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THE ROOTS OF MY SHAME

place in diasporic imaginary

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le rassemblement by Dodi Balada.

We're tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They've made us suffer too much [...] Nothing is beautiful or loving or political aside from underground stems and aerial roots, adventitious growths and rhizomes.

Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus

The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space.

Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces"

Departing from recent theoretical considerations of place and its changing topographies in human geography, I intend to

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examine the relation of place to our affective life. Since its significance for affective structures or structures of feeling is best understood in the context of diaspora and migration, where the experience of loss is often explicitly related to the loss of place, I will focus on its affective implications in relation to diasporic identity formation. As La Barbera argues, the loss of place for diasporic subjects is total. Faced not only with "an unknown universe of meanings" but also with the "harsh reality of exclusion," of "distrust and hostility," in the new place, diasporic subjects "feel lost, alone, and without

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reference points. As much as they strive to become integrated, [they] remain strangers” (3). This estrangement or loss of legitimacy also powers the nostalgias of diasporic memory that sustain and, over time, increase the gap between the actual realities of “home” they have left and its idealizations. “To a certain extent,” she continues, they

live between idealization and disillusionment both in the receiving country and in the country of origin. Their new condition is in between, at the borderland, in transit. The process that begins when one leaves [...] never ends, and it generates an unfinished condition of not yet belonging “here” but no longer “there.” (3)

Traumas of diasporic histories that prevent identity closures and that are structured around blockages, differential knowledges and ambivalences of enunciations are legible in the interstices and lesions of “here” and “there,” where subjectivity fails to fully represent the topographic narratives and social histories to which it is, nevertheless, riveted. These enunciatory lesions that constitute “the unfinished condition” (La Barbera 3) of diasporic lives, however, are not only articulations of differential excess in terms of situated epistemologies but also of discontinuities in the felt experience of displacement that can be specifically considered within the affective economies of diasporic shame. Shame, itself a *borderland affect* between intimacy and detachment, between love and contempt,¹ is often a prominent affective experience that structures the difficult terrain of diasporic attachments. Its inherent ambivalence that in Tomkins’s terms can be defined as a frustration of an abiding desire for identification² also seems to reflect the ambiguities of diasporic condition in terms of its relation to place. Diasporic lives, enunciated at borderlands, in transit or in between places, are affectively negotiated through shame that does not only articulate the emotional content of an unhomely subject who is neither “here” nor “there” but also informs the process of its formation.

However, before the relation of shame to diasporic experience is specifically considered, I

intend to focus on the recent developments in human geography and the antinomies that have determined and torn through its discursive terrain to both invigorate and problematize the notion of place. This will both account for and make manifest the contradictions within which shame can assume its diasporic articulation as an acute awareness of the ambivalences that constitute our spatial imagination. In order to shore up the affective significance of place I will use both my own lived experience as a refugee, John Steinbeck’s acute but often overlooked awareness of place attachments as well as Jamaica Kincaid’s and Kim Thúy’s deeply personal *mémoires* of displacement. Structured around deracinations of place, they all reveal its affective implications for the displaced subject.

Although theoretically immersed, the article will thus also integrate resonances of literary and life writing, appropriate in terms of their imaginative focus on place and the impact of its loss on identity formation. This is partly motivated by the fact that the loss we live with is often more fully articulated when half-eclipsed by the discretions of literary writing and partly by the need to make explicit and focus the issues I intend to examine. In all the texts, place remains a dominant motif in the affective strategies of unhomely subjects to negotiate meaning and identity. Ultimately, they form the narrative thresholds for a theoretical consideration of place and movement as an effect of differential production and discursive power takeovers, while, at the same time, pointing towards the significance of affect and geographies of feeling that often belie our understanding of place. In this respect, Doreen Massey’s dedicated writing to disessentialize the notion of place and Sara Ahmed’s sensitive differentiation of movement and its relation to the material and affective aspects of diasporic life will constitute the theoretical mainstay of the argument whereas Bhabha’s forays into complexities of interstitial subject enunciations, Levinas’s phenomenology of shame and Tomkins’s understanding of its fundamental ambivalence will contribute to an articulation of diasporic shame within

geographies of difference. It is in relation to geographies of difference and deterritorializations of place that geographies of feeling first become apparent, as that which accounts for the obstinacy and persistence of place, despite its disavowals, in diasporic imaginary.

geographies of difference

There is a poignant passage in *The Grapes of Wrath* that, apart from making explicit the abrasion of every departure, exposes the depths and fires of our attachment to what we call home: “How can we live without our lives?,” Steinbeck writes in one of his intercalary chapters,

How do we know it's us without our past? [...] Maybe we can start again, in the new rich land [...] where the fruit grows. We'll start over.

But you can't start. Only a baby can start. You and me – why, we're all that's been. The anger of a moment, the thousand pictures, that's us. This land, this red land, is us; and the flood years and the dust years and the drought years are us. We can't start again. The bitterness [...] we have it still. And when [...] [they made] us go, that's us; and when [...] [they] hit the house, that's us until we're dead. To California or any place – every one a drum major leading a parade of hurts, marching with our bitterness. And some day – the armies of bitterness will all be going the same way. And they'll all walk together, and there'll be a dead terror from it [...] How can we live without our lives? How will we know it's us without our past? No. Leave it. Burn it.

They sat and looked at it and burned it into their memories. How'll it be not to know what land's outside the door? How if you wake up in the night and know – and know the willow tree's not there? Can you live without the willow tree? Well, no, you can't. The willow tree is you. The pain on that mattress there – that dreadful pain – that's you. (87–89)

As the Joads are transformed from tenant farmers to migrants on Route 66, “the mother road, the road of flight” (118), in Steinbeck's

terms, their lives are also made to cross the frontiers of their past and, for the Joads, as for many of us, it is in the past that home dwells. Destined to leave everything behind and join the new precariat that emerged in the wake of the Dust Bowl and the technological changes in agriculture and production required by the advance of modern capital in the 1930s, they do not only represent the fatalities of progress but also reveal the profound significance of place in our lives. The strong, affective claim the place can have on us is perhaps best manifested by Grampa Joad who cannot tear himself away from the land. At first, he is almost intoxicated by the sheer prospect of California, the Garden of Plenty where the Joads could redeem themselves and reap the fruits of their hard labors:

Jus' let me get out to California where I can pick me an orange when I want it. Or grapes. There's a thing I ain't never had enough of. Gonna get me a whole big bunch a grapes off a bush, or whatever, an' I'm gonna squash 'em on my face an' let 'em run offen my chin. (83)

However, on the eve of departure that the passage above painfully depicts, Grampa Joad refuses to leave:

I jus' ain't a-goin' [...] This here's my country. I b'long here. An' I don't give a goddamn if they's oranges an' grapes crowdin' a fella outa bed even. I ain't a-going. This country ain't no good, but it's my country. No, you all go ahead. I'll just stay right here where I b'long. (111)

Tied to the place, as unyielding as the people it had brought together, when he is finally wrenched away from it, he suffers a stroke and dies shortly after they depart. Ironically, he is also buried by the road, as a migrant he had refused to be. But “Grampa didn' die [that] night,” as Jim Casey, a fallen-from-grace preacher who accompanied the Joads on their journey, reveals: “He died the minute you took 'im off the place [...] He was that place, an' he knowed it” (146). Grampa was “the willow tree” (89) they had left behind. He was “the flood years” and “the drought years”

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(87), the book on a shelf, the rank pipe in a drawer, the picture of an angel, the china dog “from the St. Louis Fair” (88), the letters from long lost brothers and “an old-time hat” with feathers (88). He was all “the doomed things” (88), everything they had to burn – their lives, their past, their place.

