

SUNY Series, Philosophy and Race
Robert Bernasconi and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, Editors

LIVING ALTERITIES

Phenomenology, Embodiment, and Race

EDITED BY EMILY S. LEE

SUNY
PRESS

CONTENTS

Cover art courtesy of Lisa Goodin.

Published by State University of New York Press, Albany

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For information, contact State University of New York Press, Albany, NY
www.sunypress.edu

Production by Ryan Morris
Marketing by Michael Campochiaro

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Living alterities : phenomenology, embodiment, and race / edited by Emily S. Lee.

pages cm. — (SUNY series, Philosophy and race)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4384-5015-5 (hardcover : alk. paper) 1. Phenomenology. 2. Human body (Philosophy) 3. Race—Philosophy. 4. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, 1908-1961. I. Lee, Emily S., 1971— editor of compilation.

B829.5.J563 2014

142'.7—dc23

2013012907

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Let me begin by thanking all the contributors to this anthology. It is a pleasure to bring together in this volume so many philosophers whose work I have long admired. It is especially wonderful to discover not only that they write such important philosophy, but that their generosity matches their professionalism.

I want to also thank California State University at Fullerton. Some of the contributions from this book were originally presented at the 40th Annual Philosophy Symposium on “Phenomenology, Embodiment, and Race” in 2010. This volume could only come together because the philosophy department—both its faculty and its students—carry on such great traditions that are well supported by the university.

I’d like to thank Lisa Jong-Soon Goodlin for permission to use her piece, *Untitled*, (ducks) from the series, “Lost and Found,” as the cover art. I have been a long admirer of Goodlin’s art; see more of her work at lisagoodlin.com.

Last, but not least, I want to thank my circle of family and friends. I hope you know who you are. Without you, I cannot imagine how to live my day-to-day life.

- Americans Facing Racism* (Boulder, Colo.: Paradigm Publishers, 2008). For insightful discussion about the variety of Asian American experiences of racism and coping with racism, I thank Jonathan Leung, my commentator for an earlier oral address of this essay. In addition, I would like to thank various members of the audience at CSU Fullerton for their very helpful comments, including Craig Ihara, Emily S. Lee, and JeeLoo Liu.
50. Rosalind Chou and Joe Feagin, *The Myth of the Model Minority: Asian Americans Facing Racism* (Boulder, Colo.: Paradigm Publishers, 2008), 101.

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A PHENOMENOLOGY OF HESITATION

Interrupting Racializing Habits of Seeing

ALIA AL-SAJI

This chapter provides a phenomenological account of racializing vision, with the aim not only of understanding its intransigent and closed logic but of sketching the avenues and practices needed for its interruption.¹ To begin, three examples can help frame the concerns lying behind my phenomenological reflections on racism; albeit anecdotal, and though this chapter will deal with racializing perception at a more general level, these examples clarify the stakes involved. The examples are not meant to be exhaustive of experiences of racism or of the antiracist responses open to us, but they are meant to remind us of the difficulties involved in thinking how racism (especially at the level of perception, affect, and prereflective experience) operates and can be overcome.²

1. In the context of the public debate surrounding the Muslim headscarf or “veil” in France, a debate that led to the passage of the 2004 law banning conspicuous religious signs in public schools (and that continues today with the face veil, or niqab, as its object), a frenzy of media and news coverage about girls wearing headscarves in schools occurred in France. In one such news story on a public television channel, just prior to the passage of the law, a common though baffling reaction was documented (baffling at the time, at least to me). A Muslim girl attending

secondary school had attempted to circumvent the interdiction on the headscarf imposed in her school (at the time decisions regarding headscarves were made on a case-by-case basis and, hence, left up to school administrations). Instead of a hijab covering the head and neck, she wore a high-necked sweater and wrapped her hair in a bandana or scarf tied at the back of the neck. This achieved a certain level of cover while in the classroom; when the girl left the gates of the school, she would put on her headscarf over her bandana and go back to life as usual. Though this “compromise” was accepted by the school for a time, tensions were palpable in the news piece. As the girl entered her classroom (in high-neck and bandana), the teacher responsible for the class reacted with immediate and visceral repulsion; she could not (physically and emotionally) tolerate the presence of the girl in her classroom, expressing violently and vocally her desire for the girl to leave.³ What was clear was that the teacher *saw* the girl as willfully incarnating religious dogmatism and gender oppression; her reaction was not that of worked-through argument or judgment, but of prereflective perception and affect.⁴

2. In her essay, “You Mixed? Racial Identity Without Racial Biology,” Sally Haslanger describes how living with her adopted African American children, and in a “mixed” family, has altered her own body sense and image.⁵ More than being simply a question of comfort zones, this transformation takes place at the level of perception, affective openness and sense of community with African Americans. Importantly, it is an alteration that disrupts racializing habits and aesthetics, and that changes her perception of, and response to, other bodies as well as her own. It reconfigures her bodily attachment to, and physical presence among, others. Such transformation is not limited to interactions with her children; rather Haslanger finds that her bodily, affective, and social map has been redrawn.⁶ She notes how this has made her sensitive to the implicit racism of some social spaces, in a bodily and affective (and not simply reflective) way, since “[r]acism is no longer just something I find offensive and morally objectionable; I experience it as a personal harm.”⁷
3. A personal example. When I first met my partner in 1996, he was an elementary school teacher working in a socially disadvantaged school in the south of France (a school with a visible proportion

of students of North African descent). The debate around headscarves in schools was already very much alive in France, and at that time and for several years after, I would attempt to convince him, through all the arguments and analyses at my disposal, that the widespread reaction to veiling in France was misconceived. As a good public servant and citizen, he was committed to the principle of *laïcité* (the French version of secularism) in the public school system. What this meant, for him and for many other friends and colleagues in France, was that veiling could not have a place in schools. As someone whose immediate family includes both women who wear the hijab and unveiled women, and where veiled women have attained a high level of educational and professional achievement (as engineers and lawyers), I saw the French reaction to veiling as eliding the reality and multiplicity of Muslim women’s experiences. My arguments, however, did not seem to work on my partner, so we left it at that. Several years later, having moved to Montreal, the question of veiling arose again in the context of the debate that led up to the 2004 French law. In the meantime, my mother and grandmother (who both wear the hijab) had been very much a part of our everyday lives. At this juncture, it became apparent that my partner was not only critical of the proposed law but had revised his reaction so thoroughly that his previous attitude seemed alien to him. Instead of owing to my persuasive abilities, it was the transformed affective tissue of collective living that seems to have shifted my partner’s perceptions. Women wearing the hijab, and the modalities of interaction that such veiling dictated, were now, to him, part of intersubjective life. New habits of seeing had emerged: veiling was no longer perceived as a homogeneous object (hiding subjects from view); rather, differentiations in ways of veiling and interacting were seen as adumbrations of individuated and concrete subjects who commanded singular and contextual responses.

In what follows, I propose to explore the question of racializing vision and the possibilities for its critical interruption by drawing on the phenomenologies of Frantz Fanon, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Iris Marion Young and on Henri Bergson’s philosophy of time. My account also proceeds in conversation with contemporary race theorists such as Linda Martín Alcoff and Shannon Sullivan. I should note that although Merleau-Ponty’s work

lacks a systematic consideration of “race,” I find his phenomenology to offer a nuanced framework for thinking racializing perception.⁸ This stems from Merleau-Ponty’s attention to the ambivalence and contextualism of visual relations, a nuanced approach he shares with Fanon. Vision is neither inherently harmonious nor necessarily objectifying and hostile. It can become the location for violent and objectifying misrepresentation, but also for critical attunement and affective openness.⁹ Vision, then, contains the ground for both objectification and its critique, for racialization and for antiracist interventions into social practice. My aim in this chapter is to disclose both these possibilities. While sections 1 and 2 uncover the phenomenological structures of racializing vision and affect, section 3 explores the power of hesitation to open such structures to transformation and critique. Hesitation, I claim, is a necessary condition for critical and ethical seeing, although hesitation by itself is not a sufficient response. To understand this, I distinguish generative from oppressive forms of hesitation in section 4, and I show in section 5 how hesitation is in need of enduring relations with others and of the critical work of memory in order to become productive. In the second half of the chapter, I thus present a phenomenology of hesitation as a means for interrupting the racializing habits of seeing and affect, described in the first half. In the course of these phenomenological studies, I will revisit the above examples.

1. A Phenomenology of Racializing Vision

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon shows how racialization is not only a process by which the identities of self and other are constituted (an othering process à la Jean-Paul Sartre); it is a socially pathological othering with important structural features.¹⁰ This othering involves a projective mechanism (or intentionality) by which what is undesirable in the self is projected onto the other; the result is a negative mirroring whereby the other is constituted as that which this self is not, or does not take itself to be.¹¹ “Black” is hence oppositionally constructed as that which “white” identity disavows. Through this racialization, difference no longer appears to be relational or fluid; difference is made into opposition and hierarchy, so that identities appear to be mutually exclusive and in-themselves terms. What allows this hierarchy to be seen as a feature of the world, and racializing operations to remain hidden from view, is the way in which race is perceived as belonging to visible features of the body (such as skin color). Racialization, hence,

relies on the naturalization of projected and oppositional difference to the perceived body.

Moreover, racialization not only structures the ways in which bodies are represented and perceived, it describes the ways in which colonialism and White supremacy divide bodies politically, economically, spatially, and socially in order to exploit and dominate them.¹² Racialization is, then, the historical and social process by which races are constructed, seen and, when interiorized or epidermalized, lived. The power of Fanon’s account of racism is twofold, in my view, for he is interested both in the *naturalization* of race, its constitution in relation to visible bodily markers that come to unconsciously stand in for race, and in its *rationalization*, the way in which racism takes itself to originate as a mere reaction to the racialized other. He shows that it is of the essence of racism to forget the histories and operations of power, which constitute it, and to scapegoat or blame its victims. What Fanon reveals in his account of racialization is that the construction of race in the White imaginary has more to do with white domination and demarcations of “whiteness” than with the concrete racialized others that are its ostensible objects. In other words, there is a ignorance to racism that is not merely accidental, but that sustains its operations—a forgetting which actively hides racializing mechanisms and misconstrues its objects.

