



PROJECT MUSE®

---

SPEP Co-Director's Address: Hesitation as Philosophical  
Method—Travel Bans, Colonial Durations, and the Affective  
Weight of the Past

Alia Al-Saji

The Journal of Speculative Philosophy, Volume 32, Number 3, 2018, pp. 331-359  
(Article)

Published by Penn State University Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/704667>

## SPEP Co-Director's Address: Hesitation as Philosophical Method—Travel Bans, Colonial Durations, and the Affective Weight of the Past

*Alia Al-Saji*

MCGILL UNIVERSITY

**ABSTRACT:** The 2017 “travel bans”—curtailing travel into the United States for nationals of several Muslim-majority countries—make palpable the skewed possibility of movement that comes with belonging to a nationality or passport. My experience of navigating travel as an Iraqi-Canadian gives rise to a critical phenomenological reflection on the affective weight of colonial pasts. The colonial past remains with the present; it is intensified through repeated enactment in U.S. policy but also through the weight of its duration and indifference toward it. It is *differentially* remembered, cognized, and felt—disregarded from white and U.S.-centric perspectives, yet palpably structuring the everyday for the occupied, racialized, and “formerly colonized.” Sometimes it is felt in the form of hesitation. I ask how hesitation can become critical and what its role might be in redressing the past. My theory of time—Bergsonian yet moving beyond Bergson—helps me think this question. I argue that the past coexists with the present and is *reconfigured* along with it, in a process I liken to kneading or folding dough. While the past’s colonizing fractures cannot be healed, they can be felt, made perceptible, and thought—in attentive reconfiguration of the past, worked through in a critical phenomenology.

**KEYWORDS:** hesitation, time/past, affect, colonialism, Henri Bergson, racism, travel ban, Islam/Muslim, critical phenomenology

It is, without a doubt, a difficult task to address at once the state of philosophy as embodied by the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP) and the place of one's own thought within it. This is the task that a co-director's address tries to fill. Whether with a critical reexamination of the phenomenological mode of seeing distinctive of SPEP (Anthony Steinbock), of philosophical progress (Amy Allen), or of the place of transcontinental philosophy (Brian Schroeder), prior co-directors found ways to subtly chart the windings and turns of the many streams that assemble to form this society.

We seem to be, however, at a different (though by no means uniquely dark) juncture, so that another dimension—the historical, political, affective situation in which, and according to which, we live—intertwines with the philosophical, institutional, and phenomenological-existential to create a conceptually thorny and affectively muddy no-man's-land, in which I could not but find myself bogged down as I tried to write this address. In this no-man's-land, my positionality as “foreigner,” “nonresident alien,” Arab, Muslim, Iraqi woman sits uncomfortably—absurdly and pessimistically incongruent—with my long belonging to SPEP, this on first view U.S.-centered (or may we say implicitly “American”) organization. This incongruence makes me hesitate. My essay receives its impetus from this unease, this hesitation. And while the essay begins to think from my positionality, it is also about more than that location, since the experience I parse has resonances and intersections that cut beyond my foreignness and beyond who currently administers the United States government. It speaks, I hope, to *other hesitations* within SPEP, within the histories of Continental philosophy, and within philosophy more broadly. Though I do not claim to speak for them, I want to show how such hesitation can itself be philosophical, how it might be constitutive, and not simply marginal, to what we do in SPEP. Can I find the resources within philosophy to survive this lived tension, this hesitation—and to think it—without reducing it to a mere schema or dismissing it as an accidental sideline of history? But first, my location.

## **I. Uneasy Movement: A Critical Phenomenology of Borders and Travel Bans**

Since the first iteration of what has come to be called the “Trump Travel Ban” in January 2017 (Executive Order 13769), applied to seven Muslim-majority countries,<sup>1</sup> my Iraqiness has come to the fore as a dimension to be

reckoned with—hitherto mostly lived as ambivalent background, tension, or guardedness, now an obstacle to travel to the locations of SPEP meetings, so often in the United States. It brought to the fore an *affective tear*, a bifurcation of affiliations and attachments, not simply geographic or national but within the self—a tear I had been trying to forget. Could I still attend the institution in which I had invested so much and which has been my home for doing philosophy? Would that come at the cost of not visiting my family in Iraq again? Yet, practically, and in the short term, this was still a problem with which SPEP, or at least its capable secretary-treasurer, could cope: Emily Zakin calmed my panic and found us an alternate location, in Canada, to hold the program meeting of the Executive Committee. As I redid travel plans (and withdrew from other conferences), I was haunted by a sense that I had lived such fracturing barriers elsewhere—before “Canadian” came to attenuate my Iraqiness in a hyphenated identity.