The fact that Grampa Joad’s last place – indeed, the most familiar place, since it belongs to all of us and yet the most unfamiliar of all places – was on Route 66, in a grave by “the road of flight” (118), also registers a social and historical change America was facing at the time. Since the Joads had been dis-placed, uprooted from the place that has bent and shaped the very sinews of their existence, Grampa had to die. He had no place in the new order of movement and change, where “the living principle” and “the most important place” was now “the ancient Hudson [...] half passenger car and half truck” (99–100). Migrancy, movement and dislocation that the Hudson represents in the novel was the new place, “the new hearth, the living centre of the family” (100). As Chambers suggests in different ontological terms that yet solicit the same change in our thinking of place, this absence of foundation, of “protection” – that migrancy, both politically, in fact,³ as well as ontologically, implies – also articulates “another sense of ‘home,’ of being in the world” (4). “It means,” as Chambers continues, “to conceive of dwelling as a mobile habitat, as a mode of inhabiting time and space not as though they were fixed and closed structures, but providing the critical provocation of an opening” in which the notion of place is “sustained across encounters, dialogues and clashes with other histories, other places, other people.” Grampa Joad was part of the “old” meaning of place, where narratives of identity, history and belonging are often conflated and associated with some of our deepest nostalgias, our desires for fixity and coherence that withstand the disruptive challenges of modernity and allow for a recovery of our social and historical continuities. It is against this sense of place that also its “new” meaning emerges, predicated no longer on defensive obsessions with origins and presence but on movement

and economies of difference, on the impossibility of ever departing or arriving at a stable sense of place, place that, as Massey, in *Space, Place, and Gender*, argues, would be “more adequately progressive [...] [and] would fit in with [our] current global–local times and the feelings and relations they give rise to” (151–52).

There are thus two narratives of place that emerge, two topographies or two places of place: one that, like Grampa Joad, no longer really has a place in our global realities and one that is more attuned to the deterritorializing flows of economic and social relations that dictate our time. The question is, however, whether the old narrative ever disappears under the pressures of the new open topographies or whether it is only dis-placed, placed in reserve or abeyance, like a still visible original tracing of a palimpsest, erased and yet intrusive, reassuming new patterns of definition and rearticulating its overwritten narrative in the hysterics of our time, in the militant attempts of growing nationalisms to reestablish the inside/outside of a place and reclaim its lost *mythos*.

Since place is always closely related to questions of identity, one can see how diasporization of identities calls for diasporization of places.⁴ However, the fact that we are multiple also produces affective dissonances in the subject, emotions of shame and guilt through which our identities are often lived as lost. Is this also the case with places? After all, what distinguishes “the willow tree” outside the Joads’s house from any other is affect. The fact that it is “burned [...] into their memories” means also that it will never disappear; it is a permanent fire that burns inside against every attempt to forget its wounds and that sings all other memories that will come to dis-place it. “The movements of selves between places,” to borrow Ahmed’s metaphor that exposes this fact of place as embodied, as leaking into and taking hold of the subject, “involve the discontinuities of personal biographies and wrinkles in the skin.” It is lived, she continues, “in the discomfort of inhabiting a migrant body, a body which feels out of place, which feels uncomfortable in [...] [its new] place” (343). Far from being outside then, the

place is inside, takes up possession, an abode, inside the subject, as much as the subject is always outside in the place: “How if you wake up in the night and know – and know the willow tree’s not there? Can you live without the willow tree? Well, no, you can’t. The willow tree *is* you” (Steinbeck 89; emphasis added). The geography of place is thus also the geography of emotions. Its claims are not only physical or historical but also emotional. The place feels and is felt, and, as such, it lives and persists in our affective structures. Even long after any material relation to it has vanished, place can persist as a ghost, a ghosted place, a traumatizing remain of displaced histories that split open and disestablish our relation to the present. This is perhaps best registered in the subject who has left, whose body is haunted by discontinuities and differential economies of legitimacy it cannot tally or match up to, the diasporic, cracked body with cracked memories of arrivals and departures that cannot be placed once and for all. Those without a place experience they have never left most acutely.

The fact that place in diasporic experience is associated with loss affects also how its narratives are constructed. In one sense, it reestablishes the “old” meaning of place as a site of coherence and finality, a site of melancholy in diasporic terms, while, in another, it also forces a rethinking of its ontological limits, introducing “new” deterritorialized topographies where place is rearticulated as differential, with its local identity deferred along the global chain of economic and cultural signifiers. This “disembedding” of place from its situated and often essentialized systems of meaning that, as Hidle argues, follows the historical realities of globalization and the recent theoretical shifts in “focus on the construction of new identities which cross national and ethnic borders and boundaries” (2), does not, however, displace our affective attachments; it may even sustain or intensify them. Indeed, as Ahmed suggests, the question of place, which she considers in more intimate and thus more sentimental terms of “being at home,” could only be “addressed by considering the question of

affect [since] being at home is [...] a matter of how one feels or how one might fail to feel” (341). Both narratives of place are, at the same time, narratives of affect, exposed as a failure not to feel despite the material and temporal distance that defines diasporic experience in relation to place. There is something local in the global subject that is lodged inside and that persists as an affective disjunction or estrangement, despite the attempt to disavow its realities in discursive strategies of deterritorialization. This is the same disjunction that produces what Bhabha calls “unhomely lives” (*Location of Culture* 13). Diasporic lives, in this sense, are always “unhomely lives” or lives that retain “something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world – the unhomeliness – that is *the condition* of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations” and that, in their enunciations, “relate the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence” (13, 15; emphasis added). In this respect, the unhomeliness of diasporic subjects comes from an estrangement of affect in relation to place and situated existence and can be specifically related to the treacherous terrain of shame where personal histories and political existence are at odds or where the cost of political existence for the diasporic subject is shame.