A primary way in which racialization takes hold in lived experience, while remaining unconscious and invisible, is by means of perception. As critical race theorists have shown, racializing perception operates by projecting race as a property of the visible body, naturalizing racial categories to bodily features such as skin color, facial attributes, bodily styles, and in cultural racism, bodily practices and clothing.¹³ In this way, “race” becomes perceived as a natural category and not a social, cultural, and historical construct. The seeming naturalness of perceived “race”-categories works to justify the very racist logic that produced them. That the racialization of bodies and the rationalization of racism are intimately tied to their naturalization in visual perception opens a site of phenomenological questioning; for it is important to ask not only what in the structure of vision allows it to become racializing, but also how racializing vision operates, what is distinctive about it.¹⁴ More generally, is the objectification of others in racist and sexist perception simply the elaboration of a universal tendency within vision (as one may be tempted to conclude from the Sartrean theory of the gaze, for instance); or is there a distinctive phenomenological structure to these ways of seeing?¹⁵ In my view, it is by interrogating the recalcitrance and rigidity of racializing vision, at the same time as its contextualism and contingency, that the means for criticizing

and transforming this vision can come to view.¹⁶ Such a race-critical and feminist interrogation can find resources in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, as Linda Martín Alcoff has shown.¹⁷ Significantly, within a Merleau-Pontian frame, the visual naturalization of "race" can be understood to be made possible by the intentional structure of vision and its reliance on habit, but not to be necessitated by them.

For Merleau-Ponty, vision is not a mere neutral recording of the visible. As the *Phenomenology of Perception* shows, we learn to see.¹⁸ This means that vision not only *makes* visible, it does so *differentially* according to sedimented habits of seeing—according to the tacit ways our bodies relate to and move in the world, allowing certain aspects of that world to be foregrounded. Such habits of seeing owe to a social, cultural, and historical field—a visual field structured in such ways as to motivate, without fully determining, certain forms of perception, certain meaning-making schemas.¹⁹ Through sedimentation and habituation, the constitutive operations of vision remain tacit or unconscious; its intentionality works in us without our reflective awareness. It is the perceived object that is seen, as figure against ground, while the habits of visual perception remain themselves invisible. As Alcoff notes, we see *through* our habits; we do not see them.²⁰ Invisible is the gaze (or seeing body) in its constitutive and dynamic relation to the object, as well as the historical horizon and spatial ground against which that object is adumbrated. Indeed, the object appears *visible in itself*, while the relational and perspectival conditions of that visibility are elided.

Though vision is generally habitual, not all vision is objectifying or, more specifically, racializing (i.e., vision is not inevitably racist, but contextually and historically so).²¹ I would claim that racializing vision builds on the intentionality and habituality of vision in general, on the self-reflexive erasure of vision before the visibility of its object. *But racializing vision is both more and less than this.* Although I agree with Alcoff that racializing vision is, like all vision, habitual, I believe that a further dimension structures racializing vision and explains its closure.²² In other words, it is important to ask not only how racialization takes hold as perceptual habit, but also how that habit differs, in its intransigence and dehumanization, from the improvisational fluidity and responsiveness of habit more generally. I believe this can be traced by asking after the structure of racializing vision as *more and less* than vision in general. Racializing vision is *less* in that the affectivity and receptivity of vision are circumscribed—the openness of vision to other ways of being, which may destabilize or shatter its perceptual schemas, delimited. The dynamic ability of vision to change is partially closed down. Racialized bodies are not only seen as naturally inferior, they *cannot be seen otherwise*. In its overdetermination,

racializing vision is also *more*. The mechanism of othering, which undergirds this vision, sustains itself by means of the very perceptions, representations, and affects it produces.²³ Hence, witness the homogeneity and persistence of this vision. In a narcissistic and self-justifying move, racializing habits of seeing inscribe their cause in the perceived body, positing themselves as the objective or natural reaction to that body. In this way, these habits rationalize racism. Although the *inability* to see otherwise is a limitation that belongs to racializing vision (and not to the bodies seen), this limitation is naturalized to those bodies, so that they are taken to correspond to that and *only* that which this vision sees.

Racializing vision thus wears "blindness" (to borrow an expression from Bergson).²⁴ It is a representational and objectifying way of seeing. This inability to see otherwise—what I call the "I cannot" of racialization—should be understood to belong to social-cultural horizons, historically tied to modernity and colonial expansion in the West and motivated by imaginary and epistemic investments in representation and the metaphysics of subject-object.²⁵ But the logic of racialization dictates its own self-forgetting; the horizon, to which the construction of "race" owes, is elided by the visual naturalization of "race."²⁶ To see "race" as belonging to certain bodies is to overlook the social, historical, economic dimensions that contextualize "race." Here, I would claim that there is a kind of "I cannot" that structures racializing vision and that is not in contradiction with its "I can."²⁷ This "I cannot" institutes, circumscribes and indeed makes possible the objectifying teleology of the racializing "I can": I can see bodies as raced only because I cannot see them otherwise. Had it been possible to see *more* than raced object-bodies (to be affectively open to the difference and becoming of lived bodies), or to see *less* than naturalized bodies (to be aware of the social-historical structures of domination that institute my own vision), then it is not "race" as such that I would see.²⁸ "Race"-perception operates through a double exclusion or invisibility. In seeing bodies as "raced," their and my dependency on social positionality cannot be seen. Bodies are recognized in neither their relationality, nor their plasticity and lived-ness, but as "biologically" inborn or culturally invariant types composed of inherent traits. At the same time, the very mechanism by which racialization hierarchically stratifies and congeals the visual field is disavowed.²⁹ In this sense, ideals of postracial color-blindness do not overcome but rather repeat and confirm such racist disavowal.

By means of this double exclusion, racializing vision circumscribes and configures what is seen, so that the realm of visual objectivity is narrower than the historicity and social structure on which it relies. More importantly, it is not only structures of oppression that are invisible, but the affective and

lived subjectivities that undergo their effects, and which are more than those effects. What I want to claim is closed down in racializing perception is the *receptivity* of vision: its ability to be affected, to be touched, by that which lies beyond or beneath its habitual objectifying schemas. It is the openness to unanticipated (and not immediately cognizable) difference—an affective openness that usually grounds the dynamic and improvisatory character of perceptual habits—that the “I cannot” of racializing vision aims to limit.³⁰

2. Racializing Affect

The affective closure of racializing perception requires further scrutiny, for, at the same time, this perception is often deeply visceral (as we saw in the first example of this chapter). Indeed, racialization proceeds not only through unconscious perceptual habits, but also through habituated and socialized affects that inextricably color and configure perception. Though affect is pre-intentional, on the phenomenological account, it can provide the motivating and material support for the projective intentionality of racializing perception, and, hence, is implicated in naturalizing its reactive directionality. Affect and perception form two sides of the same phenomenon, linking that which is seen as racialized to its immediately felt effects on the racializing body.³¹ This immediacy is crucial for the naturalization that sustains racializing habits.

To see this we must return to the first example and examine more closely the teacher's repulsion in response to her Muslim student. While this repulsion appears to have been caused by the Muslim girl's attire (or the hint of a headscarf that her attire recalls), it is the teacher's repulsion that casts this student's body and her clothing as “intolerable.” The girl's presence is at once seen and felt to be intolerable (to the teacher); and this works to justify, indeed naturalize, the racist reaction of repulsion itself.³² The mechanism of othering by which racializing perception inscribes its cause in the racialized body proceeds here at the prereflective level. The teacher's perception thus appears immediate, the more so because it is colored by affect. And it is this very immediacy that seems to justify the teacher's response. Since the racist reaction of intolerance takes the form of a quasi-automatic, bodily, and affective reaction to the appearance of the girl's body, this reaction can be read as itself a “natural” reaction to the way things are (rather than as a culturally, socially, and historically constituted comportment). The nonreflective level at which perception and affect operate function to hide the ways in which these operations are mediated and constituted by a history and culture of racism, effectively naturalizing what is seen and felt. It is in this sense that

(moral) responsibility for cultural racism is blamed on its victims. The source of culturally racist hostility is taken to lie in the “irrational” and “intolerable” practices of cultural others (here Muslim girls who veil), exculpating both racist bodies and the racist social body that enables and circulates such affect.³³

Affect does not here break out of the circle of the “I cannot see otherwise”; indeed, it guards this circle and contributes to its closure. “I cannot feel otherwise” serves to both naturalize the intolerability of the other and exculpate the teacher, and the social body of which she is a part, from responsibility for her response. What is “otherwise” is not only occluded from vision, but also from feeling, imagination, and understanding; that a veiled Muslim female *subjectivity* or *agency* may exist, which cannot be reduced to the false consciousness of gender oppression, is not only invisible but affectively inaccessible and unimaginable. The affect of repulsion marks the limits of tolerance and polices the intolerable, simultaneously defining it. In this dichotomization, the complexity of lived subjectivities is elided. While, in this example, the tolerable may be defined by secularized Muslim women and the intolerable by oppressed veiled women, the possibility of real Muslim women's lives that do not fit into this schema remains a blind spot.³⁴ Rather than engaging in the affective work of responding to those lives, repulsion blocks that response, effectively congealing the porosity and fluidity of the affective sphere. Ethical unresponsiveness to the other (the perceptual and affective “I cannot”) is hence masked and justified by an affective hyper-reaction that, at once sustains racialization and blocks the difficult work of responsibility by taking its place.

This phenomenon can be described, following Fanon, as “affective ankylosis.”³⁵ “Affective ankylosis” conveys, at once, the rigidity, immobility, and numbing that characterize racializing affects; it explains the recalcitrance of these affects. The *rigidity* of racializing affect can be witnessed in its temporality, for this affect is not only frozen in its response but repetitive in its form. This is not simply to say that racializing affect repeats the schemas of the past acontextually in future settings. It is to say that the past is here congealed as schema and is, as such, overdetermined and fixed in its sense; this is the past as “historico-racial schema,” the past constructed as myth, stereotype, distorted and isolated remnant.³⁶ Corresponding to this overdetermination of the past, there is a predetermination of the future. The future is not the open setting where newness can be created; its possibilities are projected and mapped in advance based on the ossified schemas of the past. It is in this vein that Fanon describes affective ankylosis as an “inability to liquidate the past,” for, instead of being worked-through and remembered, this past is

repeated in the present and closes down the future.³⁷ By only being receptive to that which is determined in advance, such rigidity enacts, in a temporal register, the negative mirroring characteristic of racialization.

The rigidity of racializing affect can be seen not only in the closed temporality it projects onto the bodies it racializes (and which it takes to belong to the “closed” nature of those bodies themselves), but also in its own temporal *immobility*. There is a lack of fluidity or becoming to racializing affect, a totalizing sense of completeness or absorption that means it does not hesitate in its course and does not become otherwise. Not only is receptivity to that which does not already figure on its racialized perceptual map foreclosed, this affect does not search beyond that foreclosure and does not open onto other affective responses or modes of response. In this sense, racializing affect short-circuits the work of responsivity and self-critical engagement that comes with sustained coexistence with others. This highlights the *numbing* of receptivity that paradoxically accompanies the strong affects of racialization—as if these affects serve as blinders. This numbness is twofold, for it affects both the self—in its lack of critical self-awareness and its active forgetting of the structures of oppression and privilege on which it relies—and the relation to others, eliding nuance, modulation, and adaptive effort in responding to singular others and divergent situations. Not only is the receptivity and responsiveness of the affective sphere curtailed, the creative and critical potential of affect to hesitate, which I will discuss below, is blocked.

