on 'oppression' and 'resistance' is thoroughly necessary to radical feminist critique. However, radical feminism requires a third term, a term that offers a positive analytical account of existence beyond the frameworks of oppression. Therefore, I initiate the development of a radical feminist conception of freedom.

Retrieving Freedom

In this dissertation, 'freedom' names a mode of ontological activity possible for a certain kind of social being. It is not a conception that is readily available in the writings of radical feminists. At best, freedom exists in a nascent state, compounded with other radical feminist concerns. Freedom receives no extended treatment in its own right. When the term 'freedom' occurs at all in radical feminist writing, it is being used in specific ways. First, the term 'freedom' may be used in the negative sense, as *freedom from* the familiar grind of oppression. Second, 'freedom' is occasionally subjected to a detailed critique. The target of criticism is often a liberal and individualistic form of freedom awarded to those in positions of privilege and held in place by systems of domination. Third, 'freedom' occasionally appears like a hopeful darting glance. Radical feminists are remarkably disciplined in their avoidance of utopian fantasies. Meanwhile, they are working to bring about feminist realities that are not characterized by oppression. In rare instances, the adjective 'free' appears as part of a fleeting description of what may yet become possible.

The phrase 'negative freedom' was coined by Isaiah Berlin's explorations of freedom in the liberal tradition.[5] Negative freedom names the absence of external social restriction on an agent. External restrictions include enforced laws, physical barriers, social etiquette, and even the mere frustration that sometimes accompanies social interference. The imagined state of nature is a context where there are no limits on one's freedom other than forces of nature and internal factors of the agent, say common sense and one's bodily strength. The myth of the state of nature is powerful in the western intellectual tradition. Though the experience of absolute negative freedom may not occur

[5] Berlin treats these concepts of negative and positive freedom in detail in "Two Concepts of Liberty."

in the lives of Americans, negative freedom has functioned as a founding concept in U.S. political practice. Consider the First Amendment of the United States Constitution:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or of the right of the people to peaceably assemble, and to petition the Government for redress of grievances.

The amendment establishes *freedom from* governmental interference on individual rights. Young male college students manage to cite their right to negative freedom when they want to wear a Hooters t-shirt to class: It's a free country and I can wear whatever I want.

The concept of negative freedom is referenced in radical feminism, too. Sometimes it is used in passing to help articulate differences between seemingly related, but very different experiences of oppression vs. social frustrations. Alternately, negative freedom may be used as a contrast device for oppression. As she develops a feminist conception of oppression, Frye distinguishes the conception of oppression from encounters with frustrating social limits and from negative freedom. This move addresses a potential criticism from those who would see a strong conception of oppression undermined.

> Since we are a social species, almost all of our behavior and activities are structured by more than individual inclination and the conditions of the planet and its atmosphere. No human is free of social structures, nor (perhaps) would happiness consist in such freedom. Structure consists of boundaries, limits, and barriers; a structured whole, some motions and changes are possible and others are not. If one is looking for an excuse to dilute the word 'oppression', one can use the fact of social structure as an excuse and say that everyone is oppressed (10).

In this passage, Frye is not developing a concept of freedom. Rather, she is using the common concept of negative freedom and the fact of social structures to advance the more important discussion of oppression. People may like to talk of negative freedom, as

though they are familiar with it, as though it is missing from their lives, and as though the lack of it means they too are oppressed. But the idea that nobody lives free of social and legal restraint is turned aside before it can be mistakenly used to attribute oppression to everyone's existence. Frye is not exploring the concept of 'freedom' but rather exploring the reality of harmful social barriers, double binds. She mentions *freedom from* social limitations to address a potential criticism and clarify her own work.

Negative freedom appears again in Frye's writings on loving women. In this case it is the idea of *freedom from* subordination that she hopes will help one think beyond the cage of oppression.

> We who would love women, and well, who would change ourselves and change the world so that it is possible to love women well, we need to imagine the possibilities for what women might be if we lived lives free of the material and perceptual forces which subordinate women to men (76).

Interestingly, negative freedom is used here as a contrast point and a cautious enticement. Negative freedom might springboard the imagination towards alternatives to the current situation in which women's love for each other is conditioned by forces of patriarchal culture. *Freedom from* patriarchal culture is certainly an attractive prospect.

In other passages, references to 'freedom' are accompanied by criticism. Freedom is sketched as a privilege acquired through unjust social practices. Those who have freedom (freedom from harm and freedom to be agents) have often acquired it through exploitation or domination. Frye writes:

> A set of social and economic barriers and forces separating two groups may be felt, even painfully, by members of both groups and yet may mean confinement to on and liberty and enlargement of opportunity to the other (12).

And a paragraph later:

> But that barrier is erected and maintained by men, for the benefit of men. It consists of cultural and economic forces and pressures in a culture and economy controlled by men in which, at every economic level and in all racial and ethnic subcultures, economy, tradition—and even ideologies of liberation—work to keep at least local culture and economy in male control (13).

In these passages, 'freedom' is not being developed as a radical feminist concept. Instead, the language of 'freedom' and 'liberation' are noted for their association with the liberal tradition and especially the failings of the liberal tradition. Frye criticizes forms of freedom that result from privilege acquired by men through patriarchal domination. Sarah Hoagland's writings suggest a similar critique of a liberal conception of freedom. Her rejection of traditional ethics is built on the argument that such ethics contain master/slave values. She writes:

> For much of what we call ethics in our culture involves, not the integrity and moral culpability of an individual, but rather the extent to which she participates in the structural hierarchy of a social group or organization by adhering to its rules. The ethical virtues as we know them are master/slave virtues (13).

Though her target is not liberal theory in this passage, her criticism of habitual subordination is suggestive, especially when applied to liberal political organization. Political hierarchies replicate master/slave behaviors in a similar way to patriarchal ethics. In so far as freedom is acquired through constructing laws and acquiescing to their authority, freedom further normalizes master/slave virtues.

Although radical feminists are often averse to using the language of 'freedom' in their constructions of feminist possibilities and realities, suggestive passages piqued my curiosity. Consider how Frye uses the notion of freedom in this passage:

> The forces which we want to imagine ourselves free of are a guide to what we might be when free of them. They mark the shape they mold us to, but

> they also suggest by implication the shape we might have been without that molding (76).

This is a fleeting glance at freedom. It is suggestive because negative freedom acts as a springboard concept. It directs one towards something scarcely thinkable, yet exciting in its possibilities. What would it mean to speak of radical feminist freedom? For those who would look for freedom, the passage is marked, repeatedly, with cautionary notes. Again Frye:

> When we try to think ourselves independent, to think ourselves women not mediated by men or Man, what we attempt is both prodigious and terrifying, since by our own wills we would be led to that fringe of the world where language and meaning let go their hold on our lives (78).

Hoagland is similarly cautious as she considers freedom and free will as concepts central to patriarchal ethics. "'Freedom' is an abstract concept, and we should thus be wary when working with it" (202). Later she elaborates on why she guides her own inquiry away from the concept of freedom:

> ...the concept of 'freedom' as presented in the problem of free will is far too unclear and unwieldy. For my purposes, considerations about 'freedom' as it relates to 'moral agency' involve considerations about our day-to-day moral choices from where we stand—as finite beings who will die (who will end this life) and who live within the boundaries of a finite world as well as under significant restrictions, including oppression. That is, my interest concerns what we as lesbians face, as we make choices, given the parameters of this life. And it is from such a day-to-day, mundane perspective, rather than from the grandiose theory of free will that I wish to proceed (203-204).

Thus, Hoagland sets aside the language of freedom as she moves deeper into her project of exploring lesbian agency within contexts of oppression.

Mary Daly's writings present an exuberant form of exploration. In her efforts to cast off patriarchal forms, Daly leaves behind the language of liberalism and the virtues of master/slave relationships. She takes the leap into uncharted feminist possibilities,

inventing as she goes. She doesn't bother to reference the term 'freedom.' Nevertheless, her writings on feminist creativity and hope are suggestive of freedom, if I impose the term upon her. She writes:

> Hope and despair are sharpened by Righteous Rage. Furies dispense with potted hopes, such as hopes for equality within patriarchy, recognizing this to be a contradiction in terms. In this sense we despair, that is, turn our energies away from what had formerly been perceived as "good" and which was an illusion. Rage at having been deceived/duped into expending energy in the pursuit of false hopes emboldens women to reach/hope for more arduous and ultimately more real Goods. Rage, then, as a forceful reaction to realistic assessment of our caste's conditions, releases pent up gynergy which can then express itself as original, creative hope (Pure Lust 258).

What are these feminist "Goods"? Might they involve freedom, as conceived in radical feminism? These suggestive passages, brought into proximity with each other, offer a teasing hint of what I take to be a radical feminist conception of freedom. It is inchoate, under-theorized, and long awaited by hopeful and headstrong feminists. Much of Daly's writing is marked by energetic reclaiming of language, renaming of women's possibilities, and retrieval of goddess mythology from the putrid graveyards of patriarchy. Yet she is also methodic. She habituates herself to invention and the overthrow of patriarchy. It is a study in courage and self-discipline. She writes:

> The exorcism itself of the phallic presence of absence within women's psyches is accomplished largely by the acquiring of new operative habits. Websters weaving our way into the Pyrospheres unweave old behavior patterns and create new ones. This creation does not happen through wishful thinking but through arduous practice, through repeated acts (Pure Lust 261).

I am interested in new habits. More specifically, I'm interested in ways that radical feminists can habituate themselves to be-ing free. This is the "macro-mutation"[6] I will

[6] Daly's term, see Pure Lust 314 in reference to the dis-covering of new languages to usher in be-ing feminist.

investigate in this dissertation. I aim to retrieve the concept of 'freedom' for radical feminist use. In my work, freedom names the activity of be-ing that moves from ontological multiplicity and seeks to perpetuate such multiplicity.

A Radical Feminist Conception of Freedom

Radical feminists have spent substantial energy conceptualizing oppression, locating the large scale social barriers that form the cage of oppression, enacting resistance, inventing resistant communities, and inventing ways of sustaining such communities. Practical feminist experimentation has taken place and continues to take place in discussion groups, friendships, anti-racist workshops, women's shelters, women's music festivals, across kitchen tables, and at formal conferences.

Though oppression and resistance have received and continue to receive thorough treatment, we also need positive accounts of life outside oppression and resistance. Radical feminists are not merely interested in the critique of and resistance within patriarchy. The goal is existence outside of oppression. Because the absence of oppression is experientially and temporally remote, we need positive accounts of feminist existence in order to continue moving forward. These positive accounts are crucial because they tell us about values and modes of existence that bring feminist worlds of sense into existence. Positive accounts help guide current feminist practice in discussion groups, friendships and love relationships, and activist organizations.

Hoagland, refusing to keep her gaze riveted on the evils of patriarchy, offers positive accounts of lesbian values. Her work aims to identify values that will sustain women centered communities while undercutting habits of domination. Daly, after

vigorous criticism of men's global domination of women, turns her attention to radical feminist virtues like courage, lust for happiness, lust for change, and lust for community. Yet a radical feminist conception of freedom has not been forthcoming. We are overdue for such a concept.

In the following chapters I will offer a conception of freedom and integrity. These are related concepts and styled to the current work of being a radical feminist. In brief, freedom names a class of activity that arises from non-substantial and curdled multiplicitous subjects. This class of activity, available in contemporary day-to-day contexts, is marked by the opening of possibilities. Curdled multiplicitous subjects aim to integrate their multiplicity such that it forms a resource for imagination and action. Subjects who act from integrated multiplicity are not internally homogenized wholes, but rather internally complex and unevenly blended. Be-ing free works from curdled multiplicity, opening possibilities for action as one navigates social worlds.

I describe the subject as non-substantial because I move from the existentialist insight that subjectivity is produced through actions and choices. I do not posit the existence of an essentialistic entity to which one attributes qualities like "rational," "free-willed," "humorous," etc. The activity of freedom, however, has ontological significance—it shapes the subject as acts of freedom are performed. Be-ing free is an activity undertaken by non-substantial subjects.

I also view freedom is an activity practiced by radical feminists, and other feminists, in the here and now. I am specifically seeking a mundane conception of freedom, one that is not utopist. Perhaps one might think this conception of freedom is lofty, in the way that anyone may say that all ontological claims are lofty. Whether

ontological talk is lofty or not, we both intentionally and inadvertently make metaphysical assumptions all the time. Further, because I assume no substantial subject, individuals and communities are ever engaged in ontological creation as a matter of daily life. Ontology happens!

Radical feminist freedom names the ontological activity in which subjects work from their inherent multiplicity, opening possibilities, and seek to sustain that multiplicity as they make choices and navigate their world. This is a positive conception of freedom. As the dissertation develops, I will show how this is a more tangible and motivating than 'not being oppressed.' Further, I do not think of freedom as an activity that must await worlds absent of oppression. Multiplicitous subjects can practice freedom in the here and now as part of daily life.

Conclusion

The radical feminist attention to oppression and resistance has been entirely necessary. In particular, radical feminists analysis has been advanced by discovering and analyzing the ways that oppression is intended as a closed system. However the conceptual understanding of oppression and resistance cannot provide adequate help for radical feminists seeking to imagine forms of feminist life that are not characterized by oppression. The practical and theoretical work of moving beyond frameworks of oppression requires positive concepts of feminist life.

Radical feminists like Hoagland, Daly, Lugones, and Frye have worked to provide conceptions of feminist existence and feminist values that do not replicate patterns of domination and subordination. This work too is entirely necessary. We must have

concepts that help the imagination gain traction as we seek the promise of not being oppressed. As I have shown, 'freedom' is a term that has remained under-theorized in the tradition of radical feminism. Instead one finds a disciplined explication of oppression and the myriad ways resistance takes place in spite of oppression.

Where it is used at all, the term 'freedom' receives cautious handling. It may be used in a negative sense when radical feminists grapple with the possibility of life that is without oppression. On other occasions, 'freedom' is restricted to a narrow usage referencing liberal tradition. Here it is accompanied by criticism. Liberal political freedom is viewed as the purview of a privileged few and the concept is ill-suited to radical feminist work. At best 'freedom' is a term used in brief suggestive passages about what might be possible in a feminist future. Certainly 'freedom' receives no sustained treatment in these passages. Radical feminists have felt obliged to leave freedom in a decidedly forlorn state. The time has arrived for a radical feminist conception of freedom, a positive conception of freedom.

Chapter 2
Radical Feminist Departures from Liberalism

Introduction

In Chapter One, I demonstrated that radical feminists, though clearly interested in both oppression and the creation of a world that does not include oppression, also need a conception of freedom. In this chapter I will turn to liberal conceptions of freedom that have been so influential in western political thought. For the purposes of my project, one of the interesting features of liberalism is that it has a great deal to say about the topic of freedom. Yet, radical feminists have not chosen to borrow the notions of freedom developed within the extensive history of liberal political theory. The inattention to liberal conceptions of freedom is evident in the simple fact that radical feminists are often unconcerned about the current trends of liberal feminism, never mind the short shrift given to more classical forms of the liberal tradition.

I will explain how this indifference is motivated by specific moments of departure where the radical feminist tradition moves away from the older liberal tradition. In fact, the starting points of liberal theory and radical feminism mark the first moment of departure. As I will show, the two traditions begin with different assumptions about the availability of freedom and the efficacy of oppression. The second moment of departure takes place because radical feminists need a conception of agency specifically suited to navigating the passage from oppression to freedom. Out of theoretical and practical need, they invent both 'lesbian agency' and the activity of lesbian agency.[7] The third moment of departure takes place as Mary Daly's writings draw on and formulate

[7] Later in this chapter I will explain Hoagland's use of 'lesbian' and 'lesbian agency.' For the moment it will be useful to avoid interpreting 'lesbian' to mean women whose primary sexual interest if for other women.

existentialist feminism. Existential feminism is marked by a commitment to understanding the ontological category of existence as an ongoing project, a commitment that is not evident in the classical liberal tradition.[8] After reviewing these three major points of departure, it will be clear that radical feminists have never adopted obviously liberal notions of freedom, and that liberal notions of freedom are largely unsuited to radical feminist goals. In the final pages of this chapter I will also offer a reconstructed history of these radical feminist departures. As I will show, Lugones's writings on the logics of purity and curdling are helpful in understanding why radical feminism has necessitated departures from liberalism and necessitated the invention of new resistant categories.

It is Best to Start at the Beginning

The starting place of theory receives a privileged place in my analysis because it reveals that radical feminists discern specific problems, problems of oppression and potential resistance. These problems are not the same as those familiar to the classical liberal tradition. Thus, the resulting trajectories of radical feminism and classical liberalism are quite different. Consider the quintessential liberal thought experiment: the state of nature. For classical liberals, the state of nature is a product of the imagination

[8] This chapter will focus mainly on radical feminist departures from the classical liberal tradition. The focus on classical elements of the tradition, as opposed to contemporary liberalism, is necessary because I am tracing specific historical moments in radical feminism. Radical feminism began to develop out of the Black power, Marxist, and anarchist movements of the 1960's and 1970's. From this context, radical feminists initiated their own trajectories. This was precisely the moment when Rawls and other contemporary liberals were beginning to reformulate the classical tradition. Regardless of the co-occurring reformulation of liberalism, radical feminism had already gained momentum. Even given those feminists who undertook a critique of the newly developing liberal discourse, radical feminism was moving on its own distinctive trajectories. These trajectories did not intersect with contemporary liberalism. This chapter aims to forestall potential misunderstandings of 'freedom' influenced by liberal assumptions. It is not intended as a radical feminist critique of liberal thought.

that allows one to contemplate the metaphysical character of man [sic]. We are given a description of a world wherein there is not necessarily much contact among men, where utterly independent adult male individuals are able to use their ability to reason practically to gain desired ends, where individuals are able to claim whatever their will and muscle can hold, where social involvement is a possibility but not necessarily a fixed feature of existence.