The new topographies of place that have diasporized our spatial existence and exposed the global landscapes of our localities have also redefined our understanding of place. Although still manifested in the critical imagination, our intuitive understanding of place, as a bastion of identity and localisms that provide the subject with foundational narratives, has been challenged.⁵ Place is no longer, and may, indeed, never have been, a stable point of reference, an embrace of familiarity, a look of recognition or a consolation of belonging that fixes our broken, dislocated selves. Nor is it a place of our own – ultimately a maternal place – where we can find our long-lost attachments that would restore us to ourselves. Like identity, place, which was to serve as its alibi and its foundation, its last-ditch defense against the

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displacements of our historical realities, has itself been displaced. Everything in place is now out of place or, rather, place is finally exposed as its own outside, as an exposure at its own border that it has always been, touching other places or others outside it whose very relation to it defines the idioms of its own uniqueness. This elision of inside/outside, the very *locus* or place of this divide, is, what, for Massey, characterizes the new, “progressive” topography of place that is no longer “self-enclosing and defensive, but outward-looking” (*Space, Place, and Gender* 147) and that has finally caught up with the globalizing disruptions of our age.

Since place cannot have a single signifier that would represent its identity without, at the same time, suppressing other historical resources of difference that have participated in the narrative of its unitary enunciation, there can be no homogenous place without violence, epistemic aggression or hegemony. Place is a differential assemblage of enunciations open to contestation and rescindability. What it is not, however, is a stable referent of commonality, shared understanding or legitimation of the social bond. Place is a site of struggle that should not be considered as static; it is never already there but is constantly (re)negotiated. Indeed, my sense of place as a racialized refugee, a second-generation immigrant, a black, middle-class senior citizen or a closeted, transgender construction worker – to name just a few of the constraining social signifiers and forms of identity to which we are consigned by the normative regimes of social identification⁶ – may differ from the prevalent or privileged sense of place, endorsed by collective social interests and capital ventures.

Arriving as a refugee to a camp in Garphyttan, a National Park set in idyllic surroundings of the Swedish countryside, drowning in its tall pine forests and its flowery meadows of cowslips and lilies of the valley, I did not hear the song thrush singing in the morning light nor feel the resuming calm of casual weekend visitors, seeking respite from the overtaxing rigors of their busy lives. The collective sense of pastoral romance and escapism historically associated

with the place like this was lost on me and many others like me. In the song thrush arias, we heard threats of deportation and in the dense pine forests surrounding the refugee camp, situated in an old sanatorium that was demolished in 2005, we saw the unlit, impassable roadblocks, rising like black palisades holding off the advancing approach of our future. But we desperately wanted their sense of place, jealously kept and protected by birthrights, legitimacies of citizenship, social security numbers, passports and records of residence. Their sense of place was a privilege to which we were not entitled. After a year in exile, I remember finally hearing from my parents who had stayed back, strenuously hoping for the resolution of insanity and fanaticism. The landlines had been provisionally open for a short while and, although I knew they had been subjected to forced labor, persecution and arbitrary rhythms of political oppression, all I could speak of was the resentment and the profound distaste I felt for my new surroundings. The sentimentalized countryside invested with middle-class aspirations and charismas of picturesque symbolism was for me a place for another drama, far removed from the postcard images of its natural splendor and from the flattening gaze of its casual visitors. Indeed, does not this drama place in question the valorized notions of how we organize the reality of a place and articulate its representations in social practice? Luckily, however, the old sanatorium that had stood empty since the mid-1990s, like an intestate echo of so many aborted narratives, so many fractured lives and ransacked realities, was finally torn down a few years back and covered over by the downy, deciduous carpets of the National Park, providing you with many opportunities for varied and rich experience in different natural habitats. What gives place its identity, the continuity of its introjected history or, which amounts to the same thing, its reality, is thus always predicated on the suppressed enunciations of difference. The canonical sense of place, in other words, its quirky localisms, its exotic authenticisms and its highly aestheticized histories are thus always empowered on the

broken lives of voiceless others that constitute its suppressed records.

In her vitriolic attempt to deconstruct the Edenic narratives of the Caribbean in the white imaginary, Jamaica Kincaid also articulates what could be considered as its differential geographies in her celebrated essay *A Small Place*. The warmed-over appropriations of Antigua, as the place of turquoise waters lapping the endless, white sands and of umbrella cocktails rocking to the slow-moving downbeats of rasta reggae that seem to prevail in the Western imaginary, are, for Kincaid, only aestheticized corruptions of the island's painful realities. Since tourism accounts for more than half of Antigua's GDP (gross domestic product), entire communities are developed to cater for the exorbitant desires of the metropolitan subject and the arbitrary fancies of the Western prejudice, making themselves into a projection of that prejudice. The islands are commodified and developed as commodities, conforming to the Western appropriations of their own identity and marketing back to the privileged imagination its own tropical fantasies. Through self-exoticization, however, the islands alienate their own subjects who cannot recognize themselves in the institutional narratives and "official" versions of their own communities. As Kincaid, with a sense of tragic irony, explains, tourism, "in this place," rests on the fact that "the sun always shines" and that "the climate is deliciously hot and dry," while the Antiguan have to "live day in, day out in a place that suffers constantly from drought" (4) and water scarcity. The tourist demands the sun, while the inhabitants are in desperate need of rain. The politics of place, caught up in accommodating the imperatives of the white gaze, as the new, protean form of colonial oppression, does not coincide with the realities of the black lives, which, however, as Kincaid is quick to point out, "must never cross your mind," in case "that slightly funny feeling you have from time to time about exploitation, oppression, domination develop into full-fledged unease [or] discomfort [...] [that] could ruin your holiday" (4, 10).

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The ironic disjunction of meaning in our construction of place, assertively manifested throughout Kincaid's *mémoire*, exposes both the discursive nature of place and its differential production that ultimately leads to an estrangement of affect in relation to place, creating "unhomely lives" at home. The aestheticized development of the island, and its appropriation of white universalism masquerading as the everyday, signifies its very remoteness from the suppressed narratives of native others whose lives become either unwanted constituents in the white imaginary or, at best, exotic archetypes of authenticity. "Every native everywhere," Kincaid writes,

lives a life of overwhelming and crushing banality and boredom and desperation and depression, and every deed, good and bad, is an attempt to forget this. Every native would like to find a way out, every native would like a rest, every native would like a tour. But some natives – most natives in the world – cannot go anywhere. They are too poor. They are too poor to go anywhere. They are too poor to escape the reality of their lives; and *they are too poor to live properly in the place where they live*, which is the very place you, the tourist, want to go – so when the natives see you, the tourist, they envy you, they envy your ability to leave your own banality and boredom, they envy your ability to turn their own banality and boredom into a source of pleasure for yourself. (18–19; emphasis added)

Differential geographies reveal a charged power grid of representations and difference and the underlying hegemonies that participate in all enunciations of space. Too poor to move *and* too poor to stay, as Kincaid suggests, the real outsider in Antigua is the Antiguan.