Then came a second iteration of the travel ban (Executive Order 13780, March 2017), with seemingly more “reasonable” and reasoned language, removing Iraq and all dual nationals from the purview of the ban:<sup>2</sup> “Iraq present[ed] a special case.”<sup>3</sup> Iraqis were still problems, each a potential terrorist threat; yet they were useful in fighting Daesh, and while they “should be subjected to thorough review,” they would not be blocked as a whole.<sup>4</sup> And in September 2017, came a third and now permanent travel ban (Presidential Proclamation 9645).<sup>5</sup> It set a “baseline” of criteria for “information-sharing and identity-management” but emphasized a “more tailored approach” and added two non-Muslim countries to the list.<sup>6</sup> Between the unwinding and rewinding of a yo-yo, Iraqis are held in abeyance and under suspicion—not banned as a block but “subject to additional scrutiny” and “enhanc[ed] vetting” procedures.<sup>7</sup> Failing to meet the baseline, yet in a “close cooperative relationship” with the United States, Iraq is on the cusp and remains at risk of exclusion.<sup>8</sup>

Although the Supreme Court filtered the second ban, shielding those with substantiated (“bona fide”) relationships to the United States,<sup>9</sup> it allowed the full weight of the third ban to be applied (in its orders of December 4, 2017), while waiting for challenges to proceed through the courts.<sup>10</sup> (The Supreme Court heard oral arguments in one of the appeals in April 2018, but, as of this writing, its decision has not yet been issued.)<sup>11</sup> Muslim “foreign nationals” find themselves at the whim of presidential proclamations: a *tailored* racism that operates *under the guise* of rigorous norms in “identity-management” and “information-sharing practices,”

rationalized through national security risk assessment.<sup>12</sup> It is absence of knowledge—“lack [of] sufficient information to assess the risks they pose to the United States”—that counts against Muslim foreigners, even as this absence is itself “classified.”<sup>13</sup> No concrete information or profiled tendencies about individuals are available to indicate a threat—so neither can a threat be precluded. They fall outside “shared” systems of surveillance.<sup>14</sup> Foreign Muslims are an opaque “unknown.”

But that may be the point: not which nationalities and visa categories are included or excluded but, rather, their parsing and dividing—normalizing Muslim surveillance and splitting our attachments. Dual nationals become exempt; close family members and Canadian permanent residents can apply for case-by-case waivers; Green Card holders breathe a sigh of relief.<sup>15</sup> Travel bans demarcate the unrelated, those without recognized connection;<sup>16</sup> more so, they constitute, through their exclusion, the truly foreign and the “unknown.”<sup>17</sup> Yet each time I and other Muslims read through the text of a travel ban, searching for how it might apply to us, or scrutinize a court ruling for what partial “injunctive relief” it may offer—relaxing at not being singled out and dissociating from those who are—each time, the travel ban will have performed its oppositional and cleaving function.<sup>18</sup> Borders of racialization and dividing lines of empire are rephrased, move back and forth, but the border remains, and its force intensifies with each iteration. This is an instance of what I call *colonial duration*. Here, we glimpse how colonial and racial formations are weighted by their temporal duration and how their border-making is reinforced by means of (not despite of) its rephrasing over time.

Yet I recognize that I write from a relatively “privileged” location. As a dual Iraqi-Canadian national, I can make use of the *exception* afforded by my Canadian side (a country that systematically shares its residents’ information with the United States). By always crossing through the Montreal airport, where U.S. Customs and Border Protection operates a “preclearance” zone, I am offered the comparative safety of being able to withdraw from interrogation, back across the virtual border within the Montreal airport itself.<sup>19</sup> (*Preclearance* is that hybrid space with special juridical status that allows U.S. law enforcement agents to screen and question travelers in Canadian airports before they board their flights to the United States.)

But the exception of being Canadian—which affords a world of open, seamless borders with visa waivers and visas politely delivered upon entry—at once masks and makes me remember those other modalities

of “world-traveling,” where borders were blockages, experienced in their political and historical contingency, calling for anxious preparation and prayer.<sup>20</sup> Rather than simply erecting an “invisible yet impenetrable barrier” (to borrow words from the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals),<sup>21</sup> Trump’s travel ban *makes palpable* and *visible* the skewed possibilities of movement—and the uneasy expectations of surveillance and scrutiny—that already come with belonging to a particular *racialized nationality or passport*.<sup>22</sup> The passport one holds and the differentially permeable or closed borders that correspond to it not only circumscribe the mobility of racialized and colonized foreign bodies; they also structure the possibility of *where* and *how* one can move (the phenomenological “I can”).<sup>23</sup> They affectively color lived space and hold in abeyance lived time.