The specific descriptions of the state of nature typically differ in terms of whether the context is largely brutal or fairly pastoral. For Hobbes, the state of nature is a singularly unpleasant context, best left behind in favor of an orderly and stable authoritarian government. Yet the state of nature in Hobbes's work allows one to view man [sic] as essentially free, independent both materially and ontologically, and potentially reasonable.[9] It is a context riddled with so much danger and aggravation, one is urged to conclude as Hobbes does: we are better off subject to one stable authority rather than subject to the rampages of nature and other people's fits of nastiness. He writes:

> Nature hath made men so equal, in the faculties of body, and mind; as that though there bee found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body or of quicker mind than another, yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man, and man, is not so considerable ... From this equality of ability ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our Ends. And therefore, if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies ... Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre ... In such a condition, there is ... no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all continuall

[9] I say "potentially reasonable" because Hobbes offers a lengthy analysis (in chapter 13) of the various insecurities and moods that dominate individual action. Because of "diffidence" and other manifestations of insecurity, social life is marked by unpleasantness. Yet men can act reasonably rather than on emotional insecurity and impulse, if they are forced to act with maturity and forethought, thinks Hobbes.

> feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short (183-186).

By contrast, Locke offers a more benign notion of the state of nature wherein individuals are likely to behave in reasonable ways and are capable of living in relative proximity without immediately becoming caustic to those around them. Like Hobbes, Locke finds that the state of nature reveals the metaphysical nature of man [sic]. In Locke's view, man [sic] is able to use reason, is free to make choices, and is free to seek the dictates of the will. Again, freedom is figured as innately part of existence. Locke writes:

> ...we must consider what state all men are naturally in, and that is a state of perfect freedom to order their actions and dispose of their possessions and person as they think fit, within the bonds of the law of nature, without asking leave or depending on the will of any other man (4).

And further,

> But though this be a state of liberty, yet it is not a state of license.... The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one; and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it that, being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions... (5).

Rousseau is similarly disposed in his views of man's [sic] nature. In exploring the natural laws of existence, we find his account also cites freedom and rationality as immutable characteristics of men [sic]. He writes:

> This common liberty is a consequence of man's nature. Man's first law is to watch over his own preservation; his first care he owes himself; and as soon as he reaches the age of reason, he becomes the only judge of the best means to preserve himself; he becomes his own master (50).

In each of these passages, the state of nature thought experiment invokes a conception of perfect freedom. Man's [sic] nature is that of a free and potentially rational being.

Natural man [man] is free from social and legal restraint, free to follow or ignore the practical dictates of reason, free to take up with others or treat them with violence. The only limitations on freedom in the state of nature are material: the muscles and weapons of others, and environmental forces.

The Classical Liberal investigations demonstrate something important about the European male political imagination in the 16th and 17th centuries. For them, the concept of freedom is a starting place for theory. The state of nature is a device that allows them to articulate the metaphysical character of men. And in their natural character, men (or at least European males) are properly understood as free beings, capable of reasoned action, having a natural right to govern their own action, and having a natural right to choose whether or not and how they may be governed.[10]

Certainly the liberal political theorists of the 17th and 18th centuries were inventing far-reaching critiques of surrounding political orders founded on hereditary rulers and divine right. Certainly they were surrounded by grave abuses of what they took to be the natural rights of individuals including the rights to create and authorize their own form of civil state. Yet, notice that the concept of freedom, the imaginary of freedom, is readily available from where they stand. "Man is born free and yet he is everywhere in chains" (Rousseau 49). It is this sort of free being that is the topic of interest, whose nature must be complemented and perhaps enriched by an appropriate form of social life and legitimate authority structure. It is impressive, I think, that their

[10] In the above paragraphs I have emphasized that Classical Liberal writers are using the state of nature to expound upon the nature of *men*, not humans, not women, not children. None of the liberals cited here manages a sustained conception of women as existing naturally in a state of perfect freedom and retaining such freedom in the transition to a civil state. Classical Liberals may flirt briefly with the idea that women in the state of nature are moderately capable of practical reason and perhaps capable of self-defense. However this is not a position they carry forward to the more advanced elaborations of the state and appropriate use of legislation in public and private domains. Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau are decidedly patriarchal in their reflections on women, if they reflect on them at all.

imaginations could be so thoroughly suffused with the idea that humans (at least European men) are naturally free. More impressive still, this idea that "man is free" was deemed plausible enough to found the invention of a new political order.

Classical liberals like Locke and Rousseau were not content to acknowledge the rational, independent, and free existence of men [sic] as a mere point of critique against existing political orders. They proceeded to explain how men [sic] could be free beings, yet choose to leave the state of nature, enter civil society, and retain a their natural right to freedom. They develop detailed answers to questions like: What sort of political order will allow a free, rational, ontologically independent being to retain a maximal amount of freedom while also benefiting from the security of organized social life? The answers to these questions often go on to articulate the form or forms of freedom that ought to be available, in fact guaranteed, in civil society.

I have chosen to belabor the starting point of liberalism because it stands in contrast with the work of many feminists, radical feminists in particular.[11] To read the work of radical feminists, to engage in activism with other radical feminists, is to become aware that we do not start from a presumption of original freedom. They also do not begin with an ontologically independent subject. Rather, most radical feminists find women's lives ordered by systemic oppression that pervades public and private life. The analysis of women begins with existence in a context of oppression. The inquiry is attuned to social beings and social frameworks. There is no move to grasp humans as

[11] Not all feminists have the same relationship to the liberal tradition. As most are aware, liberal feminism adopts the position that freedom is characteristic of all humans. Further, liberal feminists often maintain that genuine political freedom is near to hand—provided that the patriarchal culture is subjected to a thoroughgoing feminist crackdown involving critical examinations of social and political institutions and feminist reform of these institutions. I am not focusing on liberal feminism here. My emphasis remains on radical feminism.

basic and independent in their ontological makeup. Instead of theorizing ontologically independent beings, many radical feminists focus on how women continue to exist in a context of crushing oppression. I find Audre Lorde's writing especially pointed in this matter. In her speeches and essays she describes a starting place of struggle, of living amid the interwoven social practices of oppression—racism, sexism, and homophobia.

> ...Black women have on one hand always been highly visible, and so, on the other hand, have been rendered invisible through the depersonalization of racism. Even within the women's movement, we have had to fight, and still do, for that very visibility which also renders us most vulnerable, our Blackness. For to survive in the mouth of this dragon we call America, we have had to learn this first and most vital lesson—that we were never meant to survive. Not as human beings. And neither were most of you here today, Black or not. And that visibility which makes us most vulnerable is that which is also the source of our greatest strength (42).

The place where radical feminism begins is one where many of us were never meant to survive. "In the mouth of this dragon," survival itself can be understood as resistant action, where women empower themselves to care for their bodies rather than being treated by the misogynistic gynecological industry, where women fight to take back the night from rape, domestic violence, and incest. Theory that grows from resistant lives is radical because it does not begin with the received view handed down from existing intellectual traditions. It comes from women's lives and cultures, as they exist and resist reduction, subordination, and eradication in contexts of hetero-patriarchy, racism, and imperialism. In her autobiographical reflections of growing up in Maori fashion, becoming a lesbian, academic, and radical feminist, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku writes about the context of her activism and feminist theorizing:

> I am still conscious of what, and who, encircles me: my own community of women. Maori Lesbians—tribals, urbans, moving as graciously as one can to an elderly women—crone—Kuia status. And we call ourselves Kuia 2000—organized to share our knowledge, prepare for the ritualistic

> expectations of tribal ageing, take care of ourselves, our finances, our burgeoning needs, this group, rough and very ready, always resilient, celebrates our survival. To our straight contemporaries, such action—so many ageing tribal women so visibly without men—is radical indeed. So much has happened. So much more will, I am sure. And I look forward to it. Oh yes. I do (61).

The difference of starting place is important for my project because it marks a striking difference of imagination. Liberal freedom, as a meaningful and practical possibility, is not on hand in the worlds where radical feminists have lived, died, loved, and invented. Perfect freedom is experientially remote from the daily practice and knowledge of living as an oppressed resistant woman. "In the mouth of this dragon," what seems anachronistic and unconvincing is the prospect of initiating theory from imagined negative freedom. Starting places are important. Perfect freedom is compelling in the Classical Liberal imagination where it is understood as the essential feature of ontologically independent subjects. For radical feminists, starting with oppressed resistant beings is both realistic and strategic. Thus, radical feminists have not bothered to invest energy and time in the consuming task of resuscitating liberal conceptions of freedom and refitting such ideas for radical feminist use. From the very beginning, radical feminists have turned away from liberal theory, and this has made all the difference.[12]

[12] In the broad scope of radical feminism, many important feminists have taken up the tradition of liberalism, both classical and contemporary forms, and found it wanting. Such figures as Alison Jagger, Katherin McKinnon, and Andrea Dworkin come to mind. To be clear, my project focuses on one thread in radical feminism, a thread that has acknowledged the critiques of liberalism wrought by sister theorists, yet moves in differing directions of analysis.

Lesbian Agency

Instead of reworking liberalism, radical feminists have invented their own communities, theories, discourses, and strategies. Living within the standpoint of oppression has made it possible to see resistance as a practical possibility. While oppression tells a story of totalizing and inescapable barriers, most people who experience oppression have also been crafty enough to resist in minuscule and sometimes flagrant ways. Remembering and recognizing the activities of resistance is valuable. Examining the many ways feminists and subordinated peoples manage to resist proves a rich vein for expanding the awareness that one can act though one may be extensively hemmed in by the structurally related barriers. In fact, this recognition of resistance has led radical feminists to analyze the activity of *resistance as agency*. Throughout the project, oppression and resistance have been the crucial categories of analysis.

In contrast, the liberal tradition focuses on natural freedom as the primary category of analysis. It is the free subject pursuing self-appointed goals who is understood as an agent. The liberal tradition has its own conception of oppression. However it is a conception of oppression figured within a framework where power lives primarily in the hands of the state. The problem of oppression, as it is understood in liberalism, occurs when the state exercises its power to support inequality in the public domain of rights and legislative action. As we saw in Chapter One, the conception of oppression used in radical feminism is quite different. The cage of oppression is formed by a multitude of interwoven barriers that include the public and private social expressions of racism, heterosexism, and patriarchy. Institutions like patriarchy,

however, are not *primarily* legislated institutions and the agency that motivates oppression is diffuse.

Radical feminists have found the liberal tradition inadequate to the task of addressing oppression and have thus invented their own approach. A clear example of this is available in Sarah Hoagland's Lesbian Ethics. Lesbian agency is creative activity negotiated within a context of oppression. The formation of lesbian communities, lesbian culture, and lesbian activism all happens within the larger social context of oppression. Conceptualizing agency mainly as resistance is productive for radical feminist seeking to escape the totalizing mind binds of patriarchy; particularly since these mind binds often work to naturalize oppression and safeguard patriarchy from the mere idea patriarchy merits critique. But this same focus on resistance inhibits our radical feminist attempts to move beyond patriarchy and into positive conceptions of feminist worlds.

Hoagland's conception of lesbian agency has proven valuable to my project. In this analysis of agency, Hoagland moves away from the liberal and enlightenment anglo-European tradition in an effort to provide a conception of agency suited to local lesbians struggling to remake their communities in non-patriarchal ways. One of her primary goals in Lesbian Ethics is to provide a conception of agency that empowers radical lesbians to move out of oppression. As I develop a radical feminist conception of freedom, it is crucial that I work from a conception of women's subjectivity that acknowledges oppression and affirms the ability to break away from the purity of patriarchal constructs.

Hoagland begins Lesbian Ethics with the recognition that lesbians are creating communities all over the globe, yet many of these communities struggle to remain vital.

In her estimation it is not only the crush of patriarchy and heterosexism that is weakening lesbian relationships and communities. The persistent external aggression has been augmented by certain assumptions and patterns of behavior fostered in enlightenment and liberal traditions of anglo-european philosophy. For the moment, I will address only one of the noteworthy assumptions contained within the traditional analysis of political and ethical agency. That is, given that humans are free, rational, and able to determine their will, they are *ethical and political agents* with the relevant capacities to perform as principled neighbors and responsible citizens.

Of course there are numerous criticisms of this assumption. Many have offered extensive arguments demonstrating that this assumed agency has been a privelage enjoyed primarily by affluent, white, able-minded males who have achieved the age of reason. I will not undertake an exploration of these various critiques or recovery efforts here, as that would not be my project. But there is one compelling concern—we might wonder what Hoagland could possibly find offensive in this bedrock and reputable assumption, provided that it is scoured free of racist, sexist, ableist residue. Hoagland argues, and I agree, western philosophy has not provided adequate conceptual tools to understand how *women can be ethical and political agents for liberation while starting in a place of oppression, i.e. when they are not free, and their understanding, their deliberation, and their wills are compromised by living under oppression since birth.*

Instead of agency that negotiates the treacherous waters of oppression, the liberal and enlightenment traditions assume beings with inherent freedom, reason, and the ability to weigh options and choose the most appropriate action. Since such beings are free and they can make their will concrete in the world, we are justified in naming them agents.

When these agents weigh options and make choices based on pragmatic and altruistic concerns, then they are moral agents. When such beings live in a political structure that affords expression of one's will in social discourse and decision-making, then they are free political agents. It is an elegant set of ideas leading to a commonsensical conclusion. Hoagland regards it as a tempting trap; one that radical feminists may lapse into if they do not prepare an alternate conception of agency.[13]

Enlightenment agency, as described above, implicitly assumes one is free, rational, and thus able to make moral decisions. One can make decisions as an individual or as a member of groups in order to bring about helpful changes for one's life and the vitality of the community. It is a useful conception of agency if one is actually free from oppression. However, if one is not free from oppression, if one's life is so constructed that it is difficult to enact any sort of self-authored action that is not co-opted by the oppressors, if one cannot even imagine freedom, then it becomes impossible to see how one could be an agent for change.

In order to see the enlightenment conception of agency as unserviceable for radical feminists, consider this: What does it mean to begin, not with a hypothetical position, but with the reality of being constructed as feminine? The context in which feminists work is one wrought of multiple forms of oppression. Sexism, homophobia, heterosexism, racism, ageism, ableism—these and many additional forms of social

[13] Hoagland does not maintain that these are overt assumptions that every anglo-european philosopher acknowledges and accepts. Though I think it is true that this concept of agency resonates most clearly in classical liberals, notably Locke and Rousseau. Hoagland thinks the assumptions are often implicit in the modern and contemporary conceptions of agency. Further, this set of assumptions does occupy many US minds, as it is evident in social policy, legal precedent, and our classrooms. It is a tricky assumption that undermines the activity of radical feminism. (Frye suggests an example involving women in prostitution. The patriarchal claptrap goes like this: A woman is free, so she must have chosen to become a prostitute. Prostitution is illegal. Thus it *obvious* that she is the appropriate target of criminal law).

domination work to cage[14] women. Of course, the labyrinth is not merely a set of external barriers. Patriarchal machinations extend beyond tissue and into the ways women think about possibilities for living and loving. Women's options are reduced to a pathetic few, none of them very good options.[15] Further, the options available are typically ones that serve to reinscribe their positions as members of the dominated class.[16] Her own feminist will to help another woman or girl-child is interwoven with patriarchal brainwashing and even cruelty. To make "autonomous" decisions and act on their own aspirations is largely impossible. Given conceptual framework of the liberal tradition, and a consciousness of the reality of being constructed as feminine, we are left to conclude that women who live within the labyrinth of oppression are not agents in the sense crafted by liberalism or the enlightenment tradition.

The comprehensive character of oppression also dominates the past and future. Women, as Beauvoir and Daly have noted, have no history of their own. Our imaginations have been strategically starved by generations of misogyny, the active effort to write women out of history, and the destruction of women's attempts to found their own cultures. The prospect of absolute freedom is at best incongruous with women's experiences. The liberal conception of agency is abstract and analytically suited to liberal political orders in which freedom is a feature of existence. Women do not properly inhabit that political order. Further, the liberal and enlightenment conception of agency is uncomfortably inappropriate, as though it were someone else's story—which it is. Even more distressing, it often seems impossible that women, of our own doing, could achieve a future in which we exhibit the liberal form of agency necessary to create social

[14] Frye, "Oppression."
[15] Frye, "Oppression"
[16] Frye, "In and Out of Harms Way."

change within the liberal orders. The way is shut and the conceptual door barred against our use.

From the liberal and enlightenment traditions, we have learned that moral agents are identifiable as such beings, provided that they meet specific conditions. They must be capable of rational reflection, able to determine their will, and be free to pursue the chosen action. In the case of an oppressed group whose daily existence is confined to a narrow range of structured and exploitable activity, who have no history through which to remember and imagine existence absent such oppression, who labor largely within the mind-binds of patriarchy, and who face seemingly insurmountable obstacles to achieving freedom, we are left to conclude that members of such a group do not meet the definition of moral or political agents. In this context, changing from oppressed subject to political agent is no easy matter. It seems that "the oppressed" may need to wait for help from those who do have the liberal form of political agency to affect social revisions allowing women to be agents in their own right. This theoretical and political conclusion, *in which women must wait for real agents to help them*, is clearly unsatisfactory.

The concept of femininity is an artifact of hetero-patriarchy, an oppressed subject position that is in definitional contrast with the privileged agent position of masculinity. Hoagland describes femininity and the impossibility of feminine agency in the following way:

> The concept of femininity provides a basic model for oppression in anglo-european thinking. A feminine being is by nature passive and dependent. It follows that those to whom the label is applied must by their very nature seek protection (domination) and should be subjected to authority "for their own good." 'Femininity' portrays those not in power as those needing and wanting to be controlled. It is a matter of logic, then, that those who refuse to be controlled are abnormal [unnatural, females who are not feminine] (41-42).

And moving to the heart of the matter, she also explains:

> Yet if we stop to reflect, it becomes clear that within the confines of the feminine stereotype no behavior counts as resistance to male domination. And if nothing we can point to or even imagine counts as proof against the claim that all (normal) women are feminine and accept male domination, then we are working within a closed coercive conceptual system (40).

The problem is this: once constructed as oppressed, dominated, and incapable of being resistant, the coherence of these categories forecloses the possibility of resistant women changing into beings with agency. Those women, abnormal and non-feminine, may engage in acts of sabotage against patriarchy, but these and other acts of resistance are interpreted merely as incompetence, ironic comment, stupid error or insanity. It is decidedly not the work of a free and rational agent. This is why Hoagland sets to work on lesbian agency. Radical feminism must have its own conception of agency developed and suited to the project of moving from worlds of crushing oppression to worlds that are not characterized by oppression.