Global movement and ever-increasing intrusion of capital that disrupts shared horizons of familiarity, that diasporizes all localisms and dictates how we organize our realities over and above others also calls for a new spatial imagination capable of accommodating its deterritorializing flows. However, what seemingly liberates the constraining geographies of our lives is itself a differential movement.

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Geographical and spatial disruptions of identity, “the time-space compression” that David Harvey refers to as one of the insuperable conditions of late capitalism⁷ and the incremental leaps in communication technologies that all constitute the contemporaneity of our global landscapes can also be considered in the light of Western imperialism, global assimilation and cultural homogenization. Massey, considering the need to qualify the movement that presumably characterizes our time, provides a striking image of differential globalization:

Imagine for a moment that you are on a satellite, further out and beyond all actual satellites; you can see “planet earth” from a distance and, unusually for someone with only peaceful intentions, you are equipped with the kind of technology which allows you to see the colours of people’s eyes and the numbers on their numberplates. You can see all the movement and tune in to all the communication that is going on. Furthest out are the satellites, then aeroplanes, the long haul between London and Tokyo and the hop from San Salvador to Guatemala City. Some of this is people moving, some of it is physical trade, some is media broadcasting. There are [...] e-mail[s], film distribution networks, financial flows and transactions. Look in closer and there are ships and trains, steam trains slogging laboriously up hills somewhere in Asia. Look in closer still and there are lorries and cars and buses, and on down further, somewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, there’s a woman – amongst many women – on foot, who still spends hours a day collecting water. (*Space, Place, and Gender* 148–49)

Not everyone is included. Not everyone moves. Movement of others, historical progress, as the privilege of the global North, is predicated on the availability of other gridlocked realities, lives that do not move, that are pinned down, fixed and wedged tight between the exigencies of despair and predatory corporate practice that takes advantage of financial vulnerability. In fact, far from liberating the developing world from the laissez-faire hegemonies of the West, globalization participates in its

myths and maintains the inequities of its privilege. Globalization, in other words, is a one-way street. Massey, borrowing Harvey’s terminology, refers to it as “the *power-geometry* of time-space compression” (*Space, Place, and Gender* 149). Different social bodies, she argues, “are placed in very distinct ways in relation to the [...] flows and interconnections” of global movement and access. Those who are “more in charge of it,” those who “initiate flows and movement,” always reentrench “the spatial imprisonment of other[s],” thus, weakening “the leverage of the already weak” (149, 150), which reproduces regimes of dominance and global hierarchies of power:

If time-space compression can be imagined in that more socially formed, socially evaluative and differentiated way, then there may be here the possibility of developing a politics of mobility and access. For it does seem that mobility, and control over mobility, both reflects and reinforces power. (150)

Movement is thus not only considered in terms of privilege that it reflects, but as a movement of interest that reproduces the fixed geographies of power and participates in the production of precarious lives. Movement is neither free nor is it necessarily desirable. Bhabha, in his response to James Clifford’s prominent contribution to *Cultural Studies*, “Travelling Cultures” considers, in fact, the limits of movement and dislocation as new, global normative constraints in relation to displaced subjects who may need “a lack of movement and fixity in a [general] politics of movement and a theory of travel” (Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler 114). For the lives “caught in that margin of non-movement within an economy of movement” (114), fixed topographies and localized identities may be necessary in order to survive. “Refugees and exiles,” Bhabha argues, “are of course a part of this economy of displacement and travel but also, once they are in a particular place, then almost for their survival they need to fix upon certain symbols” (114). Indeed, the notion of slowness, the exigency of keeping close, of cradling fantasies of heritage are all necessary for cultural survival. In a refugee,

the instability of subject positions coincides with the stability of spatial practice.

In related, yet differently qualified, terms of diasporic movement, Ahmed also addresses the significance of differentiation in relation to movement and cautions “how different kinds of journeys [can] become conflated [...] eras [ing] the real and substantive differences between the conditions in which particular movements across spatial borders take place” (332). Who has the privilege to move and who retains the privilege to stay or, in Ahmed’s terms,

[...] what different effect does it [movement] have on identity when one is *forced* to move? Does one ever move freely? What movements are possible and, moreover, what movements are impossible? Who has a passport and can move there? Who does not have a passport, and *yet* moves? (332; emphasis added)

Any conflation of “journeys,” their reduction to collective universalizable schemas, does also violence to the heterogeneity of their narratives, each with its own necessity, its own legitimacy and its own historicity. Indeed, Kim Thúy, an acclaimed Canadian author known to be the first to account for the Vietnamese diaspora in Canada that she delicately portrays through the impressionistic vignettes of fragmented refugee experience in her auto-fictive *mémoire Ru*, relays the same concerns regarding the teleological unities and ontologies of diasporic experience. In relation to time and space, as she reveals in an interview on “How ‘Refugee Literature’ Differs from Immigrant Literature,” migratory ontologies are regionalized:

Refugee and immigrant are very different. A refugee is someone ejected from his or her past, who has no future, whose present is totally empty of meaning. In a refugee camp, you live outside of time – you don’t know when you’re going to eat, let alone when you’re going to get out of there. And you’re also outside of space because the camp is a no man’s land. To be a human being you have to be part of something. The first time we got an official piece of

paper from Canada, my whole family stared at it – until then, we were stateless, part of nothing. (Thúy)

Human geography, where place exceeds its material representations alone and is deeply implicated in the production of meaning and the grammar of social relations, has to resist universal systems of enunciation and account for its differential meanings, for regional ontologies whose narratives often emerge as the negative foundation of place, its threshold points or transgressions, that whose disavowal is necessary for a sense of place to emerge. As Foucault suggests in “Of Other Spaces,” when considering *heterotopias*:

[W]e do not live in a kind of void inside of which we could place individuals and things [...] we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another. (23)

This does not only imply a differential production of place, constrained by its own racial, ethnic and class hierarchies, but also the fact that place itself is incomplete and always yet to be mapped through geographies of difference.