The recalcitrant invisibility that structures racializing vision and affect—the “I cannot see or feel otherwise”—means that antiracist practice needs to be more than a discursive or cognitive intervention (though this discursive level is also required).³⁸ Precisely because of the role of perceptual habit and affect in naturalizing racism, it is within perception and affectivity that I believe critical antiracist practice must find its tools. Here, the inner weakness (or potential) of habits of seeing to become aware of their own affective limitations and conditions, to recall their historicity and social horizontality, must be mined. Drawing on Bergson’s account of habit, I find this critical potential in the form of hesitation.

3. Hesitation and Affect

Hesitation defines the structure of time for Bergson, the ontological interval wherein time makes a difference, wherein it acts in experience. The difference that time makes is felt as delay: “time is what hinders everything from

being given at once. It retards, or rather it is [delay].”³⁹ This implies, as in Gilles Deleuze’s formula, that the whole is not given, that there is no completion or closure for an enduring reality.⁴⁰ That all is not given means that what is must be understood as tendency and becoming rather than thing; this is important not only for how we see objects and bodies, but for what it means to see, feel, and think. If experience itself is tendency, to use Bergson’s term, then its temporal structure is that of indetermination, becoming, and potential change. Tendency connotes not simply movement, but “nascent change of direction.”⁴¹ For to hesitate is to feel one’s way tentatively and receptively; time is “tâtonnement,” says Bergson, that is, a search without finality or teleology, an experimentation that does not dictate the future it will find.⁴² Such a search does not take the form of linear progression; it forks and diverges continually, so that the futures it encounters were not those initially anticipated, being irreducible to the repetition of the past. But neither is the past a self-same or congealed idea, on this account. Though the past as a virtual whole pushes on each present, actualizing itself there, this past is dynamically reconfigured through the passage of events. The past is not the accumulation of events in a container, but the continuous immanent transformation of sense and force that is tendency.⁴³ Newness, in other words, arises not only from the openness to the future but from the way the past is remembered in hesitation; memory and invention are here intertwined. Hesitation does not only delay, it also opens onto elaboration and becoming otherwise. Since all is not given, what happens in the interval is becoming.

Phenomenologically, affect plays a vital role in the bodily experience of temporal hesitation. In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson notes that affect is felt when the body hesitates in the course of habitual action.⁴⁴ The causal sequence of excitation and response is interrupted and hesitation takes its place. Here, hesitation is felt as bodily affect—so that we might speak of affective hesitation or of hesitating affect. This affect not only takes the place of, and hence delays, habitual action; it also prefigures the delayed habit, making it visible as an anticipated future among others in the world. Through affect the body waits before acting; it has the time not only to perceive, but also to remember. In this sense, to feel is to no longer repeat the past automatically, but to imagine and remember it.⁴⁵ Affective hesitation can thus make felt the historicity, contingency, and sedimentation of habitual actions and perceptions, as well as their plasticity. Moreover, if we understand affect as tendency, then affect is not a completed reality or atomistic thing, but a process always open to further elaboration, forking, and becoming. Such affect opens up routes for feeling, seeing, and acting differently.

Although the teacher's affective reaction described in the first example of this chapter would seem to belie Bergson's account of affective hesitation, I believe that Bergson's theory allows us to distinguish the ankylosis of affect in racializing perception from the critical potential of affect in hesitation. Bergson's account makes visible, by contrast, that which is missing, distorted or *ankylosed* in racializing affect. While Bergson is not concerned with racialization but with the general objectifying effects of socialization, his account points to the *necessary condition* by which affect becomes receptive and responsive, namely hesitation. Though hesitation is not sufficient in my account—it must rely on a context that motivates it and a sustained working-through that holds it open—it represents a necessary step. In presenting this Bergsonian diagnosis, I do not mean to propose hesitation as an isolated or willful remedy to racializing habit. My purpose, rather, is to show what is phenomenologically needed for perception and affect to become responsive, and the ontological ground of this possibility in the structure of temporality and affective life. It is in this sense that the phenomenology of hesitation I am offering can be read as a corrective—potentially critical and ethical—to the reifying structures of racializing perception and affect described above.

Though it may be tempting to align racializing and responsive affects with so-called positive and negative emotions, such a categorization not only overlooks the way in which emotions can serve different functions (e.g., anger can be hostility or the beginning of critique), it also mistakes the nature of the difference between the affects in question. At stake in the distinction between racializing and responsive affects are, I believe, different ways of relating to the interval of hesitation, and thus to temporality. This structural and temporal difference also means that affects that are closed may, through various strategies and circumstances, become responsive, and that those that are responsive must be guarded against closure.

Returning to the example of the teacher, it would seem that she felt, but did not hesitate. Indeed, the interval of the present was saturated with an affect so seemingly immediate and deeply absorbing that there was no time for anything else. The totalizing sense of completeness that characterizes racializing affect means that, for it, *all is given* (in contrast to the incompleteness of Bergsonian hesitation). First, that *all is given* means that racializing affect projects and narcissistically perpetuates itself in all contexts and times, expecting to encounter confirmations of itself there. This recalls Shannon Sullivan's description of habits of white privilege as "ontologically expansive."⁴⁶ Second, I would add that the *all which is given* has been circumscribed in advance according to racializing schemas, so that we must understand this

"expansiveness" to be based on a structural closure, an "I cannot see or feel otherwise." And, third, to take *all to be given* is to short-circuit hesitation. Racializing affect thus attempts to overdetermine what happens in the temporal interval, constructing it as closed horizon. This not only truncates the ability of affect to become otherwise, it numbs both self-awareness and receptivity.

In contrast, as we saw in Bergson's account, affect does not simply take place in the interval of hesitation, as if interposed from without; this affect embodies hesitation and, hence, opens the interval from within. It would be more accurate to say, along with Deleuze, that this affect happens in the interval but does not fill it.⁴⁷ In this sense, affect can hold open the interval of hesitation, leaving the space, the time, for more to come. Since *all is not given* for this affect, it can become otherwise—opening onto other affective tendencies and perceptions, but also recalling divergent memories and becoming imagination, action, language, and thinking. In other words, by hesitating, affective becoming has the potential to destabilize itself and transform, to become self-aware and respond. Here, affect is tendency rather than thing. The interval of hesitation—of indetermination and nonteleological searching—structures not only the evolution or winding course of affect itself, but its relations to others and the world. This interval of indetermination, with all its creative potential, is not yet critique, however. To see how affect can become critically responsive, let us return to Bergson's account of affect in *Matter and Memory*.

Affect constitutes a singular and positive phenomenon for Bergson.⁴⁸ Though affection is different in kind from perception, according to Bergson, they are inextricably linked. Bergson notes that there is no perception without affection, since the body is not a mathematical point in space, but flesh exposed to the world.⁴⁹ But while perception designates the body's relation to and virtual action on its situation, affection enacts a "useless" self-relation or self-perception—the body's effort on itself in response to that situation.⁵⁰ Three elements are worth noting. First, affect follows from and expresses the vulnerability of the body, its exposure to what is other. It marks the passivity of the living material body. But for the body to feel itself affected, to undergo affect, its passivity cannot be mere inertia or indifference. Affect arises not in opposition to activity, but could be described, in paradoxical terms, as the activity of bodily passivity itself. This is because, second, affect defines a peculiar kind of effort. It is an effort in which the body works on itself in response to the world.⁵¹ Affect is hence a situated response to the context in which the body finds itself, but it is not a response that acts on that

situation directly. Rather, affect is an effort to stave off habitual reaction by prefiguring it as bodily feeling; the body acts on itself and affectively works through, instead of enacting, a reaction. The peculiar activity (and passivity) of affect lies in this effort to delay, to hesitate. In this way, the structure of affect undermines several dichotomous schemas: it lies at the hinge of passivity-activity, but also inside-outside, or more accurately, self-affectation and hetero-affectation.⁵²

Third, in Bergson's words, affect is "*un effort impuissant*" [a powerless effort].⁵³ Though affect is ineffective from the point of view of the teleology of action, a teleology in which hesitation figures only as failure and lack, this very powerlessness of affect is also generative. As an interruption of habitual reaction, affect allows the time both for a situation to be undergone and affectively registered and for marginal self-awareness, searching, and recollection to take place. Since affect responds to its context by working on itself, it holds together receptivity to that context and bodily awareness of its habituated (albeit delayed) response. The importance of affective hesitation for critical and antiracist vision can be located at this juncture. Bergson's account shows that affect is not only the openness onto an outside, but also the lived-through and self-aware undergoing of that alterity.⁵⁴ The lived-through bodily awareness of affect can allow the historical, social, and habitual frame that structures my positionality and embodiment to be glimpsed on the horizon of experience. Indeed, there are two ways in which racializing habit can become visible in hesitation. *Marginally and affectively*, the delayed objectification is prefigured but not explicitly seen. The seeming coincidence between habits of seeing and the visible is decentered, revealing the ways in which vision is already ahead of itself, constituting the seen according to habitual schemas. At the same time, *memorially*, affect can be cast in the role of a witness, connecting to a kind of "memory of the present."⁵⁵ This affective receptivity to, registering and memory of, the present has the function of an "involuntary witness" (to use a phrase from Deleuze).⁵⁶ As witness, affect both becomes a memory of habit and an occasion to remember; it makes time for receptivity and responding differently. When we note, in addition, that affectivity can be openness to that which does not count as representation, the critical and responsive potential of affective hesitation comes to view. For it is precisely the receptivity to what registers *otherwise* than in the logic of objectification that is excluded in racializing perception and affect. Hesitation thus points not only to this unrecognized affective field, but also reveals the blinders through which the visibility of this field is circumscribed.

What I believe is important, from the perspective of critical and antiracist practice, is attention to the ways in which affect can become responsive. And what I find in reading Bergson is a call for perception and affect to slow down. Racializing perception proceeds at a velocity such that we cannot see it happening, faster than the speed of thought.⁵⁷ This contributes to its apparent immediacy and its naturalizing effect. Hesitation is a deceleration that opens up the affective infrastructure of perception, in order both to make it responsive to what it has been unable to see and to make aware its contextual and constructed features. It may be objected that locating antiracist work on the level of affect overlooks the way in which affect is the source of what is recalcitrant and irrational in racism; so that the solution must lie at a level amenable to rational change, in cognitive work at the level of belief. The first example above might be read in this way. But if racializing affect is not deconstructed from within, its violence remains and will be displaced into other processes of othering and onto other racialized bodies. To deconstruct racializing affect is to interrupt the totalizing sense of completeness, the "ontological expansiveness" by which all is felt to be given. In this way, the naturalized immediacy, repetitive overdetermination, and reactive directionality, which this affect sustains, would be destabilized. It is hesitation that I believe offers the possibility of this interruption. It does so not by eliminating affect but by modulating and transforming its temporality. This reconfigures affect in at least five ways.