Hoagland chooses the term 'lesbian agency' out of an interest in accuracy. She is theorizing the agency of women who break from the subject position of hetero-patriarchal feminine women. To break away from this subject position is a thoroughly lesbian act—an unfeminine act that casts one beyond "decent" hetero-patriarchal worlds of sense. The term 'lesbian' provides the accurate name for a radical feminist mode of agency, regardless of ones choice or absence of lovers. Hoagland is also careful to keep the definition of lesbian open to ongoing invention. It is valuable to have a conception of agency that allows one to think beyond the patriarchal conception of woman as feminine

and subject to men.[17] The concept of the lesbian continuum helps one understand lesbian agency. As Adriane Rich pointed out, living on the lesbian continuum means we do not have a closed definition of lesbian and that the definition will shift as we move deeper into feminist modes of existence. Living on the continuum means women choose their location, shift their position, and name themselves lesbian agents in virtue of their *many* ways of abandoning patriarchy. For example, this dissertation is the act of a lesbian. It helps to understand my work as that of a lesbian agent and to understand myself as a lesbian. Such understanding accurately portrays the fact that I work within a radical feminist domain; I do not work towards limited modifications internal to the operation of patriarchy.

The problematic conception of liberal and enlightenment agency isn't specific to just one theorist, nor does Hoagland simplistically assume that she can provide a blanket indictment that will soundly dispense with the liberal and enlightenment thinkers. The target of her criticism is any explicit or implicit use of assumptions woven together in the following way: First, humans are fundamentally free. Subjects are first theorized within a context of negative freedom. An example:

> By Liberty, is understood, according to the proper signification of the word, the absence of external Impediments: which Impediments, may oft take away part of a mans power to do what hee would; but cannot hinder him from using the power left him, according to his judgment, and reason shall dictate to him (Hobbes 189).

Second, once in a social context, this freedom is inalienable; it is an aspect of one's natural essence. The form of freedom available in the abstract state of nature remains available in social contexts because humans are able to reflect on their options, determine

[17] Monique Wittig is a formative influence as well. She argued that a lesbian is not a woman because in refusing to serve men (in psychological, sexual, and material ways), the lesbian removes herself from the position of feminine subject to masculine designs.

their will, and then pursue that willed action. Third, this ability to reason and choose one's course of action is the foundation for ethical agency and political agency. Even in cases where one is compelled by force to do as someone bids, one retains free will, though the action in question does not reflect ones freedom. As Rousseau explains:

> Force is a physical power; I do not see how its effects could produce morality. To yield to force is an act of necessity, not of will; it is at best an act of prudence. In what sense can it be a moral duty? (52).

Wherever these assumptions are woven together, radical feminists will be left without conceptual help. In fact, they are left to settle for the notion that freedom, agency, and a better life will come when the oppressors (men) realize that oppression isn't nice and that generous oppressors (men) should lift women from their patient knees.

The vital question in classical liberal theory is, what sort of political existence is best suited to beings that are ontological independent, free, and capable agents? Or in its more classical form: what sort of political order would allow humans to retain as much freedom as possible yet avoid the hardships of the state of nature? By contrast, many feminists, radical feminists in particular, direct their inquiry by asking: How do we become agents of change when, for our entire remembered existence, our imaginations and wills have been channeled and conditioned by the social structures of patriarchy?

In Lesbian Ethics, Hoagland faces the challenge of explaining how those who are oppressed may create paths out of oppression and also be understood as having moral agency. With this as her project, she invents conceptions of both subjectivity and concrete ethical action. Lesbian feminists require a conception of subjectivity and ethical action that figures lesbian agency as power exercised with other lesbians and within

variously oppressive social worlds. Such agency is crucial not only to resistance but also to the invention of non-oppressive worlds.

Hoagland's project is extensive and carefully elaborated with an abundance of examples. For our purposes we will begin with a brief sketch of lesbian agency. Her explicit assumptions include the idea that the invention of lesbian feminist value will take place largely in contexts where women do not have control over their surroundings. Subjects arise in the midst of a social world where we have little or no voice in public discourse, few historical or mythic figures to nurture the idea of our own agency, limited access to social resources, even more limited access to *control* of social resources, subject to steady inundation of hetero-patriarchal propaganda. It is a subject position crafted of ontological reductions. The mind-binds of hetero-patriarchy suffuse us, undermining even wishful dreams of a post-patriarchal reality.

From these ontologically reduced positions, positions of subordination, women lack the power to be rational ethical agents in the tradition of liberal and enlightenment agency. It is impossible to be rational and ethical agents of the liberal and enlightenment sort precisely because ontologically reduced and subordinate beings cannot will certain ends, and act so as to bring about those ends, and most especially bring about an end to their own subordination. Lesbian ethics must grow from a different sort of agency. Hoagland begins with the narrow forms of action available to women yet dismissed as inconsequential by men. Though the context of oppression is chiefly scoured of opportunities for lesbians to exhibit enlightenment and liberal agency, it is still possible to act, and a lesbian's actions do affect other people and her own context. Hoagland develops a conception of agency predicated on the insight that lesbians can often exert

power *with* other lesbians and *within* a context of oppression, though women do not exercise power *over* patriarchal oppression. Lesbian agency is social and does not rest on a foundation of ontological independence. Further, exerting this form of agency fosters lesbian engagements with each other as they act to affect the worlds in which they live.

The aim of lesbian ethics is to promote engagement among individuals and to create forms of interaction that will sustain relationships without repeating habits of domination and subordination. We must learn to recognize our capacity to exercise power *with* rather than being disappointed that we cannot exercise power *over* a situation and fix an ethical problem. But it is a difficult project because living within hetero-patriarchy means domination and subordination permeate our modes of interaction and our imagination of what is possible. Domination and subordination are practiced from cradle to grave. Consider just a few contexts where domination and subordination are repeated: a father who exercises power over his family, an older sister who exercises power over her siblings, a teacher who exercises power over her students, a CEO who exercises power over his employees, an administrator who exercises power over her faculty, a president who exercises power over his fellow democratically elected representatives. The sheer range of contexts in which we are taught to practice domination and subordination yields a normalization of the practice. 'Power over' seems like the only power by which to effect change. It becomes commonplace, unquestioned, and makes it difficult to see that other forms of social interaction are possible, and even practical.

The practice of domination functions in concert with the expectation that the person doing the dominating has substantial power over the situation. Interestingly,

domination and subordination serve to keep individuals separate rather than encouraging them to engage substantively with each other. If faced with an ethical problem, the person elevated by the hierarchy can intervene and fix the problem or create a lasting change. 'Fixing' is an activity of privilege, one that actually maintains distance between fixer and the fixed. For example, a tearful student once visited me in office hours because she was pregnant. She was a sophomore, scared, overwhelmed, and she didn't know if she "believed in abortion." Nevertheless, she had scheduled an appointment with Planned Parenthood for a few hours later that day. She visited me, ostensibly because she had missed a quiz and a homework assignment. Faced with this poor soul I rushed to ease the situation by removing the quiz and homework from her grade and recalculated to her advantage. I was able to do this and send her on her way feeling good about my power to intervene. What the student and I did not do was engage as anything other than people negotiating a grade. No lesbian feminist engagement was created in this exchange. Of course I did have the privilege of feeling good about myself, remaining distant enough to feel superior, and creating an image of myself as a capable fixer.

In order to break the spell of domination, subordination and the distance it seals between women who might have been engaged allies, Hoagland avoids reliance on *power over* situations and people. She instead analyzes the values of power *within* contexts. One seeks to affect a situation. Lesbian value does not rely on or necessitate choices that remove the ethical problem or fix the unethical situation. Thus lesbian agency can be expressed in multiple worlds—worlds where mere survival and obstinacy destabilize the subject position of subordination, worlds where one is policed but still able to steal food for a women's shelter, worlds where one has loving, supportive partners determined to

foster lesbian values including ongoing evaluation of relationship patterns so as to avoid domination. Here one might consider a concrete example drawn from Hoagland's own experience. Having been denied tenure for being a dyke, and being unable to force the university to reverse this hetero-patriarchal practice, Dr. Hoagland engaged in demonstrations with other women. This activity reinforced the fact that lesbians do in fact exist, that people can disrupt the smooth operation of sexism and homophobia, and that women, lesbians in particular, can fight back. All of this is an example of lesbian agency. Yet in more traditional ethics and political theory this protracted resistance may simply look ineffective because it does not have the power to create substantial change.

In Hoagland's analysis, agency is not a matter of being able to choose the ethically correct action and make that action concrete in the world. Agency develops from a process of creating moments where one influences the surrounding context, one experiments and tries new kind of action to test the effect and one ultimately participates in a community effort of inventing feminist engagement and non-domination.

To experience life as part of an oppressed group means that one often navigates multiple social contexts. Some contexts fostering one's agency and others do not even recognize one as an agent. In lesbian ethics, there is no single correct ethical action. Ethically appropriate choices and responses will differ depending on whether one is in a context with other similarly situated and similarly ethical folks or whether one stands in a world that is distinctly perilous and has no interest in promoting one's agency. Furthermore, the process of moving out of oppression means that the possibilities for action, *the very possibilities for ethical action*, will change as women move beyond contexts of unfreedom. Webs of non-patriarchal cultures and values as well as the

provisional goal to create engagement and non-domination through one's choices mark this phase of movement.

Be-ing Free vs. Static Freedom

The third important moment where radical feminism departs from the liberal tradition takes place as a result of recurrent feminist use of existentialism. This trend of conceptualizing subjectivity from an existentialist perspective begins with Beauvoir, though my focus will be on the more recent feminist existentialism of Mary Daly. The ontological character of subjectivity is important because Daly's turn to existentialism dominates the background theory of Gyn/Ecology and Pure Lust. These texts are central to the body of radical feminist work that allows for radical feminist conceptions of freedom. Thus, this aspect of radical feminism is important to my project of inventing a radical feminist conception of freedom.

In attempting to think about how we would make a transition towards radical feminist futures, I have found it useful to compare Rousseau's conception of civil freedom and Daly's conception of be-ing. This exercise reveals important distinctions between a radical feminist and a liberal approach to the concept of freedom. Both Daly and Rousseau write of freedom; however, the term 'freedom' is not one that Daly employs in her writings and the translations of Rousseau typically use the term 'liberty.' In spite of the differing terminology, these thinkers address something that, in our ordinary pre-theoretical usage, we might call freedom. The differences prove interesting.

As I have said, Daly doesn't use the term 'freedom,' nor is this a much-used term in radical feminist literature. Yet Daly is clearly working to envision and create a radical

feminist present and future that is not characterized by oppression. More revealing are Daly's writings about Be-ing. I maintain that her use of the term 'Be-ing' suggests a conception of freedom, though Daly herself does not explicitly make such connections.

A few terminological notes will be helpful: When Daly uses the term 'Be-ing' with the upper case, she is referring to existence on a grand scale, the unfolding elaboration of the Goddess.[18] Individuals and communities can participate in Be-ing through their own local activities of invention. These local forms of creation are not capitalized; they are activities of be-ing. The hyphenation is used to mark the fact that Daly is thinking of an activity, a verb. She does not mean the traditional noun usage of the word 'being.' Rather, she employs an existentialist notion in which Be-ing is existence understood in terms of ongoing projects or activities of creation.

As Wanda Warren Berry points out, Be-ing isn't a reified thing, it isn't a static abstract category, nor is it an essentialist metaphysical substance. It is reality understood as dynamic and creative process. Daly wants to understand existence, especially women's existence, in this way because it is a path by which we will have greater opportunities to create our own non-patriarchal practices and identities (41-42). Be-ing offers the capacity to create a path out of the patriarchal foreground experience in which women are defined, reduced, fragmented, and alienated from each other by the oppressive customs, institutional practices, and languages of patriarchy. I would argue that freedom, if we impose this term on Daly, is what we *do*. It is an activity, a way of doing existence. In many ways, Daly is an existentialist. She sees women as

[18] One could substitute the idea of 'reality' or 'existence' if one found the notion of the 'Goddess' unpalatable. However it is a mark of Daly's commitment to women's culture and feminist invention that she does not shy from this language.

tremendously capable of invention, such fabulous invention that they can completely remake their existence and their subject position. She writes:

> ...feminism is a verb; it is female be-ing. Unlike sado-pseudofeminism fabricated by the fathers, which is a thing, a reified state, feminism as Realizing is constant unfolding process. It was/is inevitable that women who conceive of feminism as a thing, a state, would come at some point to believe themselves to have moved "beyond feminism." But if one understands feminism to mean the radical, ontological process of Realizing female Elemental potency, one does not move "beyond" it. One moves with it. Feminism is a Name for our moving/movement into Metabeing (Pure Lust 194)

One of the crucial points here is that Daly has criticized western linguistic traditions for 'noun naming.' Francis Gray argues that when working with Daly, we have to keep in mind that language is the condition for ontology (230-231). A particular language can set limits on the kind of ontological commitments available to us. The ways we use language affects the ontological assumptions and frameworks we develop. Noun naming is a method typical of eurocentric western patriarchal traditions. It has been a necessary step in the construction of ontological frameworks employing static essences. Daly argues at length against the dangerous mistake of treating Be-ing as a static substance. In fact she argues that we must throw off the habit of noun naming and adopt the practice of verb naming. This change in thinking and language marks an ontological shift into a radical, existential, feminist universe. It is in this context that women will create and recreate themselves without the patriarchal interventions that have destroyed, mortified, and fixed women for centuries of global patriarchy.

The point is, it is not just 'Be-ing' that has been used as a noun. Liberals like Rousseau have treated 'freedom' or 'liberty' as a noun. Rousseau sees freedom, within the State, as the product of a legislative process. Civil freedom is created as a product of

choosing to enter a republic, engaging as part of the general will in the democratic legislative process, and thus defining the scope of existence. For Rousseau's liberal individuals, freedom is a thing, a possession. It is an artifact of the populace's work to give itself laws. Citizens define the scope of their freedom and then live within that defined range. In this way, civil freedom is the end product of the general will. This difference between Daly and Rousseau isn't just a point of tension; it is a thoroughgoing difference in method.

One might be tempted to object that Rousseau's approach really doesn't result in civil freedom that, once defined through legislation, retains one static definition. After all, the democratic process has provisions for revision and amendment. This reply is inadequate. The potential for amendment and revision does not remove the incongruity between Daly and Rousseau's conceptions of freedom. The problem is that the goal of Rousseau's liberal democratic legislation is to make definite, lasting laws and policies. Even the revision or amendment of laws and policies aims at definite and lasting boundaries and fixed modes of existence. The result of Rousseau's democratic lawmaking is freedom within fixed margins. Alternately, be-ing is not an activity that aims to overthrow the patterns of patriarchy merely to set into place a new variety of stable and abiding patterns. Be-ing is an ongoing, unbounded, unfolding that breaks static patterns and creates its own unpredictable path. Be-ing, and the concept of freedom that accompanies it, cannot without contradiction operate alongside Rousseau's liberal conception of freedom.

Daly's writings on be-ing mark an important move in radical feminism. The choice to understand existence in terms of ongoing creative process grows out of a

context where women have been fixed by the machinations of patriarchal domination. Breaking towards an existence where women are able to invent themselves requires new practices and methods of resistance. Daly writes:

> One of the most important characteristics of caste systems is that they are extremely difficult, though not impossible, to change. In other words, caste systems are rigid, like plaster casts. Moreover, women are cast into fixed roles within the sexual caste system. Escape from these requires that we cast our Selves outward, inward, Wierdward, into other dimensions, refusing castration (Pure Lust 232).

The practice of noun naming is inadequate for the task of breaking out of the strategic ontological reductions and patriarchal erasure of possibilities. It is necessary to understand be-ing as a process, and thus it is necessary to understand freedom as an ongoing activity. Freedom, in a radical feminist context, cannot be a form of existence where one participates in creation of laws and then lives within the fixed law. Such behavior returns women to a fixed existence, the precise form of reduced life we seek to move beyond.

The Logic of Curdling and the Logic of Purity

Thus far we have seen three important points of departure from Classical Liberalism, points where the radical feminist tradition has moved to different ground as a consequence of developing feminism suited to the lives of women. First, radical feminists have begun their theories and activism from a starting place of oppressed yet resistant lives and experiences. Second, this starting place has required a conception of agency, lesbian agency, which is not founded on assumptions of fundamentally free beings. Third, Daly's conception of be-ing free is organized around the principle of

ongoing creation, rather than civil freedom within the limits of the State. In retrospect, some more recent developments in feminist theory help to make visible a certain pattern underneath the simultaneous creation of radical feminism and the departures from liberalism. In contemporary radical feminism, significant contributions have been generated by the work of María Lugones. Of particular import are her analyses of "logics" that facilitate domination and resistance. Theorizing these logics is an ongoing and feature of Lugones's current work. I introduce these logics here for two reasons. First, these logics are a reference point for my radical feminist conception of freedom. Second, when we use these logics and revisit the earlier work by radical feminists, it is possible to see that radical feminists have moved away from liberalism in a consistent way. They have moved away from theories and concepts that are complicit with logics that foster domination. Meanwhile radical feminists have been inventing theories, concepts, practices, and communities that employ what Lugones would call a logic of resistance.

Lugones writes of the logic of purity and the logic of curdling. By 'logic' she means a set of practices and assumptions about reality that allow one to understand and organize the world, people, experience. So one understands how things relate to each other by using a particular logic or framework of understanding. The logics of purity and curdling operate in thought, language, and action such that they shape the world and our experiences. [19] In the most basic terms, the logic of purity is associated with domination. Meanwhile the logic of curdling is associated with resistance to domination. One may

[19] The use of "logic" is ironic too. We often use the word "logic" when we mean practices of rational argument construction. However, Lugones's use of "logic" allows for ideas and practices to be associated with madness. The irrational logic of "mutually assured destruction" is one example.

think of them as frames through which we understand our lives and the possibilities available within the scope of practical agency.

Lugones is providing an explanation of what she takes to be existing patterns of thought and action that constitute reality. Thus the logics of purity and curdling name ontologically constitutive processes through which reality is crafted and experienced. The logics of purity and curdling are frameworks that constitute reality and organize experience.

The logic of purity is a framework through which experience is organized and by which we construct patterns of action. It is a logic that relies on a particular kind of separation, clean separation. Lugones introduces the logic of purity through an image of an egg, cracked, opened, and gently split into yolk and white. The goal is a pure separation in which the white slides away from the yolk and each can be placed in separate bowls. If one breaks a bit of the yolk into the white, then one may still complete the exercise; the pattern of action is just harder and messier. One has to fumble about with a spoon, chasing the yolk around the bowl in an effort to extract this impurity from the white (121). The logic or purity operates as a framework through which to know the world, to conceive of social groups, and to understanding the possibilities and restrictions on human agency. In this logic, the world, individuals, and categories are understood to be composed of pure constituents that are split-separated from each other.