Far from being integrated or total, place is thus disjunctive and articulated through hierarchies of social relations and regimes of representation that challenge any claims to its self-consistency. Emancipated from its territory, place, by the same token, has no longer any borders to define its identity by excluding the world; the world, rather, has moved in and its pervasive presence is felt everywhere. This process of global assimilation and increasing homogenization of the local idiom, however, has also reanimated the “old,” defensive narratives of place that the Joads’s journey in Steinbeck’s novel represents, narratives associated with identity nostalgias and internalized place orthodoxies. Massey identifies them also in the “recrudescence of some very problematical senses of place, from reactionary nationalisms, to competitive localisms, to introverted obsessions with ‘heritage’” (*Space, Place, and*

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Gender 151) that, with increasing exigence and ferocity, plague the liberal landscapes of Western democracies. The pursuit of authenticity, of history that confers authority, “the search after the ‘real’ meanings of places, the unearthing of heritages and so forth” could be considered, she argues,

as being, in part, a response to desire for fixity and for security of identity in the middle of all the movement and change. A “sense of place,” of rootedness, can provide – in this form and on this interpretation – stability and a source of unproblematical identity. (151)

What is significant, however, is that the re-essentialization of identity structures that often relies on fixed notions of place and the resurgence of national and ethnic absolutisms that are gaining political traction and generating new claims of legitimacy for the subject are seen as part of the howling response to the displacements of globalization and its disruptive impact on local economies of identity formation. This also reveals a deeper, more fundamental need for attachment in our relation to place, or *topophilia* that could be seen as an affective hinge between place and identity, that through which identity and place are articulated together.⁸ One could say, however, that *topophilia* today can only be articulated in terms of mourning. The deterritorialization of place, brought on by global modernities, has not been followed through by an equally disjunctive affective detachment – the subject has not been redefined and is still a national rather than a cosmopolitan subject although the place itself has – which has thus contributed to the symptoms of social hysteria of increasing nationalisms and possessive place protectionism we are witnessing today. This dislocation between identity and place, however, that distinguishes the modern subject, reiterates the process of mourning in which emotional attachment or investment in the object of interest has not yet caught up with the fact of its physical absence – and may, indeed, never will, resulting thus in a *dénouement* of lingering melancholia. This is why place today is often considered in

romantic or melancholic terms or as nostalgias of lost communities and national integrities.

Since attachment is crucial to our understanding of place, its changing geographies should also be related to the structures of affect, which, to further extend Tuan’s argument in *Topophilia*, underlie “the way human beings respond to their physical setting – their perception of it and the value they put on it” (2). This is perhaps most prominently articulated in diasporic identity formation, where relation to place is deeply ambiguous, conflicted or charged with hurt. Indeed, following a general call for rematerialization of theory and poststructuralism in human and cultural geography, which, as Hiddle suggests, should be “attentive to *both* the material and the immaterial dimensions of life” (6; emphasis added), special solicitude is given to diasporic space.⁹ Although, he concedes,

one should not theoretically close and fix places with certain meanings and identities, but instead treat place as a contextual and contested concept [...] in focusing on culture and meaning systems which are not bound to place, it is very easy to overlook the fact that even migrants settle somewhere, at least for a while, and the question then becomes how life goes on where they settle. How do migrants relate to the space where they settle, and how are their relations to other places where they might have families, relatives etc.? (6)

It is thus in the materialities of diasporic experience that the question of place and its contradictions seem to emerge – whether place is seen within the deterritorialized geographies of movement and diasporization or whether it is seen within the policed geographies of border control that nurse our fantasies of identity. In Massey’s terms, these are two “completely anti-nomic geographical imaginations” and it is their “negotiation which brings the question (rights of movement/rights of containment) into politics” (*For Space* 86). However, this conflicting doubleness of spatial imagination is maintained in the affective life of a diasporic subject and the constant tension between the two narratives of

place, the two “geographical imaginations,” constitutes the very torsion of a complex that defines the pathos of diasporic experience.

between a rock and a hard place

The notion of place is always charged with significant emotional investment in diasporic identity. The disjunction between “where I come from” and “where I am” that is often apparent, that resides in the skin, in the accent, the color of my eyes, the frizz of my hair, the alienating rhythms of my name, and that often requires a justification, an excuse, even an expiation, belongs to the question of place. Although the mythogenic narratives of birthrights and paternal blood fantasies, associated with place nostalgias, are usually seen as closures of identity, global divestitures of place are also abrogating regional historical stresses that constitute the symbolic imaginary from which the resources for identity formation are drawn. They legitimize our personal narratives, provide subject continuities and confer authenticity to the historical claims of our past. It is thus not only the fact of deracination or trauma that is being dematerialized in terms of diasporic experience, but also the historical archive and the symbolic capital that provide traction for autonomous initiatives of minority cultures. The loss of place or deterritorialization that haunts every diasporic imaginary, and that is usually overcompensated by vigorous affective investments in the notion of soil or territory, is also further compounded by involuntary separations and forced migrations. The fact that I haven’t taken my leave (*of me*) and yet must leave compounds the affective residues that conspire for the restitution of loss. This is why the question of place is crucial for diasporic attachments and cannot be dispassionately camouflaged in global postures of cosmopolitan liberalism.¹⁰ I can see this in my father’s eyes, where the resilience of place, after twenty-four years of exile and disavowal, still quivers and heaves from time to time, glazed and weak, but threatening enough to be quickly choked back into submission. These are not only erratic specters of loss, parrying

the need to remember, enunciate, repeat – specters of interiorization and mourning – but also of resistance, of absolute refusal of place to be lost. Spatial dislocation, in other words, is always also an emotional dislocation, which alone accounts for the resistances that Massey, in *For Space*, refers to as a “failure of [our] spatial imagination” (8).¹¹

In the global or privileged imaginary, however, place sentimentalism is powered by the enduring myth and charisma of lost authenticities that also testify to the unfolding vitiations of place and its increasing homogenization. This is usually articulated through nostalgias for the mythic pasts of native cultures or distant localisms that, with increasing exigency, turn from sentimental idolizations to protected World Heritage sites, as places that still resist the historical forces of global assimilation. However, the metropolitan nostalgias for absent worlds of distant authenticities, buried deep in the deserts of the developing world, yet again, enable the global North to see its own existential alienation in terms of technological and historical progress while denying them to the very cultures it glorifies. In the perverse imaginary of the global subject, Massey’s woman, who “spends hours a day collecting water” on foot in the depths of sub-Saharan Africa (*Space, Place, and Gender* 149), is, somehow, the privileged object of desire.

Even if place, today, seems to reside in its cherished fantasies alone, it still retains its power as the primary trope of identity. Indeed, the difficulty of distinguishing between the two is nowhere more visceral than in the experience of diasporic subject whose lines of escape remain blocked by screams and paranoias of history that cluster and howl against its liberation. The impasse of diasporic pathos, however, does not consist only in this difficulty of separation but also in the unresolved aporias of place, where both the possibility of revealing the discursive nature of place and the impossibility of looking beyond it are equally present.¹² Although implicit in the estrangement of diasporic lives, the process of disinscription of place from its

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traditional constituencies seems also to expose the impossibility of relinquishing its claim on the diasporic subject. Deterritorialized, place, in the diasporic imaginary, is thus always reterritorialized anew through hysterias and latent fantasies that cathect fierce affective attachments. This antinomic doubleness of place that retains its tension in the unhomely subject testifies also to the fact that place is violent, that place damages, penetrates, cannot be given up, refuses to leave.