With a passport (or nationality) comes the heaviness of an atmosphere, a shortening of breath, a feeling of nausea and of enclosure. Its borderlines configure the imaginary infrastructure of a world to which one’s belonging is perpetually deferred. This hesitating breath cannot allow itself to become panic. One must present a calm demeanor and an open smile to border agents; clothing and accent are being scrutinized. There is a lucidity here—one is not dupe to the meaning of borders—yet one trembles underneath.<sup>24</sup> (This is assuming a passport or travel document; for those *without or stripped of* nationality, the phenomenology of national borders presents a differently configured problem of enclosure.) With wry irony, banned travel and mass deportations were the prelude to war in the Iraq of my childhood.<sup>25</sup> Obtaining a visa is a complicated dance that begins with the passport, applying for an exit visa, the voyage to an embassy, itself heavily fortified, and only ends on the whim of a border agent (and then it would need to be renewed). It is this whim—this volatility and arbitrary power—that Trump’s travel bans, in their back-and-forth iterations, encourage. To many of those affected by it, the travel ban has an unsurprising and reminiscent feel: it makes explicit what were lived dimensions of U.S. foreign and immigration policies. It makes visible the dividing lines of imperial and racial formations—and the thickness of the colonial durations—that structure lived experiences of the United States.<sup>26</sup>

Without diminishing Trump’s wrongs (or the analogy to Saddam Hussein brought to mind above), I should recall that the United States is not the only nation restricting immigration and travel and that Canada, with all its gestures of generosity, has a selective immigration system that accepts mainly the educated, the wealthy, the healthy, and those of

reproductive age—and preferably white. It also bears noting that it was at the French Consulate in Montreal, when applying for a long-stay visa for a sabbatical ten years ago, that I learned to see my Iraqiness as “une nationalité sensible.” This oddly apt term holds multiple layers of sense. Beyond that of requiring special attention and precautionary measures, of needing to be handled with care (code used by consular officials to tell me that my visa application needed to be sent to Paris for extra scrutiny),<sup>27</sup> the term marks the peculiar hypervisibility with which Iraq—rather than the colonial duration that has destructured it—is cast as the problem. In its obverse active sense, *sensible* also points to a susceptibility to be moved, to feel and to be touched, and to a nuanced and heightened receptivity to sensations. It inadvertently captures how national attachments—situated as alien, enemy yet in need of liberation, constantly suspect yet actively unknown, and under the weight of that entangled (neo)colonial duration—translate into a bodily affectivity at once prickly and hesitating, fragile and knotty.

## 2. Hesitations

Hesitation, then, does not go away but is intensified, deepens, rippling through time and infecting other dimensions of being. Indeed, what I am charting are multiple hesitations, the ripples of wave formations that amplify or interfere with one another: affective dissonance, panicking immobility, enclosed and occupied breathing, spasmodic anger, pessimistic resilience, and grief. Does philosophy have a role to play in these intervals of hesitation? I am not the first to have charted such hesitations: Iris Marion Young’s “Throwing Like a Girl,”<sup>28</sup> the “tetanization” and muscular spasms of the colonized and the explosion of the racialized body schema in Frantz Fanon’s work,<sup>29</sup> Henri Bergson’s equation of duration with hesitating and delay,<sup>30</sup> Gilles Deleuze’s stuttering,<sup>31</sup> and the painter’s quivering, responsive hand for Maurice Merleau-Ponty;<sup>32</sup> and there are more. Yet, in many philosophies, hesitation becomes an obstacle to be overcome, a stage in becoming, or a means to a more seamless and fluid activity. In the foreign pairing of the works of Bergson and Fanon, I find the models to think of hesitation differently. This may be because, instead of resolving hesitation, they do not seem to be afraid to dwell with it, to perform and sustain it, to think it. Here, I offer a corrective to my previous work on hesitation: in my essay “A Phenomenology of Hesitation” (from 2014),

I differentiate productive and paralyzing hesitations, the latter often resulting from internalized situations of oppression.<sup>33</sup> Yet, though hesitations tend in different directions and can be the source of changes of direction, it is unclear to me, now, that hesitations can be categorized in this way. There is an unpredictability to hesitating, an interval that it creates, which means that what I make of my hesitations, or *what hesitating makes of me*, is a singular unfurling of time. As much as hesitation may be produced by situations of oppression—and by the weighting and fracturing of the past in the present—it also lives these situations, feels and expresses this duration. Thus, the immobilizing hesitation that Young describes in “Throwing Like a Girl” can become feminist reflection; and the paralyzing fragmentation and waiting that Fanon lives in *Peau noire, masques blancs* needs to be dwelled in to become militancy and world transformation.