To be raised in the logic of purity means that thinking of the world in terms of easily separable substances is more habitual than thinking of mixed up multiplicity. It seems a straightforward practice to think in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, pure groupings, analysis of wholes into atomic constituents, cleanly fragmented

components of an ordered unity, and tidy borders that demarcate separate groupings. In some cases an exercise of purity may be relatively innocent, as when one separates junk mail from the bills. Here one employs the logic of purity quite without reflection. In contrast to such relatively innocent time saving exercises in purity, one can also engage in the construction of split separations that are not so innocent.

One overt example of purity is the assumption is that there are two basic biological kinds of humans—one is born male or female. It is in virtue of presumed clearly distinct physiological attributes that one is marked as male or female on a birth certificate, encouraged to embody certain sex specific gender characteristics, tracked on medical charts, social security roles, driver's license, college admission materials, etc. In fact, it is easy to innumerate instances in which language and social practice organize around the assumption of this pure separation within the human population. Meanwhile, there is plenty of evidence to demonstrate that human physiology is quite varied and that a fairly standard statistical portion of the human population has neither XX nor XY chromosome pairs. The existence of intersexed people with chromosomal composition XXY, XYY, and XØ is well documented. There is plenty of anthropological evidence to show that sexual characteristics are not automatically tied to specific gender patterns. There are plenty of people who are born with ambiguous sexual organs. Yet the two pure categories of male and female remain overtly assumed as the only categories. The categories continue to be enforced as unchangeable fixtures of human experience.

The logic of purity is at work in the concepts of male and female. Instances of sexual variety are often erased and actively ignored—a process that involves describing intersexed individuals as abnormal and in need of medical reconstruction to fix birth

defects. Parents who do not elect to follow medical advice and have their child constructed as male or female are viewed as negligent, inflicting psychological damage on an otherwise redeemable child (Dreger 24-35). An intersexed adult may find that s/he cannot get reliable healthcare because doctors refuse to provide preventative care. For example, intersexed individuals have reported that doctors refuse to give gynecological exams or breast exams in instances where one's genitalia are ambiguous. Thus living on the boundary between strictly constructed categories of "male" and "female" is analyzed as a *personal choice* where the individual should expected to suffer awkwardness, rejection and perhaps brutality at the hands of "normal" people. The pure categories of 'male' and 'female' are revealed to be constructs maintained and policed through repetition, coercion, brutality, and surgical intrusion. The logic of purity, which underwrites and stabilizes these categories, is far from harmless.

The logic of purity is also typically available in abstract reasoning, especially the style of reasoning seen in western philosophy. One of the first things taught in an introductory logic course is that logic helps one to reason correctly. Logic courses, and many other philosophy courses, are organized around the goal of helping students to reason correctly, helping them to make distinctions, and helping them to arrive at conclusions without drifting into contradiction or other confusion. I learned about necessary and sufficient conditions in just this kind of early philosophy course. The category 'triangle' is bounded by specific conditions. One necessary condition for members of the category 'triangle' is being a three-sided figure. The category 'triangle' is strictly bounded such that there is no possibility of a figure that passes into and out of category. Something is a triangle or not a triangle. But nothing can be somewhat of a

triangle and somewhat of a square. Nothing can shift from triangle to square and retain membership in the category 'triangle.' Learning to make distinctions and becoming practiced at articulating such distinctions is a skill philosophers are trained to exercise. We often use the logic of purity to good effect when we explore a complex phenomenon and manage to tease apart the complexity until the phenomenon can be more easily observed and manipulated. We often live years in contexts where efficient use of the logic of purity is a skill for which we are rewarded. What we are not so often trained to do is to recognize that the logic of purity is easily abused. We are not so often trained to see the logic of purity as an integral tool in social domination.

A second logic highlighted by Lugones is the logic of curdling. Often, Lugones will use the phrase 'logic of curdling' interchangeably with 'logic of impurity.' The lens of curdling fosters understanding of the surrounding world and our selves as multiplicitous, internally complex, even contradictory. The metaphor used to introduce this notion of curdling is that of making an emulsion. Emulsions are inherently unstable because the ingredients may both cohere with and repel each other. Homemade mayonnaise is a tricky business, and Lugones uses its creation as a metaphor for introducing curdling:

> I place the yolk in a bowl, add a few drops of water, stir, and then add oil drop by drop, very slowly, as I continue stirring. If I add too much oil at once, the mixture se separa, it separates. ... In English, one might say that the mayonnaise curdled. ... When an emulsion curdles, the ingredients become separate from each other. But that is not altogether an accurate description: rather, they coalesce toward oil or toward water, most of the water becomes separate from the oil—it is instead, a matter of different degrees of coalescence (122).

The metaphor of curdled mayonnaise is an instructive reminder. We are in fact familiar with frameworks of understanding where impurity is a recognizable and commonplace event. Unstable emulsions are as common as sandwiches. The logic of purity has enormous influence on our thinking and action. Yet the logic of purity does not completely dominate experience. We experience mixed up ambiguities that cannot be settled into dichotomies, hierarchies, discrete parts that exist in easy split-separation. When we approach the world through the logic of curdling we engage in:

> Going back to mestizje, in the middle of either/or, ambiguity, and thinking of acts that belong in lives in mestizo ways,
> thinking of all forms of mestizaje,
> thinking of breaching and abandoning dichotomies,
> thinking of being anomalous willfully or unwillfully in the world of precise, hard edged schema,
> thinking of resistance,
> resistance to a world of purity, of domination, of control over our possibilities,
> is separation not at the crux of mestizaje, ambiguity, and resistance? Is it not at the crux both of its necessity and its possibility? Separation as in the separation of the white from the yolk or separation as curdling? (Lugones 122-123)

The logic of curdling is important because it is a form of understanding that accommodates resistance. By contrast, the logic of purity facilitates ontological reductions that advance the cause of domination. Yet in the logic of curdling, it is always possible to find ways in which clean-cut, strict categories are avoidable or escapable. It becomes possible to see both metaphors and lived realities of being intersexed, transgendered, transexed, multi-cultural, multi-lingual, a hybrid, a border-dweller.

In retrospect, we can see that Daly treads on similar "curdled" ground when she writes of radical feminism as a movement, an ongoing process, where one never rests with one set of permanent guides, concepts, or borders. Notice how Lugones' writing

can be helpful in understanding the details of Daly's feminist project. One of the recurrent themes in Daly's writing is the emphasis of breaking free from the patriarchal confines that reduce women to fixed vessels serving the needs of men. In order to move beyond this emptiness, women are urged to transgress the boundaries laid and enforced by patriarchy. This is not surprising, as the transgression of patriarchal boundaries is certainly to be expected in the invention of a feminist reality. For Daly, activities of transgression have ontological import as well as being a practical feature of feminist activism. In the logic of purity, where oppression may take on its most forceful aspect, the possibility of another reality is obscured, even erased. The logic of curdling makes it easier to see transgression as possible. There are no pure categories, no women emptied and purified of gyn/ecological power. In the logic of curdling, categories are fluid and invention is expected. Nobody is pure, including a "purely" oppressed person.

> Transgressing women go beyond limits set/fixed by lechers' laws. We pass beyond bore-ocracy's boundaries. While in certain dimensions of our activities we live "on the boundaries" of patriarchal institutions, in our deepest dimensions of be-ing, we pass beyond these boundaries. We pass beyond our own former limits" (Pure Lust 244).

Yet the transgression is not merely accomplished once, as if one may break with tradition and hop into a feminist world. The voyage is one in which women remain conflicted, partially constructed by the mind-binds of patriarchy even as we invent new realities. "No woman is/has completely Realized" (Pure Lust, 163) because our minds and habits remain "contaminated/laminated" by the strategic manipulations of domination. Furthermore, in Daly's ontology, women are not Realized because the project of feminism is never complete. "Pure Lust, then, is not a suddenly arrived at state; it is unfolding, questioning, realizing (Pure Lust, 164).

It is useful to read Lugones backward into Daly. However I do not mean to say that Daly has anticipated Lugones' analysis of curdling. Rather, I mean to show that there is a confluence of methodology. Daly and Lugones are both aware that masters of domination carefully erase the possibility of resistance, especially effective resistance. Patriarchs empty women of possibility and define reality in a way that domination is inescapable and all resistance is visible only as pathology or nonsense. Both Daly and Lugones are keenly aware that we must be able to see the possibility of resistance and experience resistance as it is acted out in ones immediate surroundings. What is interesting is that both analyze domination and resistance as a simultaneously practical and ontological movement. Further, they both explore ways in which we can understand resistance, growth and change as integral parts of feminist ontological context. We need feminist tools for this project, not tools of patriarchy that make a fixed reality and exclude possibilities for invention. In this way, it is enlightening to read Lugones in conjunction with Daly. The logic of curdling suggests the system of order through which Be-ing unfolds.

It is similarly useful to read Hoagland and Lugones together. The task of generating a lesbian context is accomplished in a curdled logic. Consider Hoagland's conception of 'lesbian.' One might assume that a lesbian context or lesbian ethics pertains only to those women who choose to engage sexually only with other women—this would be an oversimplification and misunderstanding of Hoagland's project. The meaning of 'lesbian' is not developed with the use of a strict definition, a drawing of boundaries. Rather, a lesbian context is invented and sustained by women loving and caring for other women, investing their energy in each other, connecting with each other,

enabling each other to be agents, creating meaning together. The meaning of the word 'lesbian' is left open for development just as the lesbian context is a place of development. It is not a club for which specific rules restrict membership and access. Hoagland argues against the attempt to create a strict (pure) definition. Hoagland writes:

> We feel we must define what a lesbian is so we can determine who is a lesbian and thereby defend our borders from invasion.... Even if we had a firm and theoretically coherent definition which articulated the borders of lesbian community, it would not serve us in the way we have imagined. So I let go of the urge to define. And I begin to think of lesbian community in a different way (8).
>
> I think of contexts. I think of lesbian context, and I do not think of defining its borders.... I think of lesbian community as a ground of lesbian be-ing, a ground of possibility, a context in which we perceive each other essentially[20] as lesbians, a context in which we create lesbian meaning (7).

Reading Hoagland with Lugones in mind proves useful because it allows one to interpret the lesbian context in instructive ways. For example, we find that Hoagland's project is one of persistently shaping a reality through activities and personal engagement that do not foster domination and exclusion. That project is a developing one, not a project founded upon stable definitions or foundational first principles. In this way, the lesbian context may be understood as a curdled context. It continues to shift in the developmental process. It is also useful to see that Hoagland resists, from the moment she begins explaining the possibilities of a lesbian context, using tools of purity that have been common to patriarchal contexts of domination and subordination. The project of inventing feminist realities is not served by strictly bounded concepts governed by the logic of purity.

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[20] The use of "essentially" might suggest a misinterpretation, namely that Hoagland is inventing an essentialistic definition of 'lesbian.' What she is actually doing here is emphasizing that the lesbian context is created on lesbian terms, without bothering to describe the contrast with heterosexism. Why doesn't she bother to contrast lesbian reality with heterosexist reality? Because her project isn't about heterosexism.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have indicated some of the major forms of divergence separating the radical feminist tradition and the liberal political tradition. There are of course many differences; however, the ones I address are crucial to avoiding misunderstanding radical feminist freedom. These key differences occur in three places. First, rather than beginning with the assumption that humans are essentially free and in need of an appropriate state that will guarantee natural rights, radical feminists assume that women find themselves surrounded by pervasive and insidious oppression and the lived experience of resistance. It is from the context of oppression that radical feminists begin. The liberal conception of absolute negative freedom is disregarded in favor of theorizing the immediate challenges of oppression and resistance. Second, radical feminists seek to value the reality and potentiality of resistance. For this reason, they have invented a conception of agency that permits conceiving of navigating oppression while also inventing modes of existence that avoid perpetuating the existing patriarchal patterns of domination and subordination. Lesbian agency contrasts with enlightenment conceptions of agency that assume that free and rational beings are able to exert a considerable measure of control within liberal political and ethical orders. Finally, radical feminists focused on conceptions of existence, activism, and engagement that assume reality is an invented unfolding process. The activity of be-ing free is a possibility even in contexts where oppression typically dominates. These three moments of departure indicate the conceptual distance that separates the liberal tradition and the radical feminist tradition. It will be important to keep these differences in mind as the radical feminist conception of freedom develops in later chapters.

To be clear, this chapter is not intended to show that the liberal tradition, including contemporary forms, is fundamentally flawed. It is true that some radical feminists have made this type of extensive and carefully researched critique of classical and contemporary liberalism. However my project aims to explain and invent a radical feminist conception of freedom. To accomplish this goal, I have briefly addressed liberal theory so as to avoid misunderstandings whereby liberal assumptions could misdirect one's understanding of radical feminist freedom.

In the final section of this chapter I began the process of organizing the works of radical feminists as projects that anticipate Lugones' introduction of "the logic of curdling." This exercise is not merely a descriptive. I have place the distinction between logics of curdling and the logic of purity here because the logic of curdling will continue to be a theme in later chapters. As will become clear, the radical feminist conception of freedom I invent is one that operates within the logic of curdling.

Chapter 3
Liberatory Subjectivity

Introduction

In the following pages I will explore the ontological accounts of subjectivity available in the work of Daly and Lugones. The radical feminist conception of freedom being developed in this dissertation is the activity of a subject. However the subject is unlike much of what we see in the history of philosophy. It is not a substantial subject. Instead the subject is in flux—a shifting, curdling, interacting existence. In the effort to articulate freedom, it has been crucial to understand the ontology of the subject that will *be free*. Daly and Lugones are resources for understanding subjectivity in a radical feminist framework. These two philosophers are at odds in certain moments and yet clearly compatible in others. I want to retain insights from both in order to facilitate my own conception of radical feminist freedom. Daly explores both oppressed subjectivity and a radical feminist subjectivity that fosters the ongoing project of be-ing feminist. I will use her conception of radical feminist subjectivity as a starting point for analysis. Careful attention to Daly's feminist existentialism will help highlight the organic ever-evolving nature of this radical feminist conception of subjectivity. Although Daly's conception of subjectivity is compelling, I will argue that Daly's account requires certain modifications in order to provide a more ontologically efficacious free subject. Lugones offers an instructive account of how we may view ontological separation as products of patriarchy and how separation can also be viewed as a feature of resistant existence. She offers an account of subjectivity as ontologically multiplicitous. Here, the self is understood as internally complex, plural, and never unified. By contrast, Daly does not take up a multiplicitous, non-unified subjectivity as a vision of feminist overcoming. Yet

Lugones' conception of multiplicitous subjectivity, with its lack of unity, marks an important advance for my radical feminist ontology of freedom. It allows one to conceptualize the subject as shaped by totalizing oppression yet retaining the inherent possibility of innovative feminist action. In this chapter, I will aim to weave connections through and across the space that separates Daly and Lugones.

Theories of Subjectivity

In the history of European and North American philosophy we can find a variety of ways by which to understand subjectivity, often described as theories of identity. There are two major trends relevant to the matter at hand. First is an approach that understands the subject or self as a single stable substance that exists, endures through time and change, is a unified whole, and may be known through careful reflection. The second major trend of analysis understands subjectivity as a multiplicity of elements that are *not* bound together by a substantial self.

Descartes provides an example of the first approach, where the self is a single and unified substance. Under his analysis, there are two metaphysical substances that compose all of reality: *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. *Res cogitans* is literally thinking substance. *Res extensa* is literally extended substance. In the Second Meditation, at the height of hyperbolic doubt, Descartes arrives at the conclusion that though all else may be questioned, at least he is certain that he exists. But what is the 'I' that exists? When analyzing his own subjectivity, Descartes finds he is most essentially a thing that thinks. He writes:

> But what then am I? A thing that thinks. What is that? A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sensory perceptions (19).

Later, in Meditation Six, Descartes acknowledges that the mind is linked with the body in a compound unity. However he is careful to emphasize the distinctness of mind from the body. There are no divisions, subdivisions, or parts outside of parts for the non-material *res cogitans*; Descartes concludes that his subjectivity is singular and unified. He writes:

> ...there is a great difference between the mind and body, inasmuch as the body is by its very nature always divisible, while the mind is utterly indivisible. For when I consider the mind or myself in so far as I am merely a thinking thing, I am unable to distinguish any parts within myself; I understand myself to be something quite single and complete (59).

Descartes is further convinced that although the mind and body are intimately tied, he is essentially *res cogitans*.

> Although the whole mind seems to be unified to the whole body, I recognize that if a foot or arm or any other part of the body is cut off, nothing has thereby been taken away from the mind (59).

Descartes concludes that as a subject he is essentially a thinking thing, though he does draw mind and body together in later Meditations. In fact he offers an account of how embodied humans have been granted a bridge, the pineal gland, which links the extended body, with all its experiences and motions, to the thinking substance of mind, with all its willing and reflection. Later critics of mind body dualism have argued that Descartes and other dualists are unable to provide a satisfactory account of how a thinking, non-material substance could affect the material substance of a body. Descartes had attributed the location of interface to the pineal gland and the sustaining efforts of a benevolent creator,

though his remarks on this gland never had the epistemic strength of clear and certain ideas. In retrospect one might say that Descartes offered an account of unified subjectivity, but an unsuccessful account of embodiment.

Far earlier, in the very founding centuries of western philosophy, a version of the unified self is available in Plato's Phaedrus. Interestingly, Plato *does* conceptualize component parts of the subject, yet concludes that their proper alignment renders a unified being. He characterizes the soul as tripartite in structure. It is composed of an intelligent part, a courageous and willing part, and finally an appetitive part. The soul of an individual allows for the possibility of knowledge, making reasoned choices, and making choices based on appetites and desires. Though the soul is internally complex and even in potential conflict, the complexity and differentiation is choreographed by the rational element into a disciplined unity. Ultimately, for Plato, it is the rational element that is capable of guiding the soul towards knowledge of self, truth, beauty, and justice. In fact, unity established by the dominating hand of reason is the *only* path to knowledge and certainty. The tripartite structure also allows Plato to address some questions of embodied subjectivity.[21] The Phaedrus dialogue describes how a well-ordered soul has ground for epistemic certainty in answering questions of self-knowledge, knowledge of others, knowledge of one's place in the social order, knowledge of justice, truth, beauty, etc.