Whether place, as the contested terrain in the politics of identity and difference, is discursive – whether it can be seen “not as the *source* of conflict,” as Bhabha suggests in *The Location of Culture*, but as “the *effect* of discriminatory practices” (163)¹³ – or whether its significance resides precisely in its resistance to theoretical appropriations and epistemic recolonizations, its implications for diasporic subjects are no less assertive. In other words, imagined or real, present or fetishized as partial presence,¹⁴ in diasporic experience, place still articulates the drama of the subject – what Said, in *Orientalism*, identified as “the imaginative geography” or poeticization of space as the fact that “space acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant and anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning *for us* here” (55; emphasis added).¹⁵ Place is thus never abolished in diasporic imaginary, but only redoubled as the limit point of intensities in the affective life, overdetermined and present all the more by virtue of its absence.

The fact of physical detachment that powers the mythic, archaic and symbolic reconstitutions of place in diaspora is often offset by place fetishizations, answering to the impossible demand to identify with the lost object. Historical narratives of place, its sentimentalized icons, what Ahmed refers to as “the language of heritage” (337), or all the stock representations of the collective past that homogenize identity, and in which the diasporic subject is heavily invested, can be seen both as metaphoric substitutions of place and its metonymic displacements at the same time. They provide comfort, fix lesions and assuage the constancy

of guilt through a lifeless but obsessive revivalist enterprise, while at the same time registering the very absence of place. Like fetish, being a partial presence that both supplements for the lack while *re-marking* the presence of that lack by the same token, place assumes the same intensities in the compensatory economies of emotion. In other words, in the loss of place, I am yet claimed and constantly pulled back by the icons that testify to its irremissible presence, which may be revealed as rhetorical, but which I am still helpless to renounce. The demand of place is exorbitant. Often couched in terms of the Oedipal paternal past, it is imperious and devolves on the displaced subject as an identification that must, yet no longer can, be assumed.

This presence of what could be identified as a *topomythology* that cuts across and divides diasporic experience is lived as a demand, a sovereignty, a siege of a city declared open to assailants of history that confer legitimacy to the whole of me but that I can no longer take up as mine. Hostage to bloodlines I have left screaming but no longer identify with, to lives and intimacies of others whose faces I cannot suffer to remember, to my place, my ghost town, against which everything else is measured but which only endures as the sole object of my fierce resentment, my rancor and my bad blood, from under this I can only emerge whole as a shameful consciousness. Shame expiates for the differential lack/excess of the whole of me and is nested with the crushing force of an entire nation and its history precisely in this impossibility of my representing it. In diasporic shame, I am not only riveted to that which I can no longer assume – my place, my history, me – but, in the very movement of my estrangement from me, shame also commits me to the whole of me, to the impossibility of evading that which is already absent. My being unable, in Levinas’s ontologically significant terms, “*not* to identify with this being who is already foreign” (63; emphasis added) constitutes the torsion of a complex that underlies the unhomeliness in diasporic lives.¹⁶ Diasporic shame is the affective articulation of unhomeliness, that which makes unhomeliness *feel*. A stab of a gaze that fully assumes my past but to which I

am no longer equal forces me both to identify with the object I am desperate to renounce – in order to maintain the appearance of affinity – and to renounce that which I am desperate to identify with – in order to break free. The gaze that thus exposes the depths of my ambivalence to me cannot be faced or challenged with my own since my own does not rest on integrity of history or soil that would allow for determined subject positions but on openness and vulnerability of ambivalence that can only drag my eyes downward. But the gaze that I see reflect the intensities of patrimony and national trauma is itself not comminative; it is rather my affective life that through shame atones for my inability to be its equal and fully assume the suffering I desire. My unhome-ness originates in my shame for another's suffering, in the fact that I both desire to take it up as mine and the fact that I fiercely disavow its irremissible claims on the Ego. This ambivalence of being held tight between the arrogations of the past that I *no less* desire than my own emancipated existence is part of the same movement of shame, testifying, *at the same time*, both to the impossibility of renouncing the old narrative of place – as that which cannot be dissipated – and to its irresistible dissipation.¹⁷

However, collective memory, as Bhabha writes, and “the guise of pastness” that defines the diasporic relation to place, is “not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic” (*Location of Culture* 52).¹⁸ In other words, the politicized constructs of the past that dramatize identity by romantic and aesthetic investments in the pathos of cultural history also legitimize its consolidation around the illusions of homogeneity and sameness. The “artifice of the archaic,” as Bhabha calls it, is the ruse of identity that collective history seems to confer, a political curveball that can mobilize sympathy to win elections or initiate conflict in the name of the Father, *Volk* or *Volksseele*, but this deadly ruse is performative in both senses of the word. Insofar as it is an artifice, it is a performance of identity, with all the accoutrements and ventriloquy of cultural symbolism that supplements for the

arch(é)aic; however, it is also performative in the sense that it *acts* with a formative and prescriptive force since identity is articulated in the archaic alone, which constructs and normalizes identity formation.

Artifice or not, place still determines the fragmentation of the affective experience in the diasporic subject. It is undeniably present at the splitting point of subject enunciation and it reveals itself as unmartyred shame for the materiality of suffering I am powerless to assume. It is thus both tied to regional ontologies that resist universal theoretical assumptions and to metaphysics of indigeneity with its own specific cultural and historical imperatives. However, it is also tied to deterritorializing cosmopolitanisms of new topographies and, considered within the economy of emotions, it provides the hinge/impasse that both expiates for my incapacities of representation while, by the same token, making them explicit. The diasporic subject is unable to resist the fixed notions of place, even after their deconstruction, due to the impossibility of evading the assignation of responsibility that place in its very destruction demands. Like a skin no longer my own place still clings to me as mine and its cauterized burns are reflected in the eyes of all those who still share its open wounds. It is to their hurt and to the exposure of their vulnerability that I respond with absolute disparity of my own, allowing shame to emerge in the affective gap as an expiatory witness to my own ambivalence. Diasporic shame is thus the epiphany of my responsibility for the place to which I remain consigned despite my failure of identification. It is also the breaking out of the Other within myself that, like a sobering burst, exposes the hidden depths of my ambivalence and my insincerities, testifying, by the same token, to the Ego's inability to assume full mastery over its empire. Nothing, in this respect, could be more sincere than my shame.