This essay arises out of a hesitation that draws on a duration much longer than the last two years or than my membership in SPEP. It goes back further than the last war on, and occupation of, Iraq; than the last three wars of Iraq; than the sanctions that deconstructed Iraqi society; than U.S. support for Saddam Hussein; than the CIA coup that brought the Ba’th to power in 1963; than the British mandate and repressed Iraqi rebellion against it; or than the Sykes-Picot accord (which divvied up the former Ottoman Empire among the colonial powers). Borders of racialization and dividing lines of empire are effective not simply by proclamation. Their recapitulation digs ruts. Their long duration snowballs and weighs on time—an *enduring* colonization that is not simply episodic or contingent. It is in this sense that I speak of *colonial duration*. Trump’s travel bans repeat this weary imperial and racializing past. More so, they reenact the occlusion and compartmentalization of the past that sustains the momentum of colonial durations. In constructing Iraqis and other Muslim “foreign nationals” as gaps in information, they become “unknown” quantities—their pasts fragmented into data, disentangled from the colonial durations that structured them. They can be isolated as objects for surveillance, without the desirability or normativity of that surveillance needing to be questioned.

Rather than being left behind, however, the colonial past remains with the present. Haunting the interstices of the present and structuring its joints, this past is *differentially* remembered, cognized, and felt by differently positioned subjects. This maps an epistemology of ignorance (to use Charles Mills’s term) by means of which imperial formations and racial imaginaries hide their workings.<sup>34</sup> It is a recalcitrant ignorance where



the past coexists with the present, weighs on it, is known but *disregarded, uncared for*;<sup>35</sup> this “colonial aphasia” (historian Ann Stoler’s term) is a pathology of time that is more than forgetting.<sup>36</sup> Here my argument meets up with the theorization of ignorance in critical race theory and colonial studies.<sup>37</sup> But I add an important affective dimension: the weight of the past at work (pre-reflectively) behind the back of consciousness—felt more than reflectively known—a past that submerges, bogs us down, or buoys us up. The colonial past has uneven affective weight—disregarded, indifferent, or “ankylosed” from white, Eurocentric or U.S.-centric perspectives, yet intensively structuring the everyday for the occupied, racialized, and “formerly colonized.”<sup>38</sup> Often for us, this past can be felt in the present in the form of hesitation, delay with respect to meaning-making in the world.

Could hesitation be a means for interrupting this recalcitrant disregard, for attending to or *redressing* this past (to use Saidiya Hartman’s term)?<sup>39</sup> Could it be a *method* for healing philosophical disregard (if only philosophy could make itself hesitate and treat its institutional occlusions)? That would be too easy a remedy—one that, moreover, reinstates the self-mastery of philosophical systems. The interval of hesitation is intimately tied to the past; as it delays a habitual or unreflected line of action, hesitating creates an opening into which memories could come flowing back. But the past that is actualized, or recollected, is already weighted with colonial narratives and racial stereotypes; unless fissures of resistance are mined, this version of the past dominates and, through repetition, is amplified.

What is needed, I think, is that hesitation be not only an interruption of the present but also a *critical reconfiguration of the past*. This is a deeper hesitation, leading to what might be a *critical phenomenology*. Critical hesitation, on my account, draws in the past so that *it, too, hesitates*. It is not a masterly, or direct, reiteration of the past—of our pasts, of philosophies past—but indirect and faltering. Feeling its way with care, even love, it is a lateral reworking of the past along with the present.<sup>40</sup> In this “lateral passivity” (to use Merleau-Ponty’s term), the impetus for hesitation comes from outside, from its situation, world, and others (familiar and alien) upon which it constitutively depends. *Critical phenomenology*, by being about structuring conditions, must have a feel for the past—those pasts that remain with us, and immerse or buoy us up, in the everyday, in the pre-reflective flow of lived experience.

In order to explain what I mean by *critical hesitation*, I need to take a step back and elucidate the theory of time that underlies my account. Thus, in the second half of this essay, I develop a nonlinear—and somewhat

alien—theory of time (Bergsonian in impetus yet also moving beyond Bergson). I understand the past, at once, as *lining* the present and as *reconfigured* along with it. *Reconfiguration* of the past is my own term; it is a concept through which I rethink the “conservation” and irreversibility of the past while avoiding the pitfalls of facile revisability and erasure, on the one hand, and selfsame preservation, on the other. What such “reconfiguration” might mean is crucial: How do the ways we remember, read, and actualize the past—know or forget it, live with and based upon it—reconfigure that past? I understand the past as *deeply textured and relational*—where ways of knowing and of misrepresenting the past participate in “forming” it but also where this activity itself leaves a trace (and can be uncovered). More generally, this could be called an “ontological” rather than “psychological” past (to evoke Deleuze), since this past overflows what is recollected of it and since it plays a structuring role in experience.<sup>41</sup> But this past also has texture, weight, and materiality; it is neither a container of ideas nor simply a spiritual or mental substance.