First, to hesitate is to slow down, making the temporal interval that affect occupies, and which racializing affect tried to fill up and overdetermine, felt. This puts the immediacy and automaticity of affect into question; phenomenologically speaking, it can be said that hesitation puts the immediacy of affect in brackets, while allowing affective experience to continue. This means (1) that racializing affect can be denaturalized, so that its immediacy no longer stands in for its "naturalness" and self-evidence; (2) that the mediations—the social-historical horizon, positionality, and attachments—that constitute this affect can be revealed, allowing further mediations and interventions to take place; and (3) that the reification of affect, as instantaneous thing, can give way to an experience of affect as tendency and process.

This brings us, second, to an important consequence of hesitation as slowing down; for in modulating its temporality, affective experience continues but with a different quality or intensity. I want to claim that this modulation both discloses structures of affectivity, which had been elided and distorted in racializing affect, and allows affect to resume its flow. In this

vein, third, the *ambiguity* of affect is revealed. Affect, as we have seen, is an encounter of self and other, where the body works on itself in response to what is other. It represents the intersection of self-affectation and hetero-affectation, an encounter mediated by forces of sociality and historicity, by structures of domination and privilege, which themselves remain invisible. Though preintentional and prereflective, this encounter is neither immediate nor unaware; it includes a lived-through bodily awareness.⁵⁸ Racializing affect reduces this ambiguity to ambivalence (to use a distinction from Merleau-Ponty).⁵⁹ That which is felt in affect is projected onto the other as cause, hiding both self-involvement and structural conditions. This means that the ambiguity of affect is reduced to, and naturalized as, a univocal and reactive directionality, which takes the place of any effort at critical awareness or receptivity. Denaturalizing affect involves, then, not only the suspension of its immediacy, but also changing its directionality; for the naturalized causality that affect enforces needs to turn back onto the feeling, perceiving, social subject as its source.

Fourth, as ambiguous and multiple, affect resumes its course as *tendency*; it is unfrozen, able to become otherwise and to respond differently. Rather than being determined in its reactions by a racialized perceptual field mapped in advance, affectivity becomes a tentative search that is receptive to that which is not already given on this map. This is because, fifth, to hesitate is to delay and to make affect wait. The incompleteness, both of affect and of that to which affect responds, is here felt. To wait is to testify that time makes a difference for experience, that all is not given in the present. To wait, without projection, is not only to be open to a futurity that escapes prediction, but also to a past that can be dynamically transformed through the passage of events, and that grounds the creative potential of events. This breaks with the closure of the past and the predetermination of the future found in racialization. More so, it permits mediation and antiracist work at the level of memory and the past to make a difference for future attachments, for the ways in which we see and feel according to others.

The critical power of hesitation is linked to memory. Affect, as I noted above, functions as a witness to situated bodily response. This links affect to a memory of the present and to memory more generally; affect is both an occasion to remember and an event that reconfigures the network of memories of the past, my own past in its relations to the memories of others. In my view, there are several ways in which memory can serve a critical function with respect to racializing habits of seeing and feeling. On the one hand, memory is already a destabilization of habit; it replaces the performance

of habit. On the other hand, it is the memory of habituation; it serves to contextualize and historicize our habits. In so doing, memory can connect habit to its temporal ground. This temporality is more than any given habit; it is the ontological duration that makes habit possible, despite its crystallization. Indeed, since temporal becoming is interval and hesitation, since each repetition is never quite the same, the possibility of interruption is inscribed within the same temporality that habit relies on to establish closure. Duration at once structures and fractures habits of seeing. As we have seen, this dimension explains not only how affectivity is closed down and ankylosed in racializing vision; it also makes possible, though difficult, the resumption of responsive affectivity and openness in experiences of waiting and wonder. In this context, a supplementary function of memory can be discerned, for memories are not atomistic entities but networks of relations, wherein the critical reconfiguration and destabilization of one sector of the past recasts the whole. For affectivity to be opened up in the present, the past should also be worked-through; memories of other pasts need to find voice, interrupting the ankylosed and dominant stories that are repeated there.

But can racializing habit be undermined simply by hesitating? My argument is not that hesitation is sufficient to overcome racializing habit, but rather that the necessary role of hesitation should be taken into account when considering antiracist strategies for overcoming such habit. Hesitation is both the ontological ground that makes possible transformations in habit, and the phenomenological opening that can be utilized and supplemented for such change to take place. Neither does this mean that hesitation can be willfully enacted, nor that it can form a self-contained experience. Phenomenologically, hesitation happens *within* a context wherein it interposes an opening; this opening must yet be *taken up* for new possibility to be created. What this suggests is that critical and antiracist practice include indirect strategies for fostering hesitation; this involves the creation of situations and attachments that bring hesitation about, as well as attention to ways of holding hesitation open and allowing it to become productive. Albeit uncertain in its effects and partial in its reach (like most strategies), the work of critical memory is one such route.

In *Revealing Whiteness*, Shannon Sullivan presents another route: to disrupt habits of white privilege indirectly through change in one's environment (understood broadly as social, geographical, aesthetic, or political environments). Sullivan notes that a changed environment—in particular one that undermines white solipsism—can help produce new habits of living.⁶⁰ She cautions, however, that environmental change can also reinforce

the ontological expansiveness of white habits, offering new spaces for their appropriation. That habits are reinforced rather than disrupted relies, I think, on another dimension missing from Sullivan's account, namely, on the lack of affective hesitation. As Sullivan rightly points out, white privileged bodies expect to feel "at home" in all spaces, including those that they colonize. This implies, on my reading, that environmental change can only be effective if it is able to create a certain tension or discomfort, a fracture, at the level of habits of white privilege—what I have called hesitation. Hesitation is certainly not sufficient to overcome racializing habits, but the discomfort it performs, if fostered and made productive, is a crucial step. Sullivan notes that discomfort can lead to fearful or angry attempts at its eradication, reinforcing the expectations of white privileged bodies to comfortably inhabit and possess all spaces.⁶¹ The response to hesitation can thus be a defensive reaction of intensified closure—the avoidance of hesitation through ankylosed affect. In this vein, Sullivan's proposal that white privileged subjects need to accept discomfort as fitting is suggestive.⁶² To allow discomfort is to make the time within experience for hesitation to occur; this suspends for an interval the reflexes of white privilege that project comfort, seamlessness, and expansiveness in all contexts.

But can the discomfort of environmental change suspend these habits for more than an interval? Environmental change, in my account, should not only induce hesitation but sustain it. If focused only on changing the present environment, it risks missing the weight of the past.⁶³ For the inertia of racializing habit is supported by past attachments that remain alive in the present, just as others are actively forgotten. Unless working-through the past recasts this network of relations, so that hitherto unrecognized attachments and debts to others can be felt, change will be difficult to sustain. (Recalling Fanon, I would note that the hold of the historico-racial schema on experience and its predetermination of the future have to be broken.)⁶⁴ Environmental change and critical memory go together in my account. As we will see in section 5, this requires an enduring commitment to living with others, so that affective attachments can shift and relationality mutate in both present experience and memory.

4. Hesitation and Bodily "I Can"

My appeal to hesitation as a means (albeit partial) for interrupting racializing and objectifying habits of seeing may appear problematic.⁶⁵ For hesitation is

an ambiguous phenomenon. Though hesitation may make habit visible and allow its reconfiguration, the experience of hesitation also seems to undermine agency—one's sense of oneself as an "I can"—and to install a passivity at the heart of the activity of the embodied subject. More troubling, hesitation tracks social positionality. On the one hand, those in positions of privilege hesitate the least; indeed, the projective sense of ease and mastery of one's surroundings, presumed by the "ontological expansiveness" of white privilege, seem to foreclose hesitation.⁶⁶ On the other hand, hesitancy in bodily movement and action tends to characterize the lived experience of systematic oppression. This is the case for the internalized (or "epidermalized") experience of antiblack racism, as Fanon describes it, an experience in which the racialized body is felt to be "amputated" or "distorted," paralyzed through the fragmenting effects of reification.⁶⁷ Hesitation is also typical of "feminine" bodily comportment in our culture, as Iris Marion Young has shown. It is by rereading Young's landmark essay that the phenomenology of hesitation I offer can be further nuanced.

In "Throwing Like a Girl," Young provides a compelling account of the inhibited and contradictory modalities of women's movements in our culture. Young shows how women perceive two sets of (im)possibilities with respect to the same intentional goal: an "I cannot"—socially constituted as "feminine" yet experienced by women as self-referred—is superposed on an imaginary and generalized, human, "I can."⁶⁸ These contradictory projections result in a lived tension within one's body in the context of teleological action; one feels oneself, anonymously and generally, called on to act, yet at once feels one's concretely feminine body to be incapable of such action.⁶⁹ Young's analysis of the sources of this specifically feminine "I cannot" points to the role of habituation. Such habituation is both privative (enforced by lack of practice) and "positive," so that, Young argues, in growing up *as a girl* one learns a style of acting that is hesitant, fragile, and constantly self-referred—one learns to move through the world *like a girl*.⁷⁰ But habituation arises within a social horizon that motivates particular habits and that habit reinforces and actualizes in turn. Hence the root of "feminine" hesitancy is located, for Young, in the societal patriarchal gaze that systematically positions "feminine" bodies as mere objects, and in response to which women come to live their bodies on such terms.⁷¹

To take seriously, following Young, the inhibiting effects of social objectification on women's agency means understanding the hesitancy of "feminine" embodiment as more than the tentative suspension of habit. This hesitancy has to be conceived not as the indeterminacy within habit, but as the

overdetermination of “feminine” body schemas and habits. This overdetermination can be linked to the exclusionary logic of objectifying, sexist and racist, vision that “cannot see otherwise than objects”—that cannot see beyond or beneath its objectifying constructions.⁷² In particular, the objectifying patriarchal gaze operates a certain exclusion with respect to “feminine” bodies, which it defines as mere bodies, objects rather than subjects.⁷³ It is by feeling oneself seen in this way—and living this exclusionary logic whether in complicity or resistance—that “feminine” embodiment becomes instituted and felt as tension and alienation. In contrast to Young, however, I would argue that this tension is produced not only from the “I cannot” that my body takes up as “feminine” body, but also from the imaginary “I can” that is, at the same time, adopted as the norm of bodies in general. The contradictory “feminine” bodily modality that holds together “I can” and “I cannot” with respect to the same goal owes, I think, to the paradox of a social order that presupposes the general seamlessness and expansiveness of *the* lived body, while excluding certain categories of bodies (gendered and/or racialized) as those that “cannot.” It is in their social reference, as Gail Weiss has argued, and not in any inherent ambivalence within women’s bodies, that the key to the hesitancy described by Young can be found.⁷⁴