The experience of diasporic subjects cannot be understood as the radical diasporization of place alone. The antinomic narratives of spatial imagination are maintained side by side. Understood, rather, as the pressure point where the imperatives of ancestry, on the one

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hand, and the necessities of destiny, on the other, collide, diasporic experience reveals not only the failure of identity to stabilize itself on the reassurance of its binary structures but also, and at the same time, the fact of its consummate triumph. The affective disorder that originates in the absence of my union with the indigenous gods of place *and* the fact of their irresistible call unravels my subjectivity as constantly cornered by its own otherness, by its half-eclipsed, disavowed desire for identity. Diasporization, in other words, reveals both the absolute failure of identity and its absolute tyranny in the grip of which my need to reappropriate it continues unabated. The splitting of subject enunciation that produces border positions is both partial and plural at the same time. It is partial because the place that used to tether it is forever lost, “a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination” and “in this sense [...] a place of no return,” as Avtar Brah suggests, when considering the significance of home in diasporic lives (188). But the border position is also plural, because the place I have left behind never leaves, is never out of gunsight in the Oedipal crosshairs of desire, but intersects and divides the terrain of my present, destabilized by pressures that remain outside it and that my present cannot assimilate without shame. Diasporic shame is the trace of this disjunction, of being partial and plural at once, of the impossibility of being one and the same and it cannot be sublated in new hybrid categories of experience since it emerges at the limits of hybridity, as the very expression, the affective evidence and manifestation of the impossibility of sublation.¹⁹ The fetish is still turned *towards* presence that it disavows by substituting it, which is also what accounts for the continuous throb of desire to reappropriate it and come to rest, although it never does.

As shame in diasporic identity implies enunciatory ambivalence and border positionality, discursive notions of *métissage* and hybridity, that, in postcolonial terms, signify new subject positions, do not alleviate the indiscretion of subjectivity in shame. Although resisting totalizations and identity closures due to its

ambivalence, shame does not end but perhaps begins there, in the limit concepts, where hegemonies of place are renegotiated and where, as Bhabha argues, “we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (*Location of Culture* 56). The mythic notion of place is still the fist of my resistance, the gravity of my passions, whose pull may seem harder the further I seem to drift, the more I look for subterfuge in discursive strategies of emancipation. There is still the psychological crisis, almost a pathology, a defensiveness and shame for having renounced my place, my gravity, my responsibility in the ambivalence of diasporic experience. New subject positions, in other words, departing from threshold concepts, still carry the wound of displacement and can even be seen as an “artifice *au courant*,” dissimulating the trauma anew. As Wilson Harris writes, it may not be “a question of rootlessness but of the miracle of roots, the miracle of a dialogue with eclipsed [or half-eclipsed] selves,” which the necessities of our historical realities “may deny us or into which they may lead us” (65–66). In the end, everything seems to pivot on this final possibility between disavowal and openness or, which amounts to the same thing, whether the principles of universality, by their unitary assumptions, block the possibility of otherness. Since this is the case, all syncretic discourses hide the traumas of history, which has been one of denial of otherness rather than its joyous affirmation. In this history, which is our history – you know, the one that leads “from the slingshot to the megaton bomb,” the only one, according to Adorno, that can claim universal validity (320) – in this history, place will always retain its significance, not because it is a marker of our identity but, precisely the opposite, because it harbors our otherness.



disclosure statement

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notes

I am deeply indebted to the editor and the peer reviewers for their time, patience and support. Their expertise and insight have been instrumental in improving the quality of the manuscript.

1 Although typically considered in negative and socially adverse terms, shame, as Tomkins suggests in his seminal work, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, is also the most ambiguous of affects. This is not only due to its affective structure and the fact that shame originates in intimacy or desire for identification, since it implies an investment of interest in the other, a prior attachment that cannot be altogether renounced despite the disavowal and rejection suffered by the Ego. Its ambivalence, as I argue elsewhere, is also due to its implications both as a disciplinary mechanism that homogenizes social relations and as an ethical index of our openness to others that founds all social relations. Cf. Tomkins 358–73, in particular. For further suggestions regarding the political ambivalence of shame and its significance for ethics, cf. Filipovic, “Towards an Ethics of Shame” 99–114.

2 Or the “unwillingness of the self to renounce the object” of interest that persists despite oneself and that leads to “heightened [...] self-consciousness” manifested in a blush. Cf. Tomkins 361.

3 This is precisely what Sara Ahmed identifies as problematic in Chambers’ ontological considerations of place and migrancy, which, in their metaphorizing abstractions, “do not simply refer to actual experiences of being dislocated from home, but become ways of *thinking* without home.” Chambers loses sight of the political exposure of migrancy that is open to hurt and violence without protection. Drawing heavily on Heidegger, this unprotectedness of being, inherent to migrancy, then becomes “exoticized and idealized as the basis of an ethics of transgression, an ethics which assumes that it is possible to be liberated from identity as such [...]” Cf. Ahmed 332, 334.

4 Considering the relation between identity and place, Massey, in *Space, Place, and Gender*, emphasizes the exigency of a timely and yet absent work of deconstruction regarding the notion of place. “For while the notion of personal identity has been problematized and rendered increasingly complex,” she argues, “the notion of *place* has remained relatively unexamined.” Identities are

multiple, open-ended, “relational,” whereas these same possibilities “are often closed down by the assumptions that such relations [in terms of place] must be those of bounded, negative counterposition, of inclusion and exclusion” (167, 169–70).

5 This sense of place and its critique derives from a cognate understanding of space that, in Foucault’s terms, used to be “treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical [and] the immobile,” in relation to what he sees as the “richness, fecundity, life [and] dialectic” of time (*Space, Knowledge and Power* 177–78). Foucault’s call to challenge the metaphysics of spatiality in relation to time and reconsider the significance of space as an agent within the geographies of power and privilege has led to a profound change in human geography and to the “emergence of ‘an epoch of space,’” as Edward Soja calls it. Space, in Soja’s terms, has now “assume[d] a more reasonable cast [...] a more flexible and balanced critical theory that reentwines the making of history with *the social production of space*, with the construction and configuration of human geographies.” Cf. Soja 114–15; emphasis added. In this respect, cf. also an interview with Doreen Massey whose entire body of work has been committed to this change in our articulation of space:

A lot of us, I think, implicitly think of space as a kind of flat surface out there – we “cross space” – and space is therefore devoid of temporality: it is without time, it is without dynamism, it is a kind of flat, inert given [...] A lot of what I’ve been trying to do over the all too many years when I’ve been writing about space is to bring space alive, to dynamize it and to make it relevant, to emphasize how important space is in the lives in which we live, and in the organization of the societies in which we live. (Massey, “Doreen Massey on Space”)

6 And there are others, producing further, more complex, intersectional regimes of identification and finer, close-grained microeconomies of difference, made in terms of faith, literacy, dialect, urbanity, age, disability, political sympathies, employment contracts, and still further others, themselves, in turn, cut across by difference, that affect our *sense* of place, our *insidedness* and our relation to place in general.