This past is not only multiple and moving but also fissured—scarred by racial formations and their colonial durations, by their violence in past and present, and by the recalcitrant disregard that operates in colonial retellings of the past. Thus, slavery but also calls to move on, the refusal to feel the heaviness and persistence of its duration; imperial projects that are rephrased but remain and the ways they are lived every day in the Middle East, yet disregarded there where these projects emerged and are prospered from. This fracturing of the past affects the structure of possibility of the phenomenological field of the present. It is these pathologies of time that critical hesitation cannot heal, on my view, but can feel—make perceptible, discern, and perhaps think—in an “attentive” reconfiguration of the past, a caring-remembering, which I understand as a critical phenomenology and an ethics of the past.

### 3. The Past in the Present

The past is often conceived as that which is gone and without recourse. Two ideas intertwine to give us this view of the past. First, the assumption of a linear ordering of the flow of experience. Succession is visualized as a series of juxtaposed and mutually external moments, ordered in degrees of contiguity to the present. Second, although events are seen as fluid and

indeterminate while they happen (in the present), *as past* they are understood to have crystallized and become determinate. The past is imagined as a completed being, already defined in its own time, fixed as soon as it happened. Thus the modality of pastness seems to imply not only irreversibility but immutability and completion—a *closed set of possibilities*. But like a crystal as it precipitates in solution, an event cannot be fixed without also immobilizing its relations. What remain unquestioned are the ways in which creation and openness are cut off from pastness and circumscribed as matters of futurity.

In rethinking the past, the challenge is to hold together characteristics that seem at first to be mutually exclusive: that the past is irreversible yet nonlinear, conserved yet reconfigured, unconscious and forgotten yet forming the atmosphere of our lives. In connecting these differences, it is not only our understanding of such aspects of the past that shifts but the concept of the past itself.

To begin, it is worth complicating the idea of temporal passage. Could it be—following a suggestion by Bergson, emphasized in Deleuze’s reading—that for the present to pass, the past must *coexist* with it rather than being left behind?<sup>42</sup> But if the coexistence of past with present meant that they merged together or even “interpenetrated” indifferently (as Bergson seems to say in *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*), then such coexistence would collapse time by dissolving temporal differentiation.<sup>43</sup> Limiting coexistence to the immediate past is misleading. It thickens the present by incorporating the immediate past—which becomes another mode of presence, as the ambiguity of Husserlian retention illustrates—while it effectively displaces the question of difference to immediate and remote pasts. This ignores, however, the fundamental problem: the coexistence sought is not that of two moments, *external* to one another and which fortuitously overlap ( $t_1$  and  $t_2$ ), but, rather, of two dimensions that *internally* connect in their difference (pastness and presence).

To paraphrase Merleau-Ponty (from *L’Institution, La Passivité*), time is structured by difference that both obstructs and connects.<sup>44</sup> Merleau-Ponty understands this difference as *ambiguity* (in *Phénoménologie de la perception*) and later as what he calls *chiasm*.<sup>45</sup> In contrast, Bergson and Deleuze think it through the difference in kind between virtuality and the actual. Although positing this differential, ontological structure allows past and present to be conceived as distinct dimensions, without risk of collapsing one into the other, this is still a static form of coexistence. We have yet to understand their relationality.

Critically, the coexistence of past and present must be understood to be dynamic. At stake are multiple processes of *differentiation*: (1) the difference that the past, while unconscious, makes for the present; (2) the process by which the past, or some part of it, becomes present (actualization); and (3) the process whereby what happens in the present produces ripples in, and reconfigures, the past. These processes are *not isomorphic*; they connect past and present as asymmetrical and nontransposable dimensions.

In the next section, I focus on the process by which what happens in the present makes a difference for the past (what I call *virtualization*). This focus stems from my concern with understanding the plasticity of the past, its creative capacity to be reconfigured, but also because this process has generally been theoretically eclipsed by the movement of *actualization* that proceeds in reverse, in the “forward” direction from past to present (and this even in the philosophies of Bergson and Deleuze, who hint at it without explicitly attending to it).