Readers of Descartes and Plato have gone on to question the accounts of subjectivity: What knowledge is possible for human subjectivity? How does the rational soul or *res cogitans* provide conditions for the possibility of persistence through the changes of time and body? How does embodied existence affect the soul? How is it

[21] See Plato's Phaedrus, margin numbers 246a through 257a.

possible to know others and to share knowledge with them? These types of questions problematize claims about the nature of subjectivity and embodiment. These lines of inquiry are part of the long history of personal identity theory.

The second major analysis of subjectivity describes a multiplicity of parts that are *not* bound together by any substantial self. David Hume is a familiar representative of this approach. As an empiricist, Hume is deeply troubled by the suggestion of a metaphysical substance, the rational soul or *res cogitans*, that is not a feature of experience. Though he might note familiarity with the feeling of reflection and remembering, he doubts the existence of a thinking *substance*. Upon careful review of his memories and experience he can locate nothing other than a bundle of experiences and memories arising from different moments and phases of his life. He finds no enduring substance present in all the memories or experiences. Although he is not privy to the experiences of others, Hume is confident that unprejudiced empiricists will reach the same conclusions and will dispense with the idea of a metaphysical substance or soul that transcends the many alterations of life. The only conception of self that is warranted by empirical experience is "a bundle or collection of different perceptions... in a perpetual flux of movement" (252). This bundle-like self is simply a collection of memories and experiences: There is no legitimate reason to pose the idea of substantial identity that endures through time and change. Certainly there is no metaphysical substance to identify as the mind or soul. Certainly there is no unified internally complex soul that can explain, as Plato sought to do, ones position in the order of the mortal and immortal world.

The examples from Descartes, Plato, and Hume are noted here for several reasons. First, it is useful to keep in mind that the western and anglo tradition of philosophy has argued for both a unified self or subject and a self or subject that is *not* characterized by a metaphysical principle of unity. I use these two traditions to preface my exploration of Lugones and Daly. Conceptions of multiplicitous subjectivity, like the one Lugones offers, are not unknown to philosophers, although I grant that they are less common in a culture that is deeply influenced by the Christian idea of individuals who have souls and by conceptions of soul as substance. Second, I want to distinguish traditional metaphysical problems about the identity of the subject from more recent philosophical debates about the political implications of various formations of subjectivity. Rather than working to reconcile seemingly conflicting metaphysical principles like mind and body, change and permanence, variety and unity, I want to focus on the subject as a site of liberatory possibility. The questions germane to this area of investigation are, for example, if the subject is situated in a world that is dangerous or oppressive, how does this world of domination influence the subject? When one compares the subjectivity of oppressed and 'free' women, is there an ontological difference wrought by the dominance, submission, and exploitation? Under what conditions is it possible for an oppressed subjectivity to become free? I situate my current discussion of subjectivity within this simultaneously metaphysical and political domain. I will discuss ways in which subjectivity is shaped by domination and discuss some forms of subjectivity that allow for feminist becoming in spite of domination.

Method and Be-ing Feminist

Women are situated in a world that is dangerous and oppressive: How can we conceptualize subjectivity so that it is capable of change; in particular, change that is liberatory? And how must our subjectivity change in order that we may move towards feminist forms of existence? Daly takes up these questions in her work. She argues that the form of subjectivity needed is one that actualizes unity and transcendence. Daly makes such a move when she explains processes of exorcism through which women may be divested of their broken patriarchal selves and empowered with an authentic biophilic self.

This biophilic self is not a thing-like substance that supplants the prior self. In fact, Daly specifically rejects the use of 'being' as a noun.[22] Instead she understands the self as an ongoing project or activity. In the activity of be-ing, the self is created. She provides generous explorations of specific forms of be-ing. Consider be-ing biophilic—one specific form of be-ing explored in Pure Lust. Biophilia names a way women may comport themselves in the world. Biophilia carries the obvious suggestion of being "life-loving."

Daly's quest for *biophilic be-ing* results from two of her primary methods for feminist discovery and invention—the mining of patriarchy for reversals and the invention of reversals of reversals. In one of her early texts, Beyond God the Father, Daly argues that patriarchal practitioners use "reversals" as one method by which to assure patriarchal domination.[23] Daly advocates for feminist research that mines history,

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[22] See Chapter Two, specifically the section of Be-ing Free vs. Static Freedom, for an explanation of Daly's treatment of 'being' as a noun and 'be-ing' as a verb.

[23] The first reference to "reversal" takes place in Beyond God the Father, pages 95-97. However later texts are replete with Daly's examples of reversals and the feminist method of reversing the reversals

literature, and anthropological evidence for patriarchal reversals; i.e. the removal of any available form of female power and accompanying substitution of male power that dominates women. The reversals must be located and illustrated so that feminists are able to trace the mind-binds of patriarchy and so that feminists can access ancient sources of inspiration that predate the patriarchal reversal.

Anthropological, historical, and artistic evidence attest to the fact that the current forms of thoroughgoing patriarchy did not always organize social life. The goal of a patriarchal reversal is to strip women of power, both real and symbolic. Man supplants Woman by altering the meaning of a myth or symbol so as to garner and solidify social power over women. For example, it common knowledge that the European and the Mediterranean regions hosted cultures for whom goddesses were central sacred figures; however, these cultures were replaced by or evolved into patriarchal cultures. The goddess-centric cultures predate Greek and Roman civilization as well as the later Christian tradition. Consider the reversal crystallized in the comparison of the ancient Minoan fertility goddess,[24] who lifts snakes in triumph, contrasted with a "reverse" image on the Sistine chapel ceiling frescos, where Eve and Adam are cast from paradise after Eve converses with a snake and condemns humanity with original sin.

One of Daly's own explorations of reversal focuses on the simple fact of women giving birth and the Christian explanation of humanity being created by a male god who further creates woman from the body of Adam. She writes:

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[24] In archeological and anthropological circles the figure is called The Minoan Snake Goddess and is from Knossos, Crete, circa 1600 BCE. The figure stands a little over 13 inches tall with large exposed breasts, an apron that accentuates her hips and pelvis. She holds a snake in each upraised hand. Other related figures of goddesses have snakes coiled about their arms and waist. The received view of anthropologists is that snakes are associated with women and fertility because snakes undergo a form of rebirth each time they shed their skin.

> The absurd story of Eve's birth is an excellent example of a process prevalent in men's treatment of women and their accomplishments throughout the history of patriarchy. I shall simply call this phenomenon reversal. In some cases it is blatantly silly, as in the case of insistence that a male was the original mother, and that "God" (a male) revealed this (Beyond God the Father, 95).

Reversals are not negations. It would be inaccurate to interpret Daly to mean that Man and Woman are fundamental categories like ~A and A, where men create only negations and women create propositions. When she cites a reversal, Daly is not referencing a logical contradiction. Rather, she is citing an elaborate deception used to mislead women from locating resources for crafting her own existence. The image of female power or value is reversed and replaced with an image of male power and women's weakness. The replacement is a theft of symbolic meaning and a redrafting of the salient components so feminine connections with power and the divine are severed. The replacement features power or the divine in masculine form. For example, the power to create life is heady. Rather than deny the significance of creating life, the reversal attributes the creation of life to men. Later the original image or narrative or women's power is erased and eventually said to be a myth, but not actually something that people believed. In this way the reversal becomes part of patriarchal reality. With no evidence at hand that challenges this claim, it seems as though patriarchal reality is all that has been or could be. Reversals are thus revealed as a method used to normalize patriarchy. The term 'reversal' intentionally reminds feminists that patriarchy was not always normal, that there have been other forms of existence, that women are not essentially powerless.

Reversals are important to the current discussion primarily as an introduction to the method of reversing reversals, a method for feminist creation. The task of inventing a feminist reality involves divesting women of the woman-hating myths and practices

learned from patriarchy. The method suited to such work is that of reversing the reversals. The exploration and creation of biophilia is an example of Daly's method, reversing a reversal. The move towards 'biophilia' is a reversal of patriarchal existentialism. Existentialism, as the fathers teach it, urges that one contemplate death in order to grasp the nature of existence. It is by contemplating one's non-being that one may learn about being. In Pure Lust Daly notes that "existential courage" is a potted passion found in traditional existentialism (223). In Tillich (and I would add Heidegger and Sartre too), the final analysis is so abstract that there are only two categories, being and non-being. Existential courage amounts to courage in the face of non-being. However radical feminist existentialism goes far beyond courage in the face of non-being. Daly reverses the necrophilia of patriarchal existentialism. She chooses instead to explore elaborate and day-to-day expressions of biophilia. The goal is to create feminist forms of being, *not* to remain fixed on non-being. A philosophical system focused on non-being is necrophilic. Be-ing feminist involves reversing necrophilia and wholeheartedly embracing biophilia. A more detailed description of this activity of biophilia includes the passionate striving for diverse and benevolent forms of social organization and personal creation. Note that biophilia is also female identified; that is, identified with the invention of women's lives and the proliferation of life on the planet.

Daly's conception of biophilia is intended to facilitate the invention of be-ing; women will create their own identities, communities, relationships to nature and all the while privileging diversity; privileging a lust for relationships with other life-loving women; privileging the courageous social endeavor of forging a feminist world. Biophilia names a way of be-ing. This form of be-ing is then further explored in

Quintessence, where Daly spins an allegorical tale of one would-be feminist final cause, time travel, psychic and physiological recovery from the poisons of patriarchal capitalism, and daily life of kangaroo watching and composting. Be-ing biophilic, in Daly's analysis, represents a first order change in subjectivity, a needed step through which women may exit the oppressed subject position. Be-ing biophilic overthrows the blocked and frozen form of subjectivity characteristic of patriarchal beings.

"Ontological Dividedness"

How is the subject situated and held in place by patriarchy? Daly argues that within the context of patriarchy, women are fragmented,[25] living in "ontological dividedness." They are divided in the sense that they may be unable to express anger or outrage on their own behalf when subjected day-to-day to abuse or injustices of patriarchy (370). They are divided from their own bodies by a culture that repeatedly degrades feminine forms and represents body parts, like vaginas, as disgusting. They are divided from other women by the threat of appearing biased, as women-oriented instead of human-oriented.[26] These daily modes of fragmentation have ontological ramifications for women's subjectivities. Women's identities are broken.

One of the characteristic features of patriarchal culture[27] is that men possess women, not just in material ways, but also in the very form of women's subjectivity.

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[25] Cut to pieces, Pure Lust 233. Fearful fragmentation in the fatherland, 345 Pure Lust.
[26] Of course human-oriented really means oriented so that women never disregard white men.
[27] Daly has a detailed analysis of the major lynchpins of patriarchal culture. Principal lynchpins include 1) Deception, convincing women that patriarchal culture is normal/natural while simultaneously destroying the possibilities and realities of women centered culture, 2) Day to day system maintenance, wherein murder, torture, and threat of torture are used by men to keep women from resisting oppression, 3) Shaping women into patriarchal vessels, where women are taught only those forms of life that serve patriarchal needs. Each of these three lynchpins receives a detailed analysis in Gyn/Ecology and Pure Lust. As a point of reference, the possession of women takes place within the "foreground" and is an example of how women are inculcated with systems of patriarchal meaning and deployed for men's use.

Women are reduced and ontologically reconfigured so that they are appendages of men. Oppression is effective when women and their options have been successfully reduced such that even when women seek to accomplish their own desires, they do so while benefiting their oppressors. Frye names the practice 'grafting.'[28] Daly explores the ways grafted women live and how it generates ontological dividedness.

A divided subjectivity is created through the reduction of women's choices such that they may only animate forms of subjectivity deemed acceptable to patriarchy. For a reduced and reconfigured subject, the available expressions of her will result in patriarchal practices. As women, we come to see ourselves through the eyes of our oppressors, and we come to behave as our oppressors need us to behave. It is frustrating to know that one would like to effect some change but that one's will invariably reinforces a patriarchal practice. It creates an internal two-ness.[29] Women's fragmented subjectivities are lived in various ways. Within a middle class hetero-community, women's fragmentation may be experienced as an inability to have social relationships that are without taint of cruelty. In fact, as Daly argues, this is a patriarchal strategy designed to block women's abilities to be productively social with each other. For example, men position women such that women take on the roles and activities of patriarchal abusers; they become token torturers. Many little white girls with long hair are treated to the nightly agony of having tangled heads washed and combed. Certainly,

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[28] See the essay *In And Out of Harm's Way* in Politics of Reality for an extensive exploration of "grafting."
[29] In The Souls of Black Folk, Dubois wrote at length about a form of ontological dividedness, double consciousness, is a feature of life for black Americans. In Dubois' account, recognizing the contradiction between one's identity as a black person and one's identity as an American brings about the internal split. He wrote: "It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,--an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (45).

this was a ritual for me and many other girls my age. For little black girls the ritual involves chemical straighteners and irons can burn fingers and scalp. Interestingly, I have known and still know young girls who keep their long hair, in spite of painful rituals, because their fathers adore their *longhaired* daughters. Yet it is not their fathers who struggle to manage the tangles, apply straighteners, and hold the irons. It is mothers, aunts, and grandmothers who cultivate long tresses and sooth sore scalps. This is what a mother must do if she loves her daughters and wants to help them grow up to be loved in return.

A little girl's 'development' is a conditioning process that falls to the mothers, aunts, grandmothers and older sisters. Men charge older women with making the little girl a fit being for use in hetero-patriarchy. Meanwhile women learn that loving and nurturing other women invariably involves cruelty; the will to love is contorted and brought to serve patriarchy. This is ontological fragmentation. It takes place twice in this example. First, women's wills are turned against themselves, an internal dividedness. Second, the will to care and connect across generations results in division and alienation in women's potential communities. Women's abilities to pursue their own will and to connect with each other are shorn away while men pretend it's all women's business and nothing to do with men.

What change is wrought by be-ing biophilic? The reversal of brokenness, thinks Daly, is to be accomplished through activity, be-ing. In this activity, a woman becomes wholly present to her Self in and through her individual and social projects of biophilic creation. Note that the move to biophilia is a reversal of a reversal. Daly does not think that women are inherently divided. In fact, she sees ontological dividedness as a

colonization of women's subjectivities created by patriarchs. The original patriarchal reversal takes place when women's subjectivity is structured such that expressions of her will ultimately serve the oppressor. This structuring renders women ontologically broken. The reversal of the reversal, be-ing biophilic, entails a return of the will to the agent. The change is significant. It allows a woman to be "wholly present to her Self." She is able to engage her will in feminist projects of her own creation, rather than being a grafted conduit for patriarchal use, rather than having her energy channeled to support patriarchal practices.

Daly maintains be-ing biophilic is a goal for radical feminist forms of life because it reverses the structure of existence perpetuated by patriarchy. The form of subjectivity sought by Daly is one in which women break through fragmentation and create themselves as unified, yet ever-unfolding beings. Women will certainly be complex and always in a process of realization, as opposed to simple and complete. But more interestingly for my own analysis, Daly specifically argues that the Self will be *unified.* In Pure Lust, she writes:

> There are not many Selves in one woman, but rather, one Self, wholly present in that woman. I am not asserting here that the Self and soul are precisely equivalent terms; in fact, they are not. My point is that one obvious consequence of the idea that a woman has a soul wholly present in all of her "parts" is that there is an essential integrity at the very core of her Self (345).
>
> It is Realized as a woman becomes wholly Present in all of her activities. The phenomenological manifestation of this integrity and pervasive Presence of her soul is a radical consistency in her behavior. She does not seem to be "one person one day and someone else the next" (346).

These passages are significant. Although Daly clearly rejects the logic of static substances and ontological permanence, and thus she is unlike both Plato and Descartes,

through the reversal of a reversal, she returns to unity as an ideal. Just as Plato's unified and carefully ordered tripartite soul is better able to reach heights of enlightenment, Daly's woman who is wholly present to herself. The will of a woman is woven throughout all aspects of her be-ing and she achieves the ideal form of life, one of feminist integrity.

Daly is reaching for a language and a positive account of life outside patriarchal frameworks. She seeks an ontological account of women's existence in a radical feminist world of sense. This has been an important clue in my own investigations of freedom. We need a positive account of feminist realities and possibilities. I am showing that a radical feminist conception of freedom is needed and that a distinctively radical feminist account of freedom is possible. But in crafting this conception of freedom I cannot adopt the language of biophilia, unity and integrity whole cloth. The language and ontology must become impure.

Multiplicity and Experience

The unified subject, like one articulated by Daly, provides a point of contrast with the work of Maria Lugones. Lugones acknowledges that much work has been done in an effort of conceptualize subjects as unified beings. One of the principle ways this has been accomplished is through organizing the self as split-separated into various components that stand in a ranked order. Daly too suggests "parts" woven together in wholly Present be-ing. Yet Lugones chooses to reject the concept of a unified subject as philosophically, practically, or even experientially ideal. She rejects the singular unity, as well as the split-separated and hierarchally organized forms of subjectivity. Like Hume,

Lugones finds no experience of a single enduring metaphysical substance upon which to theorize subjectivity. Like Daly, Lugones notes the damage done to women as their identities are fragmented into split-separations that serve the interests of oppressors. However, Lugones takes a different path in her analysis of subjectivity. She starts from a conception of subjectivity that is multiplicitous. She offers a thoroughgoing analysis of being multiple. She is explicit in her move away from any ontology of enduring unified substance. She writes: "I am giving up the claim that the subject is unified. Instead, I am understanding each person as many" (57).

Ultimately there are two major reasons she pursues the idea of multiplicitous subjectivity. The first is that multiplicity is a feature of experience for many who experience oppression. Second, she maintains that multiplicitous subjectivity facilitates resistant potential. Lugones argues for the multiplicitous conception of subjectivity because it approximates the experience of people of color in racist and ethnocentric orders. It is an approach grounded in the day-to-day experiences of bicultural people who navigate contexts of subordination, rich ancestral cultures, and environments of neglect. She writes:

> In giving up the unified self, I am guided by the experiences of bicultural people who are also victims of ethnocentric racism in a society that has one of those cultures as subordinate and the other as dominant. These cases provide me with examples of people who are very familiar with experiencing themselves as more than one: having desires, character, and personality traits that are different in one reality than in the other (57).