Questioning Young’s, and Merleau-Ponty’s, model of the “I can” reveals the possibility of another hesitation, one that has been covered over by the idealized seamlessness of the phenomenological “I can.” I think it is important to distinguish two kinds of hesitation—with different structural roots and bodily experiences—hesitations that call for different phenomenological accounts. For there is a hesitation that corresponds to the *indeterminacy* within habit; it makes one susceptible to be affected by that which cannot be captured in the logic of objectification (as in Bergson’s account). This hesitation is not an internalized effect of objectifying vision. It stems, rather, from the structure of temporality that sustains habit while remaining invisible. To experience this hesitation is to be open to the virtual multiplication of other ways of seeing, feeling, and acting—alternative routes to that of objectifying vision, routes that could lead to affective responsiveness and critical awareness. Significantly, such hesitation does not come about through the contradictory superimposition of “I can” and “I cannot”; it is not reducible to this binary and exclusionary logic. But neither does this mean the proliferation of optimal and unobstructed “I can[s].” Rather, this hesitation expresses the constitutive passivity *within* each “I can,” its affective and temporal infrastructure.⁷⁵ Here, the phenomenological model of the “I can” needs to be revised, as in Merleau-Ponty’s later work, in order to imagine activity that is not opposed

to passivity, agency that is also powerlessness, and vision that acknowledges its blind spots.⁷⁶

Recognizing this structural hesitation within habit allows us to reread the imaginary and general “I can” in opposition to which the feminine “I cannot” is posited in Young’s “Throwing Like a Girl.” What is finally overlooked by Young is the way in which this normative “I can”—posited as human but in fact correlated to white, male bodies—itself relies on a certain “I cannot see otherwise” that excludes other ways of seeing and acting.⁷⁷ By means of this exclusion, the teleology of objectifying—racializing and sexist—vision can be constituted as “efficient,” “seamless,” and “expansive.” This teleology is based not only on a strict delimitation of affective receptivity with respect to certain others, but also on actively forgetting this very delimitation and the structures of power and privilege that it reflects. Thus the dependence of the normative “I can” on closure to, and domination of, others remains itself invisible. Here, the self-directed bodily effort to delay and open up response—that effort which is affective hesitation—not only interrupts the seamless and projective execution of objectifying habit; it also makes felt and destabilizes its blinders. The bodily “self-reference” or self-awareness of hesitation is therefore not always a limitation, a negativity that distracts from the action at hand. Hesitation allows an interval wherein vision can become self-critical—questioning the structures of habituation and socialization that it takes for granted and yet cannot see. Hesitation can be expanded into an effort of openness and responsiveness toward an affective field which is unrecognized by the objectifying gaze. In this sense, hesitation would be a remedy for the ignorance and arrogance—to use Marilyn Frye’s term—of racializing and sexist vision.⁷⁸

But what of the *othered subjects* who already hesitate? Having internalized or “epidermalized” the “I cannot” of objectifying vision into one’s body schema, this “I cannot” leads not only to a split sense of bodily self (between a subject who can and an object who cannot), but also to a form of hesitation that can be paralyzing. It is reasonable to object that presenting hesitation as a solution, albeit partial, to racializing habit ignores the difficulty experienced by racialized and gendered subjects in breaking with their overdetermined cycle of hesitation. Though I take this objection seriously, I think it poses an artificial dilemma—a choice between unwavering seamless habit, on the one hand, and paralyzing hesitation, on the other. First, to clarify, not all habit is objectifying, or more precisely *reifying* and *othering*, as sexist and racializing habits are. I propose hesitation as an intervention into the latter. But this does not mean that nonobjectifying habits of everyday life are unhesitating

and seamless; in being receptive to their situation, in searching and improvising their response, such habits already include a minimum of hesitation. Embodied in the very temporal unfolding of habit—in its adaptive modulation and prereflective improvisation—hesitation is unreflectively lived without being felt as a disruption. That hesitation is felt to disrupt objectifying habits has to do with the desired seamlessness and intransigence of those habits themselves.

Second, the seamlessness of objectifying habit is based on a structural closure that suppresses affective and ethical responsiveness. As long as such habit is held as the ideal, escaping hesitation will involve closure to, and exclusion of, *some* other. The dilemma, by which unwavering action is the only remedy to paralyzing hesitation, elides other ways of *acting hesitantly* in which habit is not unhearing and hesitation not immobilizing. Although forms of reverse objectification may be useful as intermediate *reactional* strategies against the objectifying social gaze, I believe that the cycle of paralyzing hesitation can only be broken through a critical and responsive form of hesitation.

This is because, third, both paralyzing hesitation and objectifying habit rely on the same deterministic logic, as two sides of othering and reification (with clearly incomparable effects). Both instantiate the closed temporality by which racializing and sexist schemas overdetermine the sense of the past and map the possibilities of the future in advance. Thus, the two forms of hesitation I have been describing can be distinguished not only ontologically in their temporal structure, but also phenomenologically in their relations to futurity. Since it stems from the overdetermination of interiorized schema and habit, paralyzing hesitation tends to be predictable and determinate in its effects; the othered subject expects failure in advance. She sees her future possibilities as circumscribed by her present incapacity. In contrast, responsive hesitation inserts indeterminacy into habit; it loosens the net of internalized determinism and stereotype, the hold of the “I cannot” on the othered subject. In so doing, the racialized and/or gendered mapping of possibilities that the “I cannot” delineates is glimpsed on the margins of experience; other responses to this map then become possible (and anger, critique, separation, and violence are all creative responses when they arise in this interval). Whereas the first kind of hesitation delimits possibility based on present actuality, the second *creates possibilities* that have been hitherto foreclosed and which can transform actuality. This is to say that for responsive hesitation the future is unpredictable and open; it is yet to be created.

Finally, this does not mean that the immobility of the first hesitation can be directly or easily unfrozen, by willing new possibilities into existence for

instance; I cannot willfully begin throwing better, to recall Young’s example. But through an effort that mediates and redirects the way it is lived, this immobility can be made productive. Instead of being caught in a cycle of hesitation and self-blame, hesitation can be reflected onto the social reference that gave rise to it, creating the possibility of critical awareness. In other words, the first hesitation can be the occasion for the second.⁷⁹ And though I cannot throw better, I can act differently, thinking, writing, and engaging in activism as motivated by experiences of oppression and othering. Such action should not be understood as tangential, for in addressing the structures of power and domination that ground habit, it is arguably more direct. I see this route exemplified in the work of both Young and Fanon, where paralyzing hesitation is mined and becomes philosophy and action. This is possible, I have argued, because another form of hesitation arises, a hesitation that makes us think on the way to, and within, action; this hesitation can make us *actional* and no longer merely *reactional* (to use Fanon’s terms), so that “having taken thought, [one] prepares to act.”⁸⁰

5. A Phenomenology of Critical-Ethical Vision

Can this critical and affective hesitation be the opening to an ethical and antiracist vision—a vision that does not exclude but, to use a phrase from Merleau-Ponty, *sees with* or *according to* others?⁸¹ The notion of lateral passivity that Merleau-Ponty develops in his lecture course on “Le problème de la passivité” shows both how every vision is already an institution—how there is a socially, historically, and habitually sedimented normative structure or level according to which we see—and how institutions of seeing may resist or be open to transformation.⁸² The motivations for the intransigence or the plasticity of vision are difficult to decipher. Merleau-Ponty speaks, on occasion, of the “adversity” of events that are unassimilable to the “normal” organization of the field and that cannot be made sense of through the given level.⁸³ These are events for which we cannot account from within our instituted system of meaning—events that reveal, if we are open to them, the fractures in the coherence of the visual field. There are two ways of responding to such events: by maintaining the normative organization of the field and refusing to see them, or by receptively allowing an event to insinuate itself into our vision as the dimension according to which the visual field is restructured—thus changing how we see:⁸⁴

Passivity [operates] in the assimilation or the resumption or the *Nachvollzug*. According to what? Not according to the sense given with the event. We can be crafty, maintain the operation of the old practical schema, repress. But although there is no sense given, there are events whose historical inscription we can prevent only by refusing to see them, events that are unassimilable for our system, that refuse our *Sinngebung*. The choice to maintain [the *Sinngebung*] would then be pathological. Thus, the sense is never simply given to us, but it does not always allow itself to be constructed. When it does not allow itself to be constructed without division of the self from the self, our truth falls outside of us. [. . .] There is passivity right there in activity. It is because such direction was given as “oblique” in the old level that by setting [myself] up in it as “normal” I modify the sense of all the rest and establish a new level. [. . .] [And there is] activity right there in passivity. Outside certain limit cases where the event is not assimilable, I could always maintain my old level through regression.⁸⁵

The transformation of the visual field is thus not one of radical discontinuity for Merleau-Ponty, for the new level was “obliquely” or tangentially implicated in the old.⁸⁶ This would seem to limit the novelty and difference that can be recognized within the visual field. It seems to imply a conservatism of the visual field, whereby possibilities for seeing differently are delimited in advance by the very norms that refuse the radically new. On this reading, the unassimilable difference of an event would bar it from becoming the dimension according to which we see; that is, we could not come to see such events on their own terms. As unassimilable affects they remain unconscious (at the risk of psychic and visual disruption). Though this is one reading to which Merleau-Ponty’s text lends itself, another direction is also suggested. While it is always possible, according to Merleau-Ponty, to maintain habitual ways of seeing, this insistence in response to unassimilable events (and the corresponding exclusion of other ways of seeing) could itself be read as pathological. Here it becomes important to distinguish two possible senses of lateral passivity—two ways in which we *see with* or *according to* others, structures, and attachments.