#### 4. Reconfiguration of the Past

In order to think pastness as creative force—or tendency—rather than stable deposit, I use a little-known element of Bergson's theory of time, one that deepens his more well-known concept of the “retrograde movement of the true.”<sup>46</sup> In several places in his work, Bergson evokes the image of a fountain to make sense of time—of the coexistence and scission of past and present.<sup>47</sup> In this image, time continually splits, to cite Deleuze, “in two heterogeneous directions, one of which is launched towards the future while the other falls into the past.”<sup>48</sup> Whereas Bergson initially describes these jets as symmetrical, Deleuze presents them as dissymmetrical, so that pastness and futurity cannot be held to be equivalent. What the image of the fountain makes explicit is the simultaneous (and intertwined) emergence of a present event *and its memory*, what Bergson calls “the memory of the present.”<sup>49</sup> This memory generally remains virtual and unconscious, but it plays an important ontological role; it solves, for Bergson, the problem of how past and present coexist and communicate without being derivative. To be precise, the past is formed originally along with the present; it is neither mere copy nor aftereffect. This unconscious past can be described to be *so close to the present as to be its lining* (using language from Merleau-Ponty employed in a different context).<sup>50</sup> Yet, since it is not first present to then pass, it can also be said to be “a past that has never been present.”<sup>51</sup>

Although the phrase “memory of the present” suggests a representation, it should be understood as a differential process that is more than the objectivation of the present; it includes nonrepresentable affective and background aspects of the present. What happens in the present—what is *actual*—is, at the same time, *virtually* inscribed as past. If we revisit the image of the fountain, then it is significant that the splitting of time cannot be thought to be complete. We do not have a past and a present as entities that could be circumscribed, nor are these processes that could be disentangled. Following Merleau-Ponty, the passing “now” is better conceived as *past-present* “*simultaneity*,” suggesting a “vortex” rather than closed circuits.<sup>52</sup>

While the direction that opens onto the future is philosophically elaborated by Bergson and Deleuze, the direction that falls into the past receives little attention beyond its role in securing coexistence. What is left unthought is the difference that the “memory of the present”—what I will less ambiguously call the *virtualization* of the present—makes for the past as a whole. This might lead us to think that the virtualized present is simply added to the past, whether chronologically, when the past is assumed to be a line, or indifferently, when the past is conceived as a container for events. But the past is neither a set of discrete events, nor a homogeneous plane, nor a container.<sup>53</sup> Rather, the past should be understood as an interconnected and internally differentiated whole—a network or whole of relations.<sup>54</sup> Thus the effect of virtualization, of the passing present, cannot be merely that of an addition that leaves the rest of the past as it was. In what follows, I describe the way the past changes along with the passage of the present in terms of the *reconfiguration* of the past, a term that is my own.

In employing the term *reconfiguration*, I wish to avoid two extremes: on the one hand, the idea that the past is conserved, complete and selfsame as it was, and, on the other hand, the view that the past could be reversibly rewritten or revised through erasures and substitutions. Rather, if the past is a whole of relations, then this relationality shifts with the passage of the present. As what happens in the present becomes past (virtualized), it magnetizes the whole of the past of which it is a part; *virtualization ripples through time*. New relations are woven to the whole of the past; this past shifts as past relations are repeated—confirming and stabilizing them—and as others are diverged from. This shift in relationality means that the past may be redistributed or fragmented;<sup>55</sup> while some “events” are pulled apart, others come into contact and begin to coalesce. Indeed, extending Bergson, different relations of similarity and contiguity (over

longer and more complex durations) may appear, so that relations that were hidden become prominent and events that were indistinct become “shining points,” around which others are condensed as “nebulae.”<sup>56</sup> Differences in tension and density within the past can, hence, also be intensive shifts. While one could speak here of either confirmation or divergence in meaning, I think that the reconfiguration of the past should also be conceived to be a shift in orientation of the past as a moving whole (evoking both meanings of the French *sens*). Through this shift, a different structure of possibility may be opened up: the past is transformed in its possibilities along with the present.<sup>57</sup>

I want the term *reconfiguration* to convey the ways in which the past is plastic without being equally malleable or indifferently open to all transformations. Beyond Bergson's sometimes spiritualist understanding of the past, I want to suggest that the past has *materiality* with varying texture, feeling, density, levels of detail or granularity, inertia, and resistance. The reconfiguration of the past is the manipulation of a substance that, while malleable and ductile, has weight, thickness, and stress points. Crucially, I argue that this material—or flesh—*keeps a memory of the transformations it has undergone*. In this sense, the past has an “organic memory”; it not only *becomes* but *ages*, retaining the traces of its zigzagged becoming.<sup>58</sup>

In other words, reconfiguration should be understood not as the erasure and rewriting of a neutral surface but as the folding of fabric or, better, kneading of dough—where the dough alters in its texture as it is kneaded and keeps a material trace of its manipulations.<sup>59</sup> While this recalls the use of the *Baker transformation* from mathematics by Deleuze and earlier by Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, I also want to understand the irreversibility of the past by returning to the process of kneading and folding dough that underlies this mathematical model (after all, dough is living matter and not inert).<sup>60</sup> Reconfiguration is, then, not only the redistribution of regions of the past; it must take into account differences in the texture and thickness of the “dough,” its reaction to the work it is undergoing, and the physical and chemical effects of folding. A closer look at the Baker transformation shows that a square is stretched into a rectangle, half of which is folded above the other half to form a new square. But as a geometric repositioning of parts, this picture of folding omits the overlap that would allow creasing, mixing, and touching along folds. Folding not only fragments the past but also brings different regions into contact. Between the folds, new relations may form, producing a qualitative change in the relational whole.