Multiplicity is a feature of existence for many people who must navigate two or more cultures. In such cases, the self is not experienced as unified and thus there is no practical motivation to formulate a metaphysical explanation of unity. Instead, one has multiple selves that form and reform in relation to the surrounding social worlds. These

selves are exercised in the navigation of the many, sometimes contradictory, and hierarchically related social worlds (53-54, 127, 130). Some social worlds are highly structured and policed whereas others are specifically ignored—ignored the way a pow wow is ignored by white culture, ignored the way a remote and impoverished community is ignored by affluent neighbors. Each is ignored so long as they create no disruption in the surrounding social hierarchies. Environments of neglect appear useless from the perspectives of the oppressors, yet they are simultaneously zones of resistant possibility.

Lugones is herself a woman familiar with multiple selves and the sensation of separation. She is familiar with the feeling of sharp ontological dividedness. But she also explores the meanings of separation available to her as a native speaker of Spanish. In this analysis she recalls being an impatient child charged kitchen chores, one of which happens to be the making mayonnaise. She remembers watching her own work separate in the mixing bowl and turning to her mother: "*Mamá, la mayonesa se separó*" (122). The recollection features the use of separation as curdling. Living in the U.S., Lugones is aware that Spanish-speaking communities are often environments of neglect. And it is from her life as a Spanish speaker that she draws out a new way to conceptualize 'separations.' When mayonnaise curdles the mix of oil and egg coalesce towards oily-egg and eggy-oil. It is a messy separation, and helps conceptualize separation in a way that defies the logic of purity. This is the path to understanding subjectivity as multiple, internally complex, shifting, and irregular. The path of this heterogeneous subjectivity leads away from the ideal of a unified entity. Unlike Daly, Lugones moves towards multiplicity as an ideal.

Gloria Anzaldúa offers an account of her experience as a multiplicitous being in Borderlands / La Frontera. In some cases she wrestles with her multiple identities as sources of painful internal and social conflicts. She writes:

> For the lesbian of color, the ultimate rebellion she can make against her native culture is through her sexual behavior. She goes against two moral prohibitions: sexuality and homosexuality. Being lesbian and raised Catholic, indoctrinated as strait, I *made the choice to be queer* (for some it is genetically inherent). It is an interesting path, one that continually slips in and out of the white, the catholic, the Mexican, the indigenous, the instincts. In and out of my head. It makes for loquería, the crazies. It is a path of knowledge—one of knowing) and of learning the history of oppression of our raza. It is a way of balancing, of mitigating duality (18).

In this passage Anzaldúa traces a path through multiple expressions of self. Sometimes she is a lesbian able to choose and create her identity. Sometimes she is a sexual and instinctive being deplored and pressed to shape shift towards straight. Sometimes, when recognizable as a woman of color, she is whitewashed and simultaneously rendered alien. Multiplicity is the ontological reality underlying "the crazies." Of course it is not a fruitless multiplicity. Anzaldúa recognizes that multiplicity is also a source of knowledge, if she can find the means to balance the selves.

Lugones herself notes that the multiplicity of experience, while not always a source of comfort, is a resource for navigating various social worlds in which one has differential levels of efficacy. Certainly it could be possible to be thoroughly processed and reduced to a mere appendage of oppressive social orders. But the advantage of needing to navigate multiple social worlds results in access to resources that have escaped the attention of oppressors. Multiplicity is experiential and potentially valuable. Anzaldúa writes of multiplicity as a simultaneous discomfort and source for crafting resistant identities:

> Chicanos and other people of color suffer economically for not acculturating. This voluntary (yet forced) alienation makes for psychological conflict, a kind of dual identity—we don't identify with the Anglo-American cultural values and we don't totally identify with the Mexican cultural values. We are a synergy of two cultures with various degrees with Mexicanness or Angloness. I have so internalized the borderland conflict that sometimes I feel one cancels out the other and we are a zero, no one. A veces no soy nada di nadie. Pero hasta cuando no lo soy, lo soy (63)
>
> When not copping out, when we know we are more than nothing, we call ourselves Mexican, referring to race and ancestry; mestizo when affirming both our Indian and Spanish (but we hardly ever own our Black ancestry); Chicano when referring to a politically aware people born and/or raised in the U.S.; Raza when referring to Chicanos; tejanos when we are Chicanos from Texas (63)

In the second passage, Anzaldúa is working to understand the path of knowledge within her multiplicitous identity. Lugones appeals to these forms of experience when she rejects the ideal of the unified purified subject. The experience of occupying two or more cultures and moving through numerous stratified social worlds is the manifestation of separate and palpably distinct identities. This conspicuous separation is the experience from which Lugones begins to theorize an ontological account of subjectivity that comprehends multiplicity as natural and resistant.

What I have offered here is an explication designed to show an interesting divergence in the writings of Daly and Lugones. Daly and Lugones arrive at different conclusions regarding the status of multiplicity. Clearly both recognize "fragmentation" and "split-separation" as forms of subjectivity created by and for the oppressor's benefit. Women are fragmented and separated from themselves and other women. Much western analysis regards the split-separation and efficiently rendered hierarchy as a necessary feature of 'normal' social existence. Daly and Lugones reject a reduced, fragmented subject as inadequate for the task of resistant feminist invention. Yet it is curious that

Lugones and Daly are in contradiction on the issue of multiple selves. Daly views separations as toxic products of patriarchal machinations. Lugones, however, sees two senses of multiplicity, purely fragmented beings and impure curdled beings, corresponding to the two senses of *separó*. It is the impure, curdled subject that is potentially inventive and resistant, thinks Lugones. Daly continues to have pure thoughts. The fact that she does not accomplish the sin of impure thoughts is perhaps symptom of her reliance on reversals of reversals.[30] Because she is seeking to reverse the patriarchal reversal that creates women as broken subjects, her feminist reversal moves towards the antonym of brokenness, a lively unified subject.

Daly obviously has a conception of multiplicity generated through fragmentation. In fact, she even uses the example of multiple personality disorders. But Daly does not have a conception of curdled logic. Thus she has no impure thoughts of multiplicitous subjectivity be-ing feminist. The divergence of Daly and Lugones amounts to the full-blown ontological gap between logic of purity and the logic of curdling. The existential feminism of Daly remains within the domain of purity.

Metaphors of Separation

As Daly and Lugones both note, fragmentation, where it amounts to a pure or split-separated subject, is problematic. Plato, as we have seen, offers an example of pure separation. Plato uses the metaphor of a chariot team to describe the soul. The charioteer is reasonable, one horse is devoted to bodily pleasures, and the second horse is characterized by boldness of spirit (Phaedrus 246 a-c). On Plato's analysis, reason is the most important component of the soul. Reason unifies otherwise unruly parts and makes

[30] I owe the language of "impure thoughts" to Frye, who knows the craft of a wordsmith (June 29th, 2005).

it possible for a person to act correctly. It is reason that is the best guide to action and the only guide to truth, beauty and justice (248d). Those whose chariots are led by reason are the valuable and worthy elite, suited to being civic leaders (248 d-e), and suited to governing those who would otherwise devote themselves to ill-advised acts of boldness or wallowing in bodily pleasures. Plato's subject is unified and made into a coherent[31] agent through an internal hierarchy of substances.

A hierarchally unified subject of the sort described above is an ideal for Plato; however it is completely unacceptable for Daly's feminist project. Plato uses the separations in the soul to understand the subject and the subjects place in the social order. Those who are guided by bodily concerns are the least worthy of respect on Plato's account. This type of soul is to be expected of manual laborers (248 e), women, and slaves. The rational elite appropriately governs these lesser beings. A social hierarchy of types of individuals matches the hierarchy in the soul. In the Platonic account, the logic of purity operates in such a way that an individual subject is split-separated into discrete characteristics of reason, boldness, and bodily appetites. The split-separation is then repeated at the social level to explain *unavoidable* social hierarchies. Daly discards the idea of a split-separated subject as a product of patriarchal machinations. Split-separation is not a form of unity and no split-separated woman is wholly present to her Self. For Daly, split-separation is synonymous with patriarchal fragmentation.

When developing an ontological account of subjectivity, Lugones does not pursue conceptions of a unified subject generated from within the logic of purity. First, as we

[31] When I say coherent I am thinking about how subjects could have their history, their current activities, and their future plans organized by specific and consistent goals. So one might decide to become a graduate student and then organize one's life around this for years to come, and be able to look back at the past to locate specific events and plans that were instrumental to entering grad school, etc. The subject is coherent in terms of a narrative that is meaningful and could be articulated with thoughtful reflection.

have already seen, the accounts of a unified subject do not match with experiences of those who are bicultural and live in contexts where one at least one culture is subordinated, exploited, and maligned. Second, the logic of purity fosters conceptions of subjects who have been reduced to a purely oppressed being.[32] Third, the logic of purity also aids in arranging social organization that is hierarchal and ultimately oppressive (Purity, Impurity, and Separation 460, 463-464). What the logic of purity does not offer is subjectivity that has resistant potential. Lugones turns away from conceptions of subjectivity afforded within the logic of purity. Instead she opts to analyze multiplicitous subjectivity within the logic of curdling. Daly, although she is interested in the idea that the subject has many parts, even after she has moved beyond the fixed fragmentation of patriarchy, continues to see unity as a goal. She does not see that multiplicity can take the form of curdled separation that is thoroughly impure. Daly does not see curdled multiplicity as a form of subjectivity that is valuable for be-ing feminist.

Multiplicity in Lived Experience

What are the metaphors by which we can begin to theorize the multiplicitous subjectivity? Lugones uses the metaphor of an emulsion as one way in which to begin thinking about multiplicity that does not easily suggest an image of parts that are themselves pure. Depending on the environmental conditions, an emulsion might curdle in differing ways. Particular globs might coalesce, break down, reorganize, etc. In any case, the emulsion is never pure. If we start with the assumption of impure multiplicity when we focus on subjects, we are able to attune to the ways in which they are multiple. One has multiple selves in virtue of the numerous, long-term and inculcating experiences

[32] As I argued in the first chapter, ontological reductions are a necessary step in effective oppression.

of navigating multiple social worlds (58-59). Anzaldúa writes of being willingly attuned to multiplicity:

> The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in a Mexican culture, to be Mexican from and Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, not good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns ambivalence into something else (79).

It is tempting to suppose that the experience of multiplicity is only available for those who are bicultural or live in dramatically opposed social worlds.[33] In fact Lugones's approach need not be taken to mean that multiplicitous subjectivity is the rare ontological condition of those whose lives are characterized by blatant contradiction, the sort of contradiction envisioned by Dubois who wrote of the contradictory life of being an American citizen and a Black American citizen. In fact, multiplicity is available as an ontological condition for those who do not necessarily experience the dramatic contradictions of being bicultural. For example, a white woman might, for years, negotiate a range of social contexts: a frustrating and mind-numbing job that occupies a large part of her energy, occasional trips into a nearby black neighborhood where she is reminded that she is out of place, a reasonably enjoyable and often empowering home life where she does have a comfortable place, an exhausting and never-ending battle with medical professionals on behalf of sick loved ones, the daily anxiety of dealing with a disturbed, sometimes violent family member. Each social world has its own structure--its own rules, paths of legitimate behavior, and means of enforcing accepted behavior.

[33] This claim could be enriched by an exploration of purity and unity as phenomenological privileges. As a white woman living preciously close to the top of the hierarchy, the lived experience of unity and purity may be mistaken for the prized goal of feminism. It is in fact purity/unity crafted through social domination and the privilege of glossing over multiplicity.

One's subjectivity is structured by each of these worlds and the people in them. Thus, depending on the world, she may be invisible and hemmed in by oppressive barriers, or constructed as an interloper to be monitored even as she is uncomfortably reminded of her color, or empowered and respected while at ease and unmonitored among family, or disciplined into cautious subservience, etc. For each context a specific self is pressed to coalesce and fit the surrounding social structures, expectations, demands etc. This is multiplicity, though it may not be experienced as the crazies or as psychological two-ness.

When developing an understanding of multiplicitous subjectivity, it may be tempting to think that subjects merely change in and out of various roles and apply various masks as needed. It is true that we often have experiences in which we apply a mask and recite a script. However, Lugones intends to draw attention to a different and far more effectual phenomenon (60). Being inculcated into particular worlds is not a simple matter of pressing a mask into place and holding this temporary shape and visage. On Lugones's, approach the process of being inculcated into various worlds is more like the process of dealing with runny cake batter that is poured into an intricately punched bunt pan and then cooked until the very molecules of the batter are changed.[34] To claim that subjectivity is multiple means the various selves are constitutionally different because the mold and the cooking processes differ from world to world. There is nothing essential that remains unchanged. By contrast, the language of "masks" and "scripts" suggests that there is an underlying thing that remains the same in spite of superficial appearances and actions.

[34] Here I am thinking about the irreversible denaturing of protein molecules as they are subjected to heat.

The cake metaphor reaches its limit because subjectivity is highly malleable in a way that cake batter is not. The structuring social world can influence one in substantial ways. As multiplicitous subjects, we are (unlike cakes) able to coalesce in many different ways. Thus, it can be hard to understand and sustain the metaphysics of curdled subjectivity in one's thinking.

Lugones uses the metaphor of an emulsion as one way in which to begin thinking about multiplicity. Emulsions are unstable liquid mixtures. It is possible to carefully blend ingredients like oil and egg yolk until the oil and yolk form a relatively smooth texture. However, this blending process is tricky. Particular globs might coalesce, break down, reorganize, etc. In any case the emulsion is never a single pure substance.[35] Given this insight, when we focus on subjects, Lugones intends that we attune to the ways in which subjects are multiple. It becomes possible to discern the multiplicity of selves present in the uneven emulsion of subjectivity.

In addition to thinking about curdled emulsions, it is important to think about how containers function. They are a clue to thinking about how subjects can be curdled yet be presented in a particular context as though it were a pure substance. In a multiplicitous subjectivity particular selves or one self may coalesce into the foreground. This takes place when a social construct emerges around the subject and as the subject willfully animates the construct. Imagine the relationship between a container and contents.[36]

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[35] A helpful contrast might be a mixture of sugar and water. The sugar dissolves in the water so that one has a container of pure sugar water. Meanwhile emulsions like yolk and oil are an unstable blend in which tiny beads of oil are temporarily suspended in the yolk. The mixture is always a muddle (multiple); the oil doesn't dissolve in the yolk.

[36] I have not yet noted a specific passage in which Lugones focuses on how containers can function. Nevertheless, I think it is a helpful way to consider the interplay between social worlds and subjectivities.

Variously shaped containers can display some or all of what they contain yet also presents the contents in different ways.

For example, an ice cream cone can prominently display the topmost scoop and yet hide or contain the dribbling melted bits that are channeled within the narrow part of the cone. A salad dressing bottle might be purchased with a decorative foil wrapper that politely covers the long neck of the bottle where a hefty quantity of oil settles in waiting. A wide, shallow bowl spreads the contents more thinly so that multiple ingredients are each visible and dispersed across the bottom of the bowl. Differently shaped containers call attention to the way in which an emulsion can be formed and displayed. Some containers are duplicitous constructs, designed to coax a specific coalescence into the foreground. What one sees when purchasing the salad dressing is the flavorful "low fat" part of the dressing. It looks like pure flavor without guilt, or at least that's what we are encouraged to see. The important thing for sustaining a conception of ontological multiplicity in the subject is to remain attuned to the subtle and even hidden forms of impurity. The idea of a "construct" or a "container" helps one to imagine the way in which a social world can shape an individual by pressuring and coaxing certain characteristics into the foreground. Yet we need not be fooled into thinking that there are only pure subjects.

While containers and emulsions are useful images, they do not always remind us that subjects must be understood as active beings engaged with other subjects. The image of a container that shapes an emulsion may lead one to think that subjects are isolated in containers and that they passively occupy the container. Lugones does not assume an ontologically independent subject of the sort posited in the liberal tradition.

Further, subjects can be efficacious. A subject can co-determine her identity. She engages with other subjects and may act upon the material dimensions of her context. Think of the subject as three-dimensional, like a heavy and unevenly mixed cookie batter that fills out a space, clings to itself, but is also capable of pressing against and molding the surrounding context and the other cookies. Lugones is seeking just this sort of ontological multiplicity and the capacity for liberatory agency. Sustaining her approach to multiplicity is accomplished by sensitivity to multiplicity, other subjects, containers, and the ability of the subject to codetermine her identity.

Day-to-Day Multiplicity

How does this multiplicity of selves emerge in day-to-day experience? Consider a woman who goes to work in a busy office. This social context is structured by a physical building designed for office work, specific duties defined by a job description, a hierarchy of authority within the office, legal codes that pertain to employers and employees, rules of etiquette for business settings, the inter-office culture of formality or familiarity, current office projects and deadlines, etc. These components function together to define a space that may be inhabited and maintained. The woman who works in this social construct is urged to coalesce into a particular self (perhaps a couple of selves) as she negotiates the workday. She is urged (by the space of a cubicle, the watchful boss, the threat of reprimands for violations of regulations or etiquette) to be task oriented, deferential, and appropriately mannered. This self wells up as a foreground identity while the surrounding social structures coax it forward. She is not without her own imaginative ideas for navigating this familiar social world. Feeling dissatisfied with

the strictures of her boss but poorly positioned for direct action, she covertly captures a bug from under her desk and deposits the critter on the desk of her boss. In this example, the subject is active. The animation and the coaxing co-occur. On Lugones's account neither the subject's agency nor the social world is consistently dominant. Rather the subject and the surrounding social worlds have shifting levels of efficacy. The subject herself has shifting levels of efficacy.

Lugones is serious about multiplicity. The above paragraph might be taken to suggest that subjectivity is multiple but that there are a relatively small number of selves: a work self, a leisure self, and the occasional authoritative self. Actually, Lugones suggests no upper limit of selves for multiplicitous subjectivity. Like Daly, Lugones sees that constant construction and evolution take place in subjectivity. This is the case because we are continually negotiating shifting social worlds. In the space of a workday the context changes significantly when one moves from cubicle to break room to restroom.