7 “In what follows,” Harvey writes,

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I shall make frequent reference to the concept of “time-space compression.” I mean to signal by that term processes that so revolutionize the objective qualities of space and time that we are forced to alter, sometimes in quite radical ways, how we represent the world to ourselves. I use the word “compression” because a strong case can be made that the history of capitalism has been characterized by speed-up in the pace of life, while so overcoming spatial barriers that the world sometimes seems to collapse inwards upon us [...] As space appears to shrink to a “global village” of telecommunications and a “spaceship earth” of economic and ecological interdependencies – to use just two familiar and everyday images – and as time horizons shorten to the point where the present is all there is (the world of the schizophrenic), so we have to learn how to cope with an overwhelming sense of *compression* of our spatial and temporal worlds. (240)

8 In his seminal study on place attachment, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*, Yi-fu Tuan defines *topophilia* as “the affective bond between people and place or setting.” Although, “diffused as a concept,” he argues, *topophilia* is “vivid and concrete as a personal experience” (4). Tuan, however, considers *topophilia* in significantly broader terms of perception, attitude and value, even “world-view” that determines our relation to place. The emotive ties, according to Tuan, may further differ in content and assume sensuous forms of experience whereby our physical setting is felt and lived synaesthetically. Although I see *topophilia* in more restrictive terms of affective experience related to a strong emotive complex that I consider significant for diasporic identity formation, place is here still lodged in profound attachments and lived experience, which makes its relation to structures of feeling more apparent.

9 This also resonates strongly with Ahmed’s caveat in “Home and Away” regarding the significance of materiality, of trauma and of “the contingency of ‘external’ circumstances” in migratory subjects that cannot be “detached from the social relations in which it [migrancy] is lived” (334).

10 Indeed, considering the contemporary responses to Islamic art at the Museum of

Modern Art exhibition in 2006, Bhabha warns against the “doctrinal espousal of global nomadism or transnationalism” as the only legitimate source of resistance “to myths of national identity and cultural authenticity.” The resilience of place, in this respect, is not necessarily “a form of national or cultural atavism” but may have affinities that go beyond the universalizing tendencies to justify its necessity in essentialist terms. Cf. Bhabha, “Another Country” 34.

11 This same failure, which could be seen as a failure to historicize spatiality in Foucault’s terms, a failure, Massey writes, “in the sense of being inadequate to face up to the challenges of space [...] [and] take on board its coeval multiplicities, to accept its radical contemporaneity [and] to deal with its constitutive complexity,” is also intimately related to the resurgence of contemporary nativisms and “defensive enclosures of essentialized places [that] seem to enable a wider disengagement” while providing a sense of “secure foundation” (*For Space* 8). However, as I have argued, it is the affective structure of place, the fact of its embodiedness, that blocks its deterritorialization. Place, in other words, is always a place of affective blockage or impasse that panoramic strategies of free, cosmopolitan subjects often overlook.

12 For analogous aporias of diasporic subjectivity, cf. Filipovic, “Ashamed of Who I Am” 81–107.

13 For Bhabha, it is precisely this possibility of considering place or “the cultural” as “the production of cultural *differentiation*” that “changes its value and its rules of recognition” (*Location of Culture* 163).

14 Cf. also Bhabha’s consideration of fetishism and its operating logic within racial and colonial discourse in his chapter “The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism” (*Location of Culture* 94–121).

15 In ontological terms, spatial poeticization could be seen as the becoming-place of space or, which amounts to the same thing, as the historicization of space – if, indeed, there ever was space alone, simply there, in its presence, or whether space, only considered as the more originary, is actually an *effect* of our inability to transcend our place(dness) and our historicity – a desire, in other words, for the metaphysics of presence

that has never ceased to animate the Western consciousness.

16 For Levinas, shame is an ontological index of my unsurpassable presence to myself or the incapacity of my being to be otherwise than itself. In shame, he writes,

[t]he necessity of fleeing, in order to hide oneself, is put in check by the impossibility of fleeing oneself. What appears in shame is thus precisely the fact of being chained to oneself, the radical impossibility of fleeing oneself to hide from oneself, the unalterably binding presence of the I to itself [*du moi a soi-même*]. (63)

17 The ambivalence or doubleness of spatial imagination that diasporic shame so acutely articulates can be related to Tomkins's differentiation of shame as an affect characterized by ambiguity of desire. Using a compelling image of "the child who covers his face in the presence of the stranger, but who also peeks through his fingers so that he may look without being seen," Tomkins writes:

In shame I wish to continue to look and to be looked at, but I also do not wish to do so. There is some serious impediment to communication which forces consciousness back to the face and the self. Because the self is not altogether willing to renounce the object, excitement may break through and displace shame at any moment, but while shame is dominant it is experienced as an enforced renunciation of the object. Self-consciousness is heightened by virtue of the unwillingness of the self to renounce the object.

In the experience of contempt-disgust, however, the affective renunciation of the object is absolute. Cf. *Affect Imagery Consciousness* 361–62.

18 For a further consideration of Bhabha's notion of the "artifice of the archaic" in relation to migrancy and shame, cf. also Filipovic, "Ashamed of Who I Am" 92–93.

19 Although belonging to different, yet not unrelated, discursive orders, integrative resonances could be found between diasporic shame and the growing theoretical considerations of what Shih and Ikeda propose as "post-hybridity," a concept developed as a caveat against the emerging hegemony of hybridity in the discourse of

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post-Western International Relations. Globalization, they argue, "generates the political pressure in all actors to eagerly claim hybridity" in order to "win acknowledgement in a largely capitalist, multicultural world." Ironically, this leads to what they see as "the emergence of hybrid fundamentalism" in global governance. Cf. Shih and Ikeda 455, 457. Although part of the affective order and phenomenology of experience, diasporic shame, does reveal the limits of hybrid categories as a conceptual artifice or a synthetic constitution of new subject positions implicated in the field of power relations as yet another constraining regime of identity produced by the imperatives of the global North. I am ashamed insofar as I am unable to assume the categories and the normative regimes of legitimacy to which I am powerlessly consigned. As long as they are constraining and reductive, shame will emerge irrespective of how the categories are defined, free, hybrid, pure or, indeed, post-hybrid. The presence of shame reveals the synthetic nature of all subject positions. It is a disjunction, a gap or interval of my *non-relation* to objective structures of my legitimacy as a subject. For a further consideration of this space of non-relation and, in particular, its emancipatory possibilities in the context of racial shame, cf. also Filipovic, "Black and Ashamed" 112–33.

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