Thinking through this material and living image of the past would indicate, however, that there are limits to its pliability—to how such an already differentiated and creased volume can be refolded, how it may be divided and made to touch along the folds without violence.<sup>61</sup>

Thus *the past retains, in its texture and configuration, the trace of its own temporal becoming*. In the tension, stress, cohesion, fragmentations, and fractures of the past are felt the reconfigurations through which it has passed. What I am proposing is a peculiar sense of *conservation*: events endure and are conserved not simply as contents, but in how they relate to and reconfigure the past as a whole. It is in this sense that we can redefine the *irreversibility* of the past within a nonlinear understanding of time. Bergson's famous image of the past snowballing on itself in *L'évolution créatrice* can be read in this light: not as the accumulation of events in a disorganized mass but as a past in continual movement, *immanently reconfigured through its own duration*. This past is force and *tendency*, where every "addition" is a shift in direction or inflection of the relational whole.<sup>62</sup> This transforms our understanding of the past. This is because, first, it reveals the past to be incomplete and open—or, more precisely, *half-open* or *ajar* (*entr'ouvert*).<sup>63</sup> Second, it is because folding generates multiple layers of the past—a multilayered and deeply textured lining with tensions, fissures, and knots—pasts that allow, or eschew, different presents.

## 5. Critical Hesitation: A Fractured Colonial Past

That the past holds, within its folds, the memory of reconfigurations—of tendencies transformed or abandoned and of the latency of lived experience—calls its univocity into question. The ontological past, I would argue, is multiplicitous; it holds entangled tendencies that can pull in different directions. This recalls Bergson's image of an inverted cone in *Matière et mémoire*, where the past as a whole is repeated on multiple planes with different levels of contraction and expansion—each redistributing its relations in a complex reconfiguration.<sup>64</sup> It might be tempting to assume, from this image, that there exist infinite variations of the past, with all the cross sections of Bergson's cone filled in at regular and predefined levels (this is the reading that Deleuze gives).<sup>65</sup> However, my account of the past as weighted by its own temporal becoming (duration or historicity) indicates a more contingent, variable, and finite picture: a heterogeneous

and uneven past with differential texture and thickness. Indeed, Bergson notes that virtual planes *do not ideally preexist* their configuration.<sup>66</sup>

Whether this is *one* past—repeated with different organization, affective configuration, and sense—or *many* pasts is undecidable in my view; but these are not isolated pasts tracing different lives or cultures in parallel. The picture I have drawn means that pasts interconnect through their differences—even if their relations and discontinuities are not consciously available and belong to longer durations. This relational picture should not, however, be read as one of harmony; for the past has been reconfigured, fragmented, and fissured, through overt and subtle forms of violence. This is not only because the past registers the forms of domination and exclusion (explicitly or implicitly) experienced while it was present. It is also because the past—*as past*—is a site where oppression is at work.

While progressivist narratives of postracialism and globalization hold out the hope of overcoming racial borders, the desire to “move on” and shed the past repeats the recalcitrant disregard—the affective and epistemic attitude of ignorance—at work in colonial formations. Challenging the way in which imperial malaise is often characterized as a form of forgetting,<sup>67</sup> Ann Stoler introduces the concept of “colonial aphasia.” Rather than forgetting, colonial aphasia describes fragmenting processes, “a persistent attempt not to notice.”<sup>68</sup> But I would emphasize that this fragmenting tendency must also operate within the past. Indifference to the colonial past is accompanied by reconfiguration that is corrosive *at the level of the past*; it not only allows the “rot” of this past to remain but, I argue, intensifies it and makes it fester.<sup>69</sup> The colonized past endures, yet unattended to—remaining affectively indifferent and disconnected both from relational, interlocking histories and from the present. Here we witness a *flattening* of the past, of the thick material trace of its reconfigurations. This implies disregard for how the past was made—how it is *differentially weighted by its own duration*. I add that attempts to close off the past, to make it univocal, or to render rigid its relations are not simply imposed once and for all; they are tendencies to closure that need to be repeated and confirmed in order to be maintained. Racial formations are projects that rely on and differentially manage the habitualities and possibilities of different bodies. Repetitions form grooves and dig out ruts; confirmation builds feedback loops, enforcing the dominance of a particular version of the past. I argue, then, that “colonial aphasia” points to a *splintering of, and compartmentalization within,*



*the past*. This accounts for why the weight of the past is lived so differently by differentially positioned colonial and racialized subjects.