I am calling attention to the fact that the workplace can be internally complex and call for different selves: one that is obsequious before a petty boss, one that is sociable and lively among co-workers in the break room, one that is focused and diligent in a cubicle, etc. If one were to look at any one of these selves, the portrait might be quite detailed. The person who is required to behave deferentially might be devoting all of her energy and people-reading skills to the task of using exactly the right words, conveying the right body language, speaking in the right tone, and pushing only the right buttons. Nevertheless, the foreground deferential employee provides only a limited aspect of the person. The molding context may fool the observer to seeing one coalesced self, a

properly dutiful, reduced subject. But this is not necessary. We can remember that she is a multiplicitous subject. This deferential employee faintly blended with other aspects of her subjectivity. She retains resistant potential should she animate her multiplicity.

These various structural features of office life may be absent from the same woman's home life. She may go home to a house that is her own, designed for leisure and day-to-day needs. One's behavior here may be very different than it is at work. Of course the world is still structured. The spaces of the house are designed for leisure and practical household work. The kitchen is larger and more outfitted than whatever might exist at the office, there are more windows to vent the air and stare out of on idle days, there are comfy chairs for taking a nap, etc. The structure of the house is designed to be one in which one can even ignore a mess by closing the door, disregard dirty dishes, grill hotdogs for a midnight snack, etc. The structure of the house coaxes a different self into the foreground.

This ongoing interaction between subject and construct demonstrates that there is no static subject-object separation wherein one might define the surrounding world as external or other than the subject. The objects and the subjects are involved in a process of codetermining each other.[37] There is no assumption of an ontologically independent subject. Radical feminist subjectivity is not outfitted with the forms of ontological independence familiar from Classical Liberalism; rather, subjects actively co-determining each other and the contexts of their activities. Subjectivity on Lugones's analysis is not an essential substance that is separate and distinct from a surrounding world of objects

[37] This is why it is important to think in terms of multiple contexts and the coalescence of multiple selves. When the woman mentioned above goes home and makes dinner, she coalesces into a different self, one that is perhaps in contradiction with the work self. She might be messy, leave dishes for days, close doors and ignore piles of dirty laundry. By contrast, her work identity requires habituated tidiness and a precise filing system. Thus, she is both a slob and vigilantly tidy.

and other subjects. Identities are formed amid the convergence of inventive personal action, interaction with other subjects, and contact with material constructs of one's world. The subject codetermines its identity.

Liminal Insight

In addition to the account of multiplicitous subjectivity and the various selves, Lugones writes of liminality. What does it mean to speak of the limen? The limen can be characterized as that which is in between specific social worlds. It is not a physical space or place. It is a temporal space in which one experiences the threshold between one construct and another. The idea that liminality is possible is grounded in the experience of multiple social worlds. We pass into and out of various social worlds, each of which provides a construct that urges the subject to coalesce into a particular identity. We have the experience of this as we move from the task-oriented cubicle, to the raucous break room, to an empty home. If we accept the idea of multiple social worlds that coax subjectivities into becoming different identities or selves in these multiple worlds, then we can also think of ourselves existing between contexts. We can think of ourselves as existing on the threshold between social constructions, such that no one world has us full in its grip.

Liminality is a moment between worlds. We do not necessarily experience liminality every day or in every transition into another social world. Sometimes liminality is the jarring shock of realizing that we are perhaps caught between worlds—perhaps between one that we are trying to enter but another that unexpectedly takes hold.

In other occasions we cultivate a moment of liminal reflection. Anzaldúa offers the following description:

> That focal point of fulcrum, that juncture where the mestiza stands, is where phenomena tend to collide. It is where the possibility of uniting all that is separate occurs. This assembly is not one where severed or separated pieces merely come together. Nor is it a balancing of opposing powers. In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. That third element is a new consciousness—a mestiza consciousness—and although it is a source of pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm (79-80).

Here we find Anzaldúa coaxing forward the consciousness of multiplicity, noting the subtle ways a subject admits of various selves—all muddled, contradictory, and inseparable. She writes of living at the threshold. The idea of threshold between frameworks encourages one to consider multiplicity, though one may not experience a similarly sharp realization to that of Anzaldúa. The concept of a threshold, the experience of crossing a social threshold, can be fodder for insight. Subjects are multiple, though we may have enough social privilege that we experience primarily structured social words coherent with each other. These coherent worlds may not, in and of themselves, nurture the idea of multiplicity. But the *concept* of threshold between worlds reminds one that there are multiple worlds and multiplicitous subjectivity.

In addition to thinking of liminality as an experience of jarring awkwardness, it is also important to notice that liminality can be viewed as a moment of integration. My own work on a radical feminist conception of freedom employs the idea of integration. We have already seen Daly's use of 'integrity.' For Daly, integrity is achieved by one who overcomes the fragmentation of her identity, becomes whole and forges a unified self. I do not propose that integrity or integration is a matter of wholeness or unity. Daly

views integrity as a form of radical consistency with the self. A woman of integrity is one who successfully embodies her will in effective action. I imagine something different. At moments of integration, the many selves, with their complimentary and contradictory qualities, are left unstructured and able to intermingle. One is still a socialized being with a history, social relationships, a will, and various futural projects. But the social pressure to be a single well-defined self that fits a well-defined world is absent. In this case, the subject is not urged to become singular, coherent, and internally consistent. It is partially shaped by social history and often a contradictory muddle with various futural expectations. The liminal absence of structure is what allows the individual to experience the integrated multiplicity.

The experience of integrated multiplicity offers unique possibilities. The logic of oppression, as it is implemented within hierarchal, exploitive, oppressive social worlds, functions by reducing the identity of the subject. As I argue in Chapter One, the ontological reduction of the subject is a necessary step in constituting a servile subjectivity. Multiplicity is dangerous from the perspective of the oppressor. Without multiplicity, we are without intellectual, cognitive and imaginative resources for radical critique. Living as a reduced being, a being purified of multiplicity, tangled in the mind-binds of patriarchy, we can perhaps ask for improvement. But we need more resources if we are to conceive of be-ing feminist and inventing our own freedom.

The experience of integrated multiplicity allows for a conceptual space in which the imagination is not constrained by a specific set of socially constructed boundaries. The integration is not a form of unity. Instead, it is a form of multiplicity wherein palpably different selves are in muddled contact with each other. The uneven integration

gives access to multiple vocabularies, strategies, and modes of thinking all at once. In most contexts these differing and perhaps contradictory selves would not meet. Breaking out of the deadly reductions of patriarchal domination is facilitated by awareness of multiplicity—liminal awareness.

Daly's language does not include a discussion of liminality. However it is clear that she sees the need for something akin to liminality. On a day to day basis, in the grind of patriarchal living, we are coaxed to believe that this structure is all there ever is and all there ever could be. Patriarchy must project itself as an all encompassing reality. Daly views this as the guise assumed by the patriarchal "foreground. The foreground is the "male-centered and mono-dimensional area where fabrication, objectification, and alienation take place" (Wickedary 76). However, Daly is quick to note that the foreground, though it captures our attention, is not all there is. She remains aware of the experience and value of "Boundary Living." Having evaded the reductions of patriarchy, even briefly, one acquires resources for radical critique and remaking the self. One can potentially face the foreground of patriarchy without being a mere vehicle of patriarchal use. It is the activity of "Presentiating the Background in the midst of the foreground conditions by communicating contagious Courage, Pride, and other Volcanic Virtues" (Wickedary 67). Confounding the foreground and moving into the background is the philosopher queen's road to feminist be-ing.

Daly's remarks on "integrity" are brief, yet suggestive. And it is clear that she thinks boundary living is valuable for radical feminism. I am interested in developing a conception of integrity that does not postulate unity as a goal of liberatory subjectivity. I am interested in using the term 'integrity' to name the activity of ongoing integration of

multiplicity. To undertake projects with integrity means that we foster a condition in which we are aware of our multiplicity and the imagination is given as much range to play as possible. When constrained within a specific social world, the imagination may lack range because the reduction to one self obscures anything outside of the boundaries of that social world. Radical feminist be-ing seems impossible for a reduced being existing within the context of oppression. But awareness of one's multiplicity means that the imagination is not forced to work from patriarchal purity. Instead one has a range of selves and ideas that can be brought into new arrangements, used to create strategies of resistance, sabotage, and even freedom.

It is in moments of liminality that the multiplicity of subjectivity is most accessible for the subject. It may be that two distinct and contradictory selves emerge in a particular instance. For example, one might imagine a middle class white woman who recognizes her own multiplicity and internally contradictory selves. Perhaps she is made aware of her simultaneous identities as racist and anti racist. This is one sense of liminality wherein a small set of identities have curdled into an uneasy company.

The second sense of liminality may be characterized by what I call integration. One could have an awareness of a small set of curdlings. However, it is also possible to have the contrasting experience of a hodgepodge of partially suspended identities. Here I am thinking of the experience in which one is aware of the sheer number of selves that one can exhibit, the fact that can be present as a confusing muddle, all in suspension and yet palpable in their variety.

In such moments we don't experience one identity that has coalesced in such a way that it forcefully assumes the foreground. Rather, we have a larger number of

identities partially coalesced and muddled. A woman might recognize multiple identities: white, privileged, with middle class values and high skill labor abilities; underpaid, exploited, living only marginally above the poverty line and without insurance; able bodied and yet often in pain, unable to work strenuously; a defiant intellect, social activist, sharp tongued even with family members who are less "evolved"; a tired and deferential employee who just tries to stay below the radar, etc. The subject can see herself as multiplicitous in such a way that the complexity is integrated and no one clear and consistent identity exists. No one identity is distinctly foregrounded. Rather, they are all blended into each other as an integrated curdled mass.

Conclusion

Characterizing the subject as multiply structured is worth the challenges, thinks Lugones, because it reflects experience and because theorizing multiplicitous subjectivity can help provide possibilities for resistant action on the part of oppressed and reduced agents. Both experiential and political reasons recommend the multiplicitous subject.

Many individuals have the daily and hourly experience of navigating a world which structures them as outsiders. It is also the case that these same individuals may travel to worlds in which they are insiders. When experience presents seemingly fractured and contradictory selves, one begins to wonder why there would be so much focus on theorizing a single, unified, enduring, subjectivity. Such a thing might be logically possible. But this single, unified, enduring subjectivity isn't necessarily found in experience. And more importantly, the single unified and enduring subjectivity

undermines attempts to subvert oppression. For this reason, Lugones is giving up the goal of a unified self that is part of experience or political goal for feminism.

In this chapter, I have sought to explore the significance of curdled and pure separations as these ideas shape our potential understanding of subjectivity. Being attentive to the way in which one thinks about purity and multiplicity has important implications for subjectivity. To assert that subjects are multiple but without unity, hierarchy, or a transcendental ego means that we must think of them as highly malleable, internally curdled, and able to coalesce into different formations as the social world makes demands. On this approach, the facets of one's life need not be seen as completely separate things, but different coalescences that one is in touch with and remembers, that one can draw upon, that one can forget or ignore. Such various coalescences are possible while engaged in a given social world. If we approach subjectivity in this way, we avoid splitting the subject into internal substances that are organized and unified through a hierarchy. We leave open the possibility for a subject who might integrate her curdled multiplicity, making the multiple selves accessible, even as she is pressed to coalesce towards a particular kind of self. The knowledge of these many selves can then become a resource for resistance, for imagining possibilities, and for courageous action. In this way the ongoing act of integrating multiplicity can generate resistance and perhaps freedom.

Chapter 4
Initiating the Inquiry into a Radical Feminist Conception of Freedom

Introduction

Until now radical feminists have left the concept of freedom under-theorized. The focus on resistance and oppression, wholly necessary to radical feminism, drew the radical feminist's eye and her attention. A careful analysis of oppression and its operation allows us to see women as a inhabiting a cage, though we may experience different specific barriers. The analysis of oppression facilitates our survival, our critiques of domination, and our work to evade thorough capture. Analytically, 'resistance' as a concept references the concept of 'oppression.' When we speak of resistance, whether we speak of people or objects, it is resistance against some other force. The cattails resist the probing hull of a canoe, the wind resistance lowers a car's efficiency, the resistance of firm soil allows one to climb a hill, an employee resists the sexual advances of her boss, and Take Back the Night rallies resist the silence and agent-deletion that help men commit rape, assault, and incest. In radical feminist activism and writing, 'resistance' as a practice and as a concept is used to reference individual and community efforts that undermine, or disrupt, or hold off, or call attention to the operation of oppressive social practices. Many things are possible with analytical concepts of oppression and resistance. Consider just a few feminist acts that have developed out of the focus on oppression and resistance: survival, pirate-like theft of patriarchal resources, feminist separatism. We cannot do without the concepts of oppression and resistance.

We also need concepts that do not immediately reference oppression. If we lack concepts that reference worlds that are non-oppressive, then the imagination remains

within the framework of oppression. The imagination continues to be constricted by said framework. We give up on the idea that radical feminism might have other work than resistance and incremental change. 'Freedom,' as I understand the concept, is valuable because it does not necessarily reference oppression. The exploration of be-ing free facilitates a positive account of existence in which oppression is not the primary constitutive factor in our lives. 'Freedom' is missing when our attention is drawn mainly to oppression and resistance. The focus on resistance and oppression is crucial but must be complemented with an understanding and a practice of be-ing free. For this reason it is important that radical feminist writing and practice draw freedom into the foreground. In the following pages I will introduce my own account of freedom as mode of be-ing undertaken by curdled subjects who live in contemporary worlds. I initiate a new discourse, a radical feminist discourse on freedom.

Utopia Forestalled

In undertaking this project, I advance a non-utopian conception of freedom. A radical feminist conception of freedom must work in the current context of oppression. Developing radical feminism in this way is a cautious endeavor that walks the line between the feminist desire to invent ourselves and the wary radical feminist acknowledgement that utopian dreams are misspent energy. Although some radical feminist may hope for worlds that are not wrought of oppression, the absence of utopian fantasies is characteristic of radical feminism. If we were familiar with oppression only as an abstract concept, rather than a concrete factor of daily life, then perhaps we would pair the abstract notion of oppression with abstract utopian solution. But of course

oppression and resistance are concrete features of our lives and so we are cognizant of the work that must be done in our concrete lives. This awareness is one reason radical feminists have not ventured into utopian thinking.

There is a second important reason radical feminists have avoided utopian thinking. Our remembered existence and our imaginations have been wrought of patriarchal machinations. We must remain ever-concerned with uncovering the mind-binds of patriarchy. Knowing that we carry patriarchy with us, in spite of our best efforts to the contrary, constructing utopias would unavoidably replicate the values and practices of patriarchy. There are, instead of utopias, cautious moves to consider what our existence would be like if we were not so thoroughly shaped by oppression. The crucial point is that such positive theorizing and practice is acknowledged as provisional.

My own work to invent a radical feminist conception of freedom is marked by the conscious effort to avoid any suggestion of utopia. It is an understanding of freedom suited to the current context, a context in which we continue to face oppression, continue to struggle against the mind-binds of patriarchy, and yet we work to prepare the imagination for positive accounts of non-oppressive worlds. I do offer a conception of freedom that shall apply today, but not necessarily to some distant and as yet unimagined future.

The Subject Who Can *Be Free*

I begin to conceptualize freedom while retaining insights from Lugones and Daly. From Lugones I retain the idea that subjects are multiple. Each subject encompasses many selves. From Daly I retain the idea that reality, Be-ing, is an unfolding process in

which subjects can create their own existence. Fusing these ideas from Daly and Lugones requires thinking of the subject as engaged in the process of creating itself as multiple. The subject can be multiple in more than one way, as curdled multiplicity or fragmented multiplicity. The way of being multiple depends on the structures of the worlds she navigates, her engagement with other subjects, and her own will. Some of the worlds she navigates are designed to allow and foster impurity. Other worlds are constructed to purify and effectively dominate.

In worlds that are constructed for the purpose of domination, the subordinated subject's own will is coerced to facilitate efficient exploitation. She is crafty and inventive, so she must be ontologically altered through strategies that reduce her to a more manageable form. In particular, her multiplicity must be reduced. She must be brought to know herself only within the given context of domination and as having only the available options presented by the coercive context. Her other selves are excluded, rendered invisible, and effectively fragmented away. Having lost contact with her multiplicity, she is more easily led to know only a fragment of herself, to be this one self, to act in accordance with the limited options given to her by hetero-patriarchy. Thus, she wills according to what is permitted by the cage of oppression and creates herself as fragmented. She lives as a purified and frozen being.

By contrast, the subject may be a curdled multiplicity. The selves are not reduced away or fragmented from each other. Instead the many selves are cultivated to rub edges, blend, intermingle in potentially disconcerting ways. Be-ing curdled prepares the subject to better resist oppression. In fact, the very cultivation of curdled multiplicity is resistance to the purifying forces of oppression. Even more than this, the curdled subject

has resources to effect change in her surroundings. The curdling of selves allows one to invent and experiment with resistant strategies. Though the surrounding world may work to reduce the subject, cultivating and sustaining curdled multiplicity makes resistant invention possible in ways that are difficult to conceptualize were we to hold fast to purity.

The work of understand the subject as *curdled* is strategic. In the first chapter, in my initial explorations of the ontology of oppression, I showed that the logic of purity constructs a reduced subject. The ontological reduction is a necessary stage in forging a reduced subject for patriarchal use. Fighting back requires a conceptual shift to a logic that facilitates resistance rather than domination. The subject must be re-envisioned within the logic of curdling. This is one part of the analysis of subjectivity.

The second part of the analysis of subjectivity includes conceptualizing the subject within a process ontology. Radical feminist realities are understood to be created through the ontological activity of subjects. The possibility of this approach is obscured from view in hetero-patriarchy. Effective domination of women requires that women become frozen. Those dominated must be convinced that no other form of existence is possible. Breaking out of the frozen forms of patriarchy requires an ontology in which feminist realities can be created. To understand be-ing as a verb means ones metaphysics support the idea that feminist imaginations, activism, and ways of living can create worlds that do not oppress.

My question becomes this: What is freedom for curdled subjects? In opening a discourse on radical feminist freedom, I frame the study by asking about freedom from within the logic of curdling and within a process ontology. It is in the logic of curdling

that we formulate a new conception of subjectivity. It is within a process ontology that subjects are able to create feminist worlds. It is only in the logic of curdling and process ontology that a radical feminist conception of freedom can be developed.

Freedom and Resistance as Ontological Activities

Freedom is an ontological *activity*. I understand freedom as a specific *mode of be-ing in which one works from cultivated curdled-multiplicity, opening possibilities for action while navigating our many social worlds.* This understanding of freedom is complex and so I will parse out the various components.