First, there is a sense in which we can say, with Merleau-Ponty, that we always *already* see with others. These others form the invisibles that have been laterally implicated in my field of vision. Since it only sees according to its racialized schemas (it “cannot” see otherwise), racializing vision elides this

lateral passivity and dependence on others. I believe that this forgetfulness should be understood to be double: (1) What is forgotten is my dependence on social-historical structures and social others who have accompanied the development of my vision; this invisible “weight of the past” institutes a particular way of seeing as normative for me.⁸⁷ (2) There is the exclusion of the nonfamiliar and “alien” other, the racialized other, whose difference may be represented as exotic or threatening, but whose abjection plays a constitutive role in how I come to see. This second forgetting corresponds to the structural elision of other ways of seeing and being that do not “make sense” within my instituted level. I want to claim that, while the first form of forgetting institutes the level according to which I see based on the *appropriation* of the flesh of others to whom my attachment is rendered invisible,⁸⁸ the second forgetting means that even *excluded* others are “obliquely” and structurally inscribed within the field of vision, as its “constitutive outside” (to use Judith Butler’s term). The “unassimilability” of the other cannot be understood to mean absolute difference or separation in this case, as if others were new lands to be discovered. Rather, those defined as “alien” are already presupposed and appropriated within the workings of vision, even as they are relegated to its “unassimilable” and unrecognized margins.

Racializing vision is thus reductive of lateral difference as relationality: by rendering familiar, and indifferent, the social horizon on which I depend and, by positing as absolute and alien, differences in opposition to which my identity becomes defined. In this way, difference is either subsumed to a homogeneous identity or projected as racialized opposition. These two attitudes toward otherness are interconnected: the self-certitude and naturalization of racializing vision requires that its roots in social-historical ways of seeing remain invisible; and it is this self-forgetfulness of partiality and contingency that refuses to recognize other ways of seeing and being, foreclosed as “unassimilable.”

Second, there is an important sense in which to *see with* others must be an attentive effort—an effort that I have argued in this paper begins in hesitation. In this light, the first sense of seeing with others is revealed to be ignorance of others; it is a willful gaze that takes itself to be a self-sufficient, unhesitating, and seamless “I can see,” ranging over the visible by disregarding its affective roots in sociality and historicity. The insistence on maintaining the normative schema of racializing vision, in response to an affective complexity that cannot be reduced to that level, would thus be “pathological.”⁸⁹ Witness the affective ankylosis of racializing vision in the first example of this essay.

But, while Merleau-Ponty's lectures on "Le problème de la passivité" speak of the disruption that comes to vision from unassimilable events, it is clear that such events are not sufficient in themselves to generate critical awareness and change. Here, we may ask what role hesitation plays in connection with unassimilable others or events. Their relation can be understood not as linear causality but as a relation of motivation (in the phenomenological sense), in which unassimilability calls for hesitation and hesitation is an affective recognition of unassimilability. For Merleau-Ponty, unassimilable events are those whose sense "does not allow itself to be constructed without division of the self from the self." Unassimilable events pose an impediment for the perceiving self; they are experienced as "adversity," as tension and, we may say, discomfort.⁹⁰ What hesitation registers and allows us to feel is this *unassimilability* of an event; this is not the event in its singularity and detail, but in its resistance to our perceptual and conceptual schemas, as a "truth [that] falls outside us" and that reflects our failure to incorporate it.⁹¹ Hesitation registers this very tension and, hence, recognizes the forgetfulness of normative vision, the exclusion and abjection on which it relies. This does not mean, of course, that the unassimilable will be acknowledged on its own terms, or acted on; only that its difference has been affectively received. A perceptual and affective response is, then, called for. Though the unassimilable event may yet be ignored, or reduced to an aberration according to the old level, these responses should be understood as the suppression of hesitation. As Merleau-Ponty notes, it is always possible to refuse to see events deemed unassimilable, to abide in a kind of affective and ethical closure toward others and the world. This refusal, I would claim, emerges from the pathological rigidity that is a feature of racializing vision and affect, the "I cannot see or feel otherwise" that structures them.

More difficult and less frequent, when hesitation is held open, the normative level according to which one sees can itself be transformed in response to unassimilable events. Perceptual and affective maps shift; one comes to see according to attachments that reflect hitherto repressed events and excluded others, so that it may become possible, with time, to see and act differently. But while this interrupts old racializing schemas, it does not necessarily prevent the return of racialization under new guise and the transmutation of othering into new forms of exclusion.⁹² To interrupt the affective closure and rigidity of racialization itself, transformation cannot only be forward-looking but must be based in the critical memory that hesitation enables. In hesitating, the old level according to which one sees is destabilized and denaturalized. This level comes into focus for the first time in memory. As normative

levels shift, the old level comes to be remembered in its social-historical contingency and affective limitation; its exclusion of that which now appears "normal" is recollected, an exclusion that was unconscious in the present, since it defined the operation of the perceptual field. This memory is hence self-critical; more so, it can be the source of vigilance with regards to habits of seeing. Not only can the memory of the old level produce affect in the present through feeling answerable for the past, holding hesitation open a little longer,⁹³ but this memory can motivate a different way of living the present. Here, the present is imagined as that which *will have been*; it is imagined in what it will reveal for a future critical and recollective regard, whether mine or another's. The present is lived in watchfulness and with responsibility to the future. In these ways, hesitation allows us to feel the weight and answerability of the past; it makes visible—indirectly, affectively, and laterally—the processes of habituation, socialization, and exclusion involved in the institution of the level according to which we see.

Finally, to see with others requires, as my second and third examples show, that one take up the task of living-with. Such sustained effort, in difficulty and in joy, can reconfigure and rehabilitate one's body to see differently. But how? In both Haslanger's and my own example, a shift can be witnessed at the level of attachments to others. Both transracial adoption and extended family life bring subjects together in bodily and affective intimacy, creating attachments that are neither necessarily willed nor consciously formed. These situations make familiar what may have been alien; those others, on whom racializing vision relies but whom it excludes and reifies, come to have affective presence. This presence polarizes the affective field changing its configuration and relief, so that zones of tension and comfort shift; this motivates affective hesitation. Returning to Merleau-Ponty's account of unassimilable events, can we see affective attachments as playing the role of such events? To focus on my third example, Muslim female *subjectivity*, which is formed through veiling and not oppressed by it, is unassimilable, even unimaginable, from the perspective of the secular French racial map. For such subjects to become familiar, to register in their concrete specificity and subjectivity, is for one's affective map to shift, even while one's perceptual and conceptual schemas may not yet have changed. In my account, this affective shift can be felt as hesitation. As noted, hesitation is not sufficient and it can be closed down in a defensive ankylosis of affect. But hesitation, when held open, can also lead to a more thoroughgoing shift in racial maps and a more binding reconfiguration of the network of attachments; thus, hesitation can go all the way up and transform perception and thinking.

In this vein, I think that making hesitation productive requires that living-with, in whatever form it takes, be an enduring process. Both Haslanger's and my own example suggest this. Though isolated events and punctual efforts may provoke hesitation, such hesitation can be difficult to sustain and may revert to a defensive reaction once the event has passed. It is, in my view, the seemingly minor and incessant experiences of everyday living that may be able to hold hesitation open, since such events insinuate their way into one's prereflective life and cannot be easily isolated or dismissed. This is because what is required is a shift at the level of passivity, an intervention into the workings of unreflective, even unconscious, perception and affect. Specifically, what is at stake is a reconfiguration of relationality and "lateral passivity," a shift in the dimensions and attachments *according to which* we perceive, act, and think. As my example with my partner shows, attempting to change perception at the level of perceptual *acts*, by means of persuasion and argument, misses the unreflective and unconscious habituality of perception; more so, it misses the ways in which perceptual and cognitive acts rely on, and are already structured by, socially instituted attachments (that include some and exclude others). We see *according to* these affective attachments, and hence do not see them; they function as normative level, as unconscious and "neutral" ground, selectively demarcating and configuring what is seen. Only by altering this frame, making it at once marginally visible, can perceptions and acts themselves be susceptible to change. Though my partner listened to and engaged with my arguments when I tried to convince him that veiling should not be banned from French schools, our perceptual maps so differed that ours was ultimately "*un dialogue de sourds*." The racializing map, which subtends secular French space, means that veiling is overdetermined as a *conspicuous* sign incompatible with that space, not only because it is religious (crosses, after all, are allowed), but because it is seen as invariantly oppressive to women. This racializing perception maps in advance the positions that veiled Muslim women can occupy, as victims or pawns of their religion; what is unassimilable in this racializing schema, what cannot be recognized, is the agency and subjectivity of concrete Muslim women who veil. Living with Muslim women who wear the hijab, and forming attachments with them, puts this map under strain in ways that arguments could not; this was, for my partner, an enduring "environmental change" (to use Sullivan's term) that served to interrupt habitual perception.⁹⁴

That an effort of living with others is needed points to the ways in which *time makes a difference* for how we see and feel. As I have argued, it is not merely environmental change that is needed, but an environmental change

that sustains hesitation and allows critical memory.⁹⁵ For affective hesitation is the opening that permits attachments and events to register, to be retained and sedimented, shifting the level according to which we perceive. To see *according to* others is not to see through their eyes or to assimilate them to my vision; it is to find the perceptual field to have been reoriented by others. Here, the other is not an object in the perceptual field, but a magnetizing center, or counterweight, whose very style of being, way of seeing, and memory inflect that field. To see *with others* is hence to find one's perceptual and affective map to be redrawn through the force of attachments to others.⁹⁶ Such a shift not only reorients the present but is accompanied by a working-through of the past. We have seen how memory can serve as critique of the old level and vigilance with respect to the new. More so, critical memory can be an opening onto a *shared* and *intersubjective* past. Structured through privilege and domination, this past was shared without recognition or justice, so that it remained ignorant of the intersubjectivity on which it relied. To remember this past differently, and intersubjectively, is for other memories to be heard. These memories reconfigure the past, making what was familiar and taken for granted appear alien. Once his perceptual field had shifted, the racializing map of secular space began to appear alien to my partner, even though his attachments to that space remained in play (for they constituted his past and belonging). Such critical permutation does not mean that the past is left behind; to the contrary, this past in its very reorientation is felt as one's shared past and actualized in the present. But this actualization does not simply reproduce old racializing maps and attachments; it skews those maps by navigating them differently. To borrow a useful distinction from Haslanger, one may navigate *around* white privilege rather than *toward* it, and in so doing reconfigure one's racial map; as Sullivan notes, one may use white privilege against itself.⁹⁷

What is at stake is a transformation of habitual living through intimacy, affectivity, and coexistence to become critical and ethical. It will be noted that in both Haslanger's example and in my own, the space for relearning ways of seeing and for transformative affect was the intimate space of the home or the extended family. Neither do I mean to restrict hesitation and transformative affect to these contexts, nor do I intend to romanticize the home as the abode of social change. Living-with can take many forms: in activism and in friendship, in the shared spaces of work and school as well as home, enduring experiences of coexistence take place.⁹⁸ Moreover, I do not mean to portray the coexistence that motivates hesitation as necessarily harmonious, or its affective quality as primarily joyful; we learn much from the tension and

resistance of others, from their efforts to push back, when we are able to see them on their own terms. Hence, my description of coexistence is not meant as an argument for forced integration, which generally occurs on the terms of the dominant social group, neither is it meant to impose on racialized others the presence of the well-intentioned and privileged; coexistence includes allowing racialized groups the space of separation, on their own terms.⁹⁹