'Freedom' names a mode of being. The metaphysical framework I adopt from Daly describes reality as an unfolding process. Be-ing unfolds partly through the willed actions of individuals. In particular, social institutions and forms of life are created through what we do. Of course we do lots of things—wash dishes, carpool to work, flagrantly ridicule patriarchs, scheme for ways to undermine racist hiring practices, organize rallies, etc. To speak of *modes* of be-ing is to acknowledge that we have many ways of constituting reality. To name these modes of be-ing allows for greater clarity. Daly herself invents a great many verb names that distinguish differing modes of be-ing. I'm inventing two verb names. The two modes of be-ing that are important to my work are be-ing resistant and be-ing free.

Be-ing resistant can be fleetingly enacted or a sustained practice. Consider how one might briefly engage in a resistant mode of be-ing when one encounters a specific patriarchal behavior. A woman rarely meets distant relatives, but does chance upon one in the drug store. Although well schooled to be physically accessible to men and polite in

social contexts, she opts to resist by pointedly refuse to hug this male relative, pulling back as he seeks to wrap an arm around her shoulder. She is expected to allow this physical form of greeting, but she resists being reduced to touchable object. This act is fleeting; she may not yet have incorporated this refusal into her habits of etiquette. But it momentarily disrupts the patriarchal expectation that women are physically accessible, particularly to their male relatives. In this moment she creates herself as resistant.

In contrast to this fleeting moment, be-ing resistant can take the form of sustained habits. One might consistently refuse to watch popular entertainment in which men abuse women. Images of women being abused by men are so common that they often serve as a mere plot device for the arc of male characters. The sustained practice of changing TV channels and researching movies before purchasing a ticket can take considerable effort, even if one limits the definition of abuse to physical and especially sexual violence. Though it takes effort, it can become habitual resistance to patriarchy.

Like be-ing resistant, be-ing free is sometimes fleeting and sometimes part of a sustained practice. Consider again the woman who refuses to submit to a "polite" hug. This example is worth investigating further because it can also depict a fleeting moment of be-ing free. Suppose she is a curdled subject, a muddle of capitalist consumer socially accustomed to making demands for satisfaction, a frustrated friend struggling to help a loved one navigate the medical system, and a well schooled female relative coaxed to be touchable as he approaches her. She is all of these selves and more as she is coaxed to be polite and receive a hug. As her various selves interact, she remembers her demands for satisfaction, helping her friend to create boundaries when being treated by doctors, responding to the current coaxing context in which she is becoming a reasonably polite

family member who is somewhat interested in her approaching relative. She might fleetingly invent possibilities for this context: use the hand basket to create a boundary, boldly meet his eye and extend only a hand in greeting, briskly announce that "I'm not into hugs," and then cheerfully inquire after his immediate family. She may opt for all or none of these. The point is, these possibilities are invented by a curdled subject and would be strategically unavailable were she only the reduced subject encountering a male relative in public. Be-ing resistant and be-ing free differ in that resistance continues to reference the coercive forces of oppression while the key achievement of be-ing free is the opening of possibilities.

A radical feminist conception of freedom, as I am creating it, involves a component concept—integrity. I require this concept because I move from a particular view of subjectivity. The curdled subject, not the hierarchally unified subject, is a starting place. The fact that I begin with a curdled subject must remain before us as we think about freedom. The radical feminist subject who makes herself free is simultaneously engaged (necessarily so) in the process of cultivating her multiplicity as she acts with others. It is an ongoing process that is both a matter of practical activity and metaphysical disposition. The axis of value around which activity is organized is one of feminist process, not permanence or certainty.

I will give a more detailed example of a subject who is made uncomfortably aware of her own multiplicity. She is not purely reduced, though she has sufficient privilege that she is occasionally caught off guard by her multiplicity. While she could seek to manage her multiplicity through fragmentation, she does not. Instead, she seeks to sustain a curdled integration of selves and to invent possibilities from the resources

offered by such integration. Suppose we imagine a white woman who is often quite immersed in one particular world. She works on a campus and is part of the staff for the university. She spends hours each day engaged in that particular world with all of its rules, forms of etiquette, and daily rhythms. She knows that world and how to navigate it. She knows how to help students solve academic problems. She works at being fair with all the students she sees.

Though she is aware of her skin privilege, she works intentionally and habitually at being anti-racist. Within the scope of her job, this means that she tries to see that academic concerns voiced by students of color are addressed promptly. To this end she has managed to sort through red tape and help some students of color with various kinds of enrollment problems. She has connected students with campus resources and advisers that may foster stronger community connections for the student.

For the most part, her work world coaxes her to be focused and diligent about serving students. For the most part, she is able be anti-racist without experiencing disharmony among her various selves. However, this world is suddenly disrupted. While going to her car in the parking garage, she finds herself in a dark stairwell with a couple of young black men. The situation and encounter construct and coax her coalescence as a white woman. The young black men are aware of her as a woman and white, mark her presence with a nod or murmured greeting. But she is not simply a white woman, her antiracist self find itself at odds with the unexpected emergence of a contradictory self that is racist and forcefully demanding suspicion of these men. She is frustrated to find herself altering her body and behavior to appear strong and sour tempered, and get out of the stairwell with all possible speed. In this moment, she experiences her own

subjectivity as multiple. These selves might argue vigorously. The antiracist self might argue that the other is paranoid. She might cite statistics about the rarity of stranger rape, might cite the obvious fact that the two men have noted her presence with but promptly returned to the pressing issue of a group project in their psychology lab. Nevertheless, the self that remembers years steeped in stories about white women being the targets of black men, the danger of dark stairwells, and the social obsession with stranger rape—this self remains vigorous and demanding. In this instance we have a moment where this woman might recognize her own multiplicity. Some of her identities have curdled into a unruly blend.

She could seek to ruthlessly suppress the racist self, seeking to reduce it out of existence, or at least sharply exclude it from her decision making process. In effect, she can animate a reduced subjectivity. She might do this and yet also seek to be resistant. She resists the pull of racism, affects a calm and benign demeanor, and continues to her car. But notice that she freezes herself in this move to deny contact with her racist self. She closes a range of possibilities that could be productive for her anti-racist self.

How might it be possible for this multiplicitous subject to lay hold of her multiplicity and *to be free* in this small corner of her life? I understand freedom to be a social activity. One works from curdled multiplicity yet towards engagement with others. She can invent options. She could find a way to move past being merely caught between racist and anti-racist or being in denial about her racism. She could extend herself towards these men, in brief conversation that might develop into an exchange that complicates their relationship beyond the acknowledgement and passing greeting. "Psych lab? I know some faculty there. Who's your professor and what's the project?"

Perhaps this becomes a genuine conversation, perhaps not. The point is that she acts from a position of curdled multiplicity and calls upon this multiplicity as she seeks to engage with them. Notice that the same brief remarks to the men may satisfy various selves in different ways. The racist self leaps at the opportunity for collecting proactive information—determine their identity! The anti-racist asks about their project in similar ways that she asks about so many students' lives and worries. The young men, faced with unexpected conversation from a white woman, engage with her in their own ways, one perhaps offering brief polite remarks because she presents herself as a university official. The other young man feigns straitening his stack of books to avoid engagement. It is an uncertain and brief exchange. She could continue to cultivate this multiplicity and carry it with her as something to discuss with friends. Over lunch they talk about the problems of whiteness, how it plays out in her life and the lives of her white friends, how it effects their interactions with people of color, especially students, neighbors, and even folks out walking their dogs. These types of discussions that draw whiteness forward as a topic of concern are often helped not merely by being anti-racist, but by remembering that one is multiple. Integrating this multiplicity into one's awareness allows for forms of feminist invention. One invents possibilities that would not be intelligible to the fragmented subject.

Suppose, that a subject is like this, multiplicitous, formed of many selves that are often split-separated through the logic of purity. We have been taught to think such fragmentation is good. Lovers of purity that we are, it is better to have a well ordered self and suppress our racism. Successfully managing away contradiction has seemed to be a virtue. In fact, purity and a well-ordered self does not indicate that one is virtuous.

Fragmentation facilitates domination. When we shift to a logic of curdling we are able to see subjects engaged in rich resistance. When they break towards each other, when the racist and the anti-racist self break towards each other, the integration is a rich blend fraught with internal contradictions, frustrations, passionate devotions, roiling differences. To become integrated, be-ing free, is an ongoing process of cultivating this muddled complexity (in spite of the logic of purity with all its reductions) as one negotiates worlds that are exciting, dangerous, mundane, oppressive, and occasionally non-coercive.

If we begin with a conception of multiplicitous subjectivity, and keep the notion of an ongoing curdled integration in mind, then we do not so easily imagine freedom as something like a moment of reflection in which all the pieces fit and a single agent is ontologically and practically able to act upon its choices. The freedom of a multiplicitous being is not a form of life in which ones actions and decisions are characterized by consistency with some singular authentic self. Be-ing free, as I want to speak of it here, is a possibility for the impure. It is a way of be-ing wherein the subject continually creates her identity as an integration of curdled selves, opening possibilities as a matter of regular practice. One fosters personal action and social engagement characterized by impurity and even opposition. In the practice of freedom we engage in ongoing invention and interplay that is never purified. To live as such a being is to be in motion, structurally unstable, surrounded by boundaries, but certainly capable of inventing possibilities for action.

What is freedom for a radical feminist? It is this ontological activity undertaken by the curdled subject, the creative work of cultivating herself as a curdled integration,

and opening possibilities while navigating many social worlds. Be-ing curdled can mean one makes choices, pursues goals and tasks with one's selves integrated in the given practice or project. One invents choices where they had not previously existed. The choices do not come from a purification, or reduction, of one's multiplicity. Be-ing a curdled integration of selves means one invents possibilities and pursues projects (poetry, fiction, music, art, friendships, love, activism, dinner parties, support groups, social analysis, etc) that are not involved in patterns of reduction, internal or external domination, internal or external submission.

Resistance, Freedom, and Integrity

Why conceptualize the process of acting from integrated curdled multiplicity as freedom? After all, other radical feminists who have worked in this area have used the term resistance. Why do we need to talk about freedom? I want to retain the radical feminist project of creating a positive account of life in which, although there may be acknowledged coercion, there are not systematic structures of oppression. To accomplish this goal, I need to draw freedom into focus where we have primarily attended to resistance. We need a radical feminist conception of freedom, a concept that specifically fosters our project of preparing ourselves for worlds that are not systematically oppressive.

Given the context of oppression we need practical flexibility in order to resist our immediate interactions with those who would dominate us. The understanding of the subject as curdle-integrating multiple selves offers unique possibilities for understanding freedom in the here and now; it also prepares the radical feminist imagination for less

oppressive social worlds. The logic of oppression as it is implemented within hierarchal and exploitive social worlds functions by reducing the identity of the subject. Without ongoing curdled integration, we are reduced and more easily immobilized in various social worlds. The experience of curdled integration allows for a conceptual space in which the imagination is not constrained by a specific set of socially constructed boundaries. It gives access to multiple vocabularies, strategies, and modes of thinking all at once. In most contexts these differing and perhaps repellant selves would not meet.

Freedom, as I understand it here, opens possibilities from cultivating integrated multiplicity as one navigates social worlds with others. To undertake projects of freedom means that we foster a condition in which we are aware of our multiplicity and the imagination is given as much range to play as possible. When constrained within a specific social world, the imagination lacks range because the reduction to one self obscures anything outside of the boundaries of that social world. Be-ing free seems impossible for a reduced being existing within the context of oppression. But awareness of one's multiplicity means that the imagination is not forced to work from nothing. Instead one has a range of selves and ideas that can be brought into new arrangements and can create strategies of resistance, sabotage, and even a subject who is no longer wholly subject to oppression.

Freedom without First Principles

In this explanation of freedom, I have moved in a step-by-step fashion, perhaps suggesting that be-ing free unfolds in a linear way from a foundational metaphysics of curdling, to a curdled willful subject, to principled decision, to principled feminist action.

Such linear and foundationalist thinking does not properly fit with process ontology. The entire metaphysics of my project is better understood if one remembers that Be-ing is in motion. The challenge is to think of profuse motion without lapsing into thinking there can be no discernable order. I offer the image of an axis to help clarify the relationship between be-ing free and the logic of curdling, to subvert the tendency to think of freedom as arising from a linear and potentially foundationalist account of the metaphysics of curdling.

The image of stellar bodies that rotate around an axis can be helpful. Wittgenstein explores the metaphor of an axis. An axis is created as mass begins to move in a certain kind of pattern. Consider the formation of a planet; a cloud of gas and dust passes through a phase of accretion in which mass begins to clump together. The mass begins to rotate. The emergence of this burgeoning organized motion allows one to locate the axis around which this motion is centered. The axis is a line created by a pattern of motion. The axis is not formed in advance such that the mass later begins to move around it. Rather, the axis emerges from a gradually developing pattern.

Feminist realities may be thought of as complexes of practices, cultures, and social relationships. Feminist realities are not configured by setting out principles and then working in agreement with fixed principles. Instead, feminist realities emerge over time as patterns of activity developed through experimentation and invention. A pattern or practice develops, and as this happens, an axis is drawn and reinforced. The axis marks a feminist value, but not a first principle or foundational metaphysical commitment. In radical feminism as I have explored it in this dissertation, I think there is an emerging axis of value: the metaphysics of curdling-process. The axis is explored and

investigated at length in the work of Daly and Lugones. But the axis is created by radical feminist theorizing, activism, and day-to-day feminist living. We create the metaphysics of curdling-process as a valuable feature of radical feminism as we emerge from the logic of purity and move into the activity of inventing new ways of relating, creating knowledge, creating communities, and creating ourselves. When I write of freedom, I am offering an understanding of freedom as a practice that circles and inscribes the ontology of curdling-process.

My account of freedom differs from formal accounts of freedom in which laws, or democratically informed rules for self-regulation, define the scope of one's possibilities. In Rousseau's writing for example, freedom is living within the stable framework of laws that one has helped to create. Rousseau's is a formal account of freedom. It is formal because a society could be "free" regardless of the specific laws, regardless of whether the population is happy, regardless of whether there is a daily practice of democracy. On Rousseau's account, one can remove this sort of concrete detail, values, expression and still evaluate whether the society is free.[38] For him, locating freedom is a matter of locating formal democratic conditions that organize the society.

Further Inscribing Radical Feminist Value

There are several areas of research that follow from my understanding of radical feminist freedom. First, what type of political structures would complement be-ing free? Certainly radical feminist freedom can take place within or alongside what is often identified as a liberal democratic order. In fact, radical feminist freedom can flourish in

[38] Thus for example, we could regard a society as free though it had voted to abide by governmental intrusion of the Patriot Act.

contexts of significant negative freedom, as within the context defined by the U.S. Bill of Rights. However, I would not limit my inquiry to be-ing free in a context of negative freedom. *Freedom from* patriarchy does provide the suggestion of a starting place but what formal conditions of social order might develop around the axis of curdling–process? I suspect that the writings of anarcha-feminists and anarchists generally will prove useful. My first interest is the anarcha-feminist criticism of hierarchal social relationships. These types of relationships create subject positions in which the person in a position of authority is able to open possibilities, but those in the subordinated position are mainly charged with following the dictates issued by the authority. Hierarchal relationships normalize domination and subordination, they do not foster large communities of individuals all interacting and opening possibilities.

My second interest in anarchism arises from the recognition that large scale communities require systems of organization. Complex tasks, like providing for the nutritional needs of a community, necessitate careful organization of material resources and labor. Yet we need ways of thinking about social organization without automatically relying on the use of a hierarchy. As I develop a more robust conception of the social and political structures that might reinforce the axis of curdling-process, I expect these structures will enrich my radical feminist conception of be-ing free.

In order to locate the radical feminist activity of freedom, one must look to social practices that take place on a daily basis, not merely the formal conditions that allow for potential freedom. The advantage of anarchism is that it normalizes non-hierarchal forms of organization in day-to-day life. Instead of being habituated to deference and obedience, subjects see themselves as authoritative and act authoritatively where

appropriate. Further they act as authorities without requiring obedience and subordination from others in the community. This habitual behavior complements be-ing free.

My second major research interest includes a deeper investigation of radical feminist ethics. Hoagland's Lesbian Ethics has already been a significant influence on my work. I am interested in exploring ways women can engage with each other so as to cultivate each other's curdled multiplicity. A significant portion of Lesbian Ethics aims to provide ways lesbians may relate to each other and foster each other's agency in contexts of oppression. Though she does not pursue a radical feminist virtue ethic, nor does she think of lesbian ethics as cultivating multiplicity, I think we need a radical feminist conception of virtue ethics. I mention virtue ethics because be-ing feminist is partially a matter of habituated behavior. What habits of behavior, habits of engaging with each other, can evolve around the axis of curdling process? And how might these habits complement be-ing free? These are questions that enhance the understanding of opening possibility as a matter of ordinary daily life.

Concluding Remarks

The radical feminist focus on oppression and resistance yields a conceptual and political landscape wrought of resistance and incremental moves toward existence that is not characterized by oppression. The ground before us, as far as one can imagine, is a landscape perceived through the hopeful conceptual lenses of resistance. As feminists, it is crucial that we are able to understand the operation of oppression and able to understand and formulate resistant action. Oppression and resistance are necessary

categories of analysis because feminism currently functions within interlocking systems of oppression like patriarchy, heterosexism, racism, ageism, colonialism, and economic exploitation. Yet as feminists, we also require positive conceptions of existence beyond the frameworks of oppression. In developing such positive conceptions we prepare ourselves for radical feminist futures, futures that are no so extensively configured by oppression.

The question that motivates my research is: What is freedom for curdled subjects ever-engaged in creating themselves? Freedom, when it happens in fleeting gestures or sustained activity, is the invention of that which has escaped temporarily or even left behind the context of patriarchy. We require a radical feminist conception of freedom because it fits with a politics that aims to undo oppression. We require a radical feminist conception of freedom because we need many ways of be-ing in order to continue inventing and creating feminist realities and feminist futures.

In developing this radical feminist conception of be-ing free, curdled multiplicity becomes a resource for invention. As subjects navigate their many social worlds, they are able to cultivate this curdled multiplicity and enact feminist projects that escape the reductive confines of patriarchal existence. Radical feminists are thus in a better position to invent worlds that are not characterized by oppression.

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