What I am suggesting, rather, is that in a present where experiences of coexistence already take place (both in social spaces and within structures of the self)—and given the non reflective and contradictory attachments by which we live—hesitation and attentiveness within these experiences is called for.¹⁰⁰ The examples I have given are meant to show how transformative affect and perception are possible, not to prescribe the means by which they must come about. Although the means will differ, what I believe I have shown is that antiracist transformations need to occur at the affective, perceptual, and bodily level, the prereflective level of habit, and not merely at the reflective level of cognition or belief. In this context, I have attempted to show the value for ethical and antiracist experience of what is normally seen as a negative to be avoided: hesitation. Racism aims at, manages, and takes place through lived bodies; it is through embodied practices that it can be critically resisted and interrupted.¹⁰¹

Notes

1. This paper was written during time spent at the Camargo Foundation in Cassis, France and at the Institute of Advanced Study at Durham University, UK. The paper was also made possible by support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
2. I am using the term *affect* in a broad phenomenological sense, that follows Husserlian and Merleau-Pontian usage (in particular, Husserl's *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, trans. Anthony J. Steinbock [Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001]). In this usage, the realm of affectivity is wider than what can be called *emotion*, since emotion is an intentional, sense-giving relation (to an object) that is built on affect, whereas affect is the preintentional tendency or force (attraction, repulsion, pain, pleasure, etc.) that can motivate and support this intentional turning toward an object.
3. The affective investments witnessed in many reactions to veiling in France have caused one commentator to speak of "political hysteria."

See Emmanuel Terray, "L'hystérie politique," in *Le foulard islamique en questions*, ed. Charlotte Nordmann (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2004), 103–117.

4. For a philosophical analysis of the public debate on the veil in France, see my essay "The Racialization of Muslim Veils: A Philosophical Analysis," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 36, no. 8 (October 2010): 875–902.
5. Sally Haslanger, "You Mixed? Racial Identity Without Racial Biology," in *Adoption Matters: Philosophical and Feminist Essays* (Ithaca, N.Y. and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 265–289.
6. *Ibid.*, 279–280.
7. *Ibid.*, 282.
8. Several thinkers have used Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to think racializing perception and racialized embodiment and space, notably: Linda Martín Alcoff, Gail Weiss, and Cynthia Willett. See also the critique of the elision of race in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology by Helen Fielding, "White Logic and the Constancy of Color," in *Feminist Interpretations of Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Dorothea Olkowski and Gail Weiss (University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).
9. This dual account of vision is most clearly presented in "Eye and Mind," where Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between "profane," objectifying vision (which sees only what can be made object) and the painter's vision (which is attuned to the invisible infrastructure of visibility). See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," trans. Carleton Dallery, in *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 159–160; and Merleau-Ponty, *L'Œil et l'Esprit* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1964), 9–12.
10. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967).
11. *Ibid.*, 190–191. Such undesirability is, of course, itself constituted in the collective unconscious for Fanon.
12. What Ladelle McWhorter calls biopolitical racism (in *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009]) and what Falguni Sheth has called the technologies of race (*Toward a Political Philosophy of Race* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009]).
13. Although it may seem strange to speak of the *naturalization* of race to cultural practices, this accurately describes the way in which particular features (e.g., backwardness, gender oppression, closure) come to be seen,

- in cultural racism, as part of the nature of certain cultures and of the bodies that belong to those cultures.
14. This is neither to imply that other senses are immune to racism, nor to forget the imaginary and discursive dimensions that are also clearly implicated in racialization.
 15. This echoes Kelly Oliver's concern in *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001). My response will be that, though racializing seeing relies on the intentional and habitual structures of vision, it also includes a distinctive structural limitation.
 16. In noting the recalcitrance and rigidity of racism, I do not mean to imply that the stereotypes and contents projected by racism have remained the same over time. Indeed, racism adapts to make use of the tools available in different historical epochs (e.g., biological sciences, cultural preconceptions, gender norms, etc.), *even while it maintains its othering structure*. It is this projective othering mechanism, which manages and divides people, that I see as recalcitrant. It is also for this reason that I think critical memory and vigilance are needed to overcome racism (section 5). For a genealogy of Anglo-American racism that shows its historical fluidity, yet persistence, see McWhorter's *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America*. In this vein, following Robert Bernasconi's recent work, it might be better to understand racism as drawing borders rather than defining essences. (Robert Bernasconi's "Crossed Lines in the Racialization Process: Race as a Border Concept," *Research in Phenomenology* 42 [2012]: 206–228, came to my attention too late to be incorporated into this section.)
 17. Linda Martín Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 187–188.
 18. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (London: Routledge, 2012), 154–155; *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1945), 190.
 19. In this sense, the visual field of colonialism can be understood to motivate the othering of the "native," and that of Western phallogentrism the production of Western, white femininity as object of desire of the male gaze.
 20. Alcoff, *Visible Identities*, 188.
 21. As Fanon has noted, racism and colonialism are pathological for both colonized and colonizer. See *Black Skin, White Masks*, 11. Fanon does not understand racist vision as inevitable, but presents the possibility of disalienation through revolutionary engagement and the production of a "new humanism."

22. See Alcoff, *Visible Identities*, 188.
23. For an account of racializing affect, see section 2.
24. "Des aillères." See Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1992), 139; *La pensée et le mouvant* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1938), 151–152.
25. See David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 3–8, and Alcoff, *Visible Identities*, 179–181.
26. Though all institutions involve forgetting for Merleau-Ponty, a productive forgetting that belongs to the process of sedimentation (*Signes* [Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1960], 74), I want to claim that racialization involves an ignorance that is more limiting. This is the exclusion contained in the "I cannot" analyzed here.
27. See the discussion of Iris Marion Young's "Throwing Like a Girl" below.
28. This is not to deny that *racial identity* may be configured, lived, and perceived in different ways. It is helpful to distinguish here between "race" as constructed through racism and racial identity as lived. The perception of the latter includes, in my account, an awareness of its historical constitution and lived multiplicity.
29. The function that the "I cannot" of racism performs is hence structural rather than simply definitional. Racism involves an attempt at policing borders—a mechanism of othering or projective exclusion—in the face of complex and messy lived realities that exceed those borders (to draw on Bernasconi's proposition that race be thought as a "border concept" in "Crossed Lines in the Racialization Process," 226–227).
30. My account of racializing habits has resonances with Shannon Sullivan's rich description of white privilege as "ontological expansiveness." But the unobstructed and expansive "I can" of white privilege, which sees itself as entitled to all spaces and that does not hesitate to occupy them, is based, in my view, on a necessary limitation. While I agree with Sullivan that repressive forgetting plays a role in maintaining habits of white privilege, I believe that the recalcitrance of these habits also owes to an internal and structural flaw, an "I cannot" that limits their receptivity and ability to hesitate and change. See Shannon Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 8, 10.
31. That affect and perception go together recalls Merleau-Ponty's account of operative intentionality as dialogue of body and world (in *Phenomenology*

- of Perception)—perception being an intentional response to the call of the world in a prior affective moment. This dialogue is distorted in racialization, but it is not suspended. In other words, racialization is not simply projective, but constitutes its own affects, *as if* it were reacting to the world.
32. See Etienne Balibar, “Is There a ‘Neo-Racism?’” in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), 22, 26. Hence the backward belief that it is the ostensible visibility of bodily practices, such as veiling, that “causes” racist reactions in Western society.
 33. Such affect can be conceived as circulating collectively, almost as if by contagion. See Terray, “L’hystérie politique,” 117, and Kelly Oliver, *The Colonization of Psychic Space: A Psychoanalytic Social Theory of Oppression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).
 34. To say that secularized Muslim women are “tolerated” is still to mark them as marginal, as Wendy Brown’s account of tolerance shows. See *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 14.
 35. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 122. See also Oliver, *The Colonization of Psychic Space*, 50.
 36. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 111.
 37. Ibid., 121–122. Merleau-Ponty refers to this as “perceptual rigidity,” citing the psychologist Else Frenkel-Brunswik’s work on “psychological rigidity.” Although his brief account includes “racist opinions” under phenomena of psychological and perceptual rigidity, he does not go beyond the psychological in this essay. (See “The Child’s Relations with Others” in *The Primacy of Perception*, 105, 107.)
 38. I share Shannon Sullivan’s skepticism regarding the ability of conscious argumentation and intellectualized change to disrupt unconscious habits of white privilege. Sullivan proposes indirect strategies, in particular changing one’s environment, as potentially more effective. But I would note that, in order to motivate and then be responsive to environmental change, hesitation and critical awareness are needed (a point with which I think Sullivan might agree). (*Revealing Whiteness*, 1, 9–11, 159–165).
 39. Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 93; *La pensée et le mouvant*, 102. Translation corrected.
 40. Gilles Deleuze, *Le bergsonisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), 108.
 41. Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 188; *La pensée et le mouvant*, 211.
 42. Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 93; *La pensée et le mouvant*, 101.

43. Bergson, *L’évolution créatrice* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1907), 4–7.
44. Henri Bergson, *Matière et mémoire: Essai sur la relation du corps à l’esprit* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1896), 11–12. I have called the account I am presenting a “phenomenology” of hesitation. This is justified insofar as it is mainly the first chapter of *Matière et mémoire* that is concerned.
45. Ibid., 251.
46. Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness*, 10.
47. “Affection is what occupies the interval, what occupies it without filling it in or filling it up.” Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The movement-image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 65.
48. Describing the phenomenon of pain, Bergson says: “Il y a dans la douleur quelque chose de positif et d’actif, qu’on explique mal en disant, avec certains philosophes, qu’elle consiste dans une représentation confuse” (*Matière et mémoire*, 55.) This quotation shows how Bergson blurs the lines between positive and negative affects. It also evokes the complex question of the role of pain in subject formation and diminution.
49. Ibid., 57 and 59.
50. Ibid., 56 and 58.
51. Ibid., 58.
52. Bergson notes that bodily affectivity is the limit at which hetero-affection and self-affection, outside and inside coincide (Ibid., 57–58). In this regard, we find important phenomenological resemblances, but also ontological differences, between Bergson and Husserl’s *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, avenues I do not have space to develop here.
53. *Matière et mémoire*, 56.
54. To speak of lived-through self-awareness recalls Husserl’s prereflective self-consciousness, which accompanies all our experiences. Though there are resemblances here, the ontological commitments differ. Bergsonian self-awareness is bodily effort, hesitation, and the occasion for remembering.
55. “Memory of the present” is Bergson’s term for the redundant memory that accompanies the present and remains unconscious. I have argued that this “memory of the present” is a memory of the world and of what is not directly grasped in perception, a memory that is colored by affect. See my essay “The Memory of Another Past: Bergson, Deleuze

- and a New Theory of Time,” *Continental Philosophy Review* 37 (2004): 203–239.
56. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 52.
 57. I wish to thank Ed Casey for pointing out to me this implication of my essay.
 58. Two senses of immediacy need to be distinguished here: the immediacy of an experience that does not involve reflection, and the immediacy of an encounter that gives the other directly.
 59. Merleau-Ponty, “The Child’s Relations with Others,” 103. Ambiguity can accept a multiplicity of perspectives, whereas ambivalence hides contradictions and imposes a univocal perspective. In the same article, Merleau-Ponty links emotional ambivalence to psychological and perceptual rigidity.
 60. Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness*, 9–10.
 61. *Ibid.*, 149.
 62. *Ibid.*, 164–165.
 63. Sullivan takes this into account. See in particular her argument for reparations in chapter 5 of *Revealing Whiteness*.
 64. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 226. Fanon sometimes seems to claim that the past should be left behind altogether. I think his account is more nuanced, for it is white history and reactionary attempts to recuperate it in “Negritude” that he rejects; the past as a nondeterministic whole is to be recaptured but for the sake of creating a different future.
 65. Earlier, shorter versions of the following sections appeared in my essay, “A Phenomenology of Critical-Ethical Vision: Merleau-Ponty, Bergson, and the Question of Seeing Differently,” in *Chiasmi International: Publication trilingue autour de la pensée de Merleau-Ponty* 11 (2009): 375–398. What follows is a substantially revised and expanded analysis.
 66. Recalling Sullivan’s term, *Revealing Whiteness*, 10.
 67. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 11, 112–113.
 68. Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 34.
 69. *Ibid.*, 37.
 70. *Ibid.*, 43–44.
 71. *Ibid.*, 44–45. This is not to imply that women’s responses to the patriarchal gaze are homogeneous, but that, whether complicit, resistant, or subversive, by being socially positioned as “feminine,” one finds oneself

- already having to work within a field defined by this gaze and, hence, already hesitating, even as one seeks to overcome that hesitation.
72. I am drawing a parallel between the logic of racism and that of sexism, insofar as they are objectifying schemas. I do not mean this to imply a seamless analogy between these structures of domination.
 73. *Ibid.*, 44.
 74. I agree here with Gail Weiss’s critical reformulation of Young’s account to highlight the “socially referred” character of bodily existence (Weiss) rather than its “self-reference” (Young). *Body Images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 46–48.
 75. The “I can” is always accompanied by a certain “I cannot” that serves to circumscribe and set limits to the field of my possible actions in the world. But, as Young points out, “I can” and “I cannot” are in this case only juxtaposed; it is their superimposition that gives rise to the contradictory modalities of “feminine” bodily existence (*On Female Body Experience*, 37). The passivity within the “I can” that I wish to point to here is more than the external limitation of a juxtaposed “I cannot.”
 76. For Merleau-Ponty’s attempts to overcome the activity-passivity dichotomy, see *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France (1954–1955)*, trans. Leonard Lawlor and Heath Massey (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 192; *L’Institution, La Passivité, Notes de cours au Collège de France, 1954–1955* (Paris: Éditions Belin, 2003), 250. Also see Leonard Lawlor’s critique of Merleau-Ponty’s “I can” in *The Implications of Immanence: Toward a New Concept of Life* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 85–86.
 77. Young offers her own critique of this tendency to treat the masculine as neutral measure, in “Throwing like a Girl: Twenty Years Later,” in *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Donn Welton (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 286–290.
 78. I am drawing on Marilyn Frye’s term “arrogant vision” from *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Freedom, Calif.: The Crossing Press, 1983), 52–83. In other words, such hesitation would be a critical corrective to the exclusionary logic—the “I cannot see otherwise”—of objectifying, racializing and sexist vision.
 79. One may conclude that the othered subject who hesitates in the first sense has privileged epistemic and affective access to the second form of hesitation. This may well be the case, though I think the connection is neither direct nor guaranteed. This owes to the tension that this subject

- feels, and that leads to her paralyzing hesitation, for this tension reflects the way in which the schemas of racialization and sexism, even when internalized, do not quite fit. This is an experience of prereflective bodily awareness—a conflict at the affective and perceptual level between one's subjectivity and one's social positionality—that is much more than discomfort and that can be unbearable, leading to revolt and critique.
80. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 222.
 81. Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 164; *L'Œil et l'Esprit*, 23.
 82. The description of "lateral passivity" occurs in the context of a discussion of how an organization of the visual field, that had been *the* level according to which we saw, comes to be reorganized: "Passivity [is] not frontal, toward another *I*, but congenital to the *I*, insofar as something which happens to it, i.e., sparks redistribution of its landscape, of its cathexes, of the dimensions of its being in the world; i.e., [introduced] into a certain level, and [affected] in accordance with it [by] certain values and significations, [it] ends up by upsetting the level (Wertheimer's experiment) and reorganizing it" (Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity*, 191; *L'Institution, La Passivité*, 249–250, translation corrected). The reference here is to an experiment by M. Wertheimer, *Experimentelle Studien über das Sehen von Bewegung*, *Ztschr. f. Ps.* 1912, cited in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, 259–260, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, 296–297.
 83. Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity*, 192, *L'Institution, La Passivité*, 250.
 84. For more on Merleau-Ponty's notion of "dimension," see Renaud Barbaras, *The Being of the Phenomenon: Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, trans. Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 174ff.
 85. Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity*, 191–2, *L'Institution, La Passivité*, 250, translation corrected. There exists an ambiguity in Merleau-Ponty's text: "Le choix de la maintenir sera alors pathologique." Here "la" can refer to "*Sinngebung*" or to "historical inscription" in the previous sentence, but cannot, because of gender, refer to "our system." The term that makes most (grammatical and interpretative) sense is "*Sinngebung*."
 86. "The new level would be nothing definite without what preceded it, without my history" (Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity*, 192; *L'Institution, La Passivité*, 250).
 87. Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity*, 192; *L'Institution, La Passivité*, 251.
 88. This is an "arrogating" vision, to use Marilyn Frye's term (*The Politics of Reality*, 69). As Maria Lugones points out, such vision grafts the flesh

- of the other to myself, instrumentalizing the other and refusing to see her within her own "worlds" ("Playfulness, 'World'-Traveling, and Loving Perception," in *Women, Knowledge and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy*, ed. Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall [London and New York: Routledge, 1996], 420–424).
89. This can be related to the way in which racializing perception, and racism and colonialism more generally, are pathological according to Fanon. See *Black Skin, White Masks*, 10–11, 192.
 90. Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity*, 192; *L'Institution, La Passivité*, 250.
 91. I use the term *unassimilable* here following Merleau-Ponty. But what I am describing should not be conflated with the *intolerable* of ankylosed affect discussed in section 2. Whereas the *intolerable* was already defined by racialization, the *unassimilable* is that which cannot fit within racializing schemas and hence poses a difficulty for the racializing imaginary. This recalls what Falguni Sheth calls "the unruly" (*Toward a Political Philosophy of Race* [Albany: State University of New York, 2009]).
 92. I am thinking of the ways in which racism recasts itself as cultural racism, once biological theories of race have been discredited. I am also thinking of the way in which color-blindness allows systemic and implicit forms of racism to continue.
 93. This can include regret, guilt, and remorse, but also shared pain and anger through love, and hope for changing the future. As I believe I have shown, it is not the kind of affect, negative or positive, but its structure and responsibility that matter in my account.
 94. Even if my partner had been convinced by my arguments, a willful and momentary decision would not have been sufficient to sustain lasting change. Here, I agree with Shannon Sullivan that willful and self-reflective attempts to change oneself and one's habits are unlikely to be successful (*Revealing Whiteness*, 9). This is not only because we do not have such direct and transparent access to ourselves, as phenomenologists have tirelessly discovered, but also because such attempts are instantaneous and sporadic efforts which, moreover, precisely reinforce the sense of mastery and control of oneself that excludes hesitation.
 95. Haslanger is cautious to point out that not all transracial parenting will involve a transformation in racial maps (racial schemas and bodily habits of navigating social space). Where parents' white norms and habits do not shift, this will have the damaging consequence of casting their Black children as racialized others ("You Mixed?" 287–288). In other words, though experiences like transracial adoption can enact "environmental

change” and force tacit racial maps into consciousness (284), more is required to put those racial maps into question and critically reconfigure the way in which they are navigated.

96. See Haslanger, “You Mixed?” 283–285. Also see bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 177, where she gives the example of white people who shift locations and begin to see the world differently.
97. Haslanger, “You Mixed?” 284; Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness*, 161–162.
98. For instance, Haslanger speculates that “close inter-racial friendships and love relationships” may lead to similar disruptions in racializing habits as the ones she describes in transracial parenting (“You Mixed?” 278).
99. See Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness*, 176–177.
100. This is to evoke a multiplicity within the self, in terms of identity and attachment.
101. This is, I believe, the import of the last line of Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*: “O my body, make of me always a man who questions!” (232).

SEVEN

HOMETACTICS

Self-Mapping, Belonging, and the Home Question

MARIANA ORTEGA

Home is a name, a word, it is a strong one; stronger than magician ever spoke, or spirit ever answered to, in the strongest conjuration.

—Charles Dickens

A whole history remains to be written of spaces—which would at the same time be the history of Powers—from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of the habitat.

—Michel Foucault

There is nowhere you can go and only be with people who are like you.
It’s over. Give it up.

—Bernice Johnson Reagon

To start, I have to make a confession: this is an exercise of self-mapping, an attempt to deal with a certain nostalgia, a painful fixation on loss and a desire to return to a place called home, a persistent desire that keeps returning, like the snow of February in Cleveland, the city I sometimes call home. In self-mapping, one locates oneself in life and space and recognizes locations imbued with histories, power relations, cultural and economic forces, and personal dreams and imagination. Home, says bell hooks, is “the safe place . . . the place where the me of me mattered.”¹ Quoting Michael Seidel, Caren Kaplan says that home is the exile’s “belated romance with a past, through memory heightened by distance.”² I am that exile who unwittingly falls for this romance yet is perfectly aware of its traps.³ Perhaps it is exile that brings forth the will to belong in a more insistent and gripping way—I