What kinds of redress, philosophical and otherwise, does this fractured past call for? Could *critical hesitation* navigate this past, including philosophy's own colonized pasts? Beyond the dichotomy of forgetting as erasure and recollection as retrieval of a bygone past, to hesitate is to open an interval for a *memory of the present*—a memory that reconfigures the remnants and fragments of the past so as to render that past half-open, allow breathing room to live it and to live differently according to it. Such reconfiguration does not hold out the hope of *healing* the colonial past, since it recognizes the deeply textured, resistant scarring that remains—what Edouard Glissant has called “a painful sense of time.”<sup>70</sup> To understand the kind of work this entails, we must recognize that colonial and racial formations function on multiple levels, and in different registers, at once: not simply cognitive or conceptual but also affective, habitual, and pre-reflective; not only constituting meaning but framing and instituting the very phenomenological field of sense, what counts as sense and nonsense. Racial formations and their colonial durations are hence systemic and *structuring* of experience, but this structuring relies on the *destructuring* of colonized and racialized lives.<sup>71</sup> They are affectively reduced to background, material resource to be exploited, object without reciprocity, or unknown information to be surveilled and filled in.

While racial formations flatten out and make affectively indifferent a colonial past (for those who benefit from it), the recalcitrant disregard for the past is often experienced as an overload of affect in racialized and “formerly” colonized bodies. Fanon has diagnosed the muscular rigidity and bodily tension (tetanization) of colonized bodies, where the weight of the past is all too present, to the point of nausea, filling one's joints and bogging one down (Fanon uses the term *engluer*).<sup>72</sup> This contrast between a past that is *too much*—viscous and opaque, that sticks to everything we do—and a tractable and “enlightened” colonial past underscores the fracturing of the past in the racial imaginary. What is at stake is a colonization of the past (or *coloniality*) that fragments the past, constructing a linear Eurocentric history and projecting coexistent cultures and colonized societies backward—as perpetually delayed, without coevalness.<sup>73</sup> Hesitation responds, then, not only to *how* the weight of the past is felt in the present but to its constituent fissures and violence. For racialized subjects, the adherence of the past to the present produces a qualitatively different (temporal and spatial)

*structure of lived possibility*, and not simply less possibility. It is this structure that hesitation might transform.

While I can only give a sketch, there are at least three ways in which critical hesitation interrupts the logic of recalcitrant disregard that sustains colonial durations. First, hesitation interrupts the embodied past that we live as habit. It not only suspends, for a brief interval, habits that constitute the normativity of the everyday. It also reveals and makes felt the prospective orientation that structures the so-called postracial or “post” colonial present—its imperious appropriative gesture toward the future, built on the acquisitions of a disregarded colonial past. Second, in the interval that pries open habit, an attentiveness to the present can emerge. But in the Bergsonian account, “attentive recognition” (or concrete perception) selectively actualizes circuits of the past according to a *logic of utility* that remains itself unquestioned. According to this logic, memories are filtered and oriented through a preexisting education of the sensorimotor schema. To put this in phenomenological terms, attentive recognition takes for granted an already defined perceptual and practical field; the “I can” of perception and affection frames what counts as sense. This is to say that attentive recognition as a more and more contextual, granular, and deeper description of an object or event may yet be inattentive to the absence or nonsense constitutive of how it is framed. This means that Bergson’s attentive recognition could leave his own colonial context disregarded and unthought.

Third, then, the philosophical, and ethical, promise of critical hesitation lies (ironically and even pessimistically) in bracketing the teleology of progress and hope and in suspending the logic of utility. Useless memories, superfluous and aleatory remnants, steal in. When reading Bergson’s texts, such memories sporadically emerge as signs of a past that *overflows* the utilitarian bounds of habit and conscious perception—as pure memory that pushes on the present with a desire to be actualized. Yet useless memories are often *witness* to structuring conditions of nonlinear time (reading against the grain of Bergson’s texts). We have seen the centrality of the memory of the present (of *déjà vu*) that uselessly doubles the present. Bergson refers in passing to the painful memories of a segmented, traumatized past. And in *L'évolution créatrice*, we encounter memories of other lines of evolution that can no longer be our own but that may yet reemerge as creative solutions to other problems of life.

Rather than disregard and avoid colonial pasts, redressing the past requires dwelling in, and with, its fissures and violent destructuring of lives.

These fissures cannot be seamlessly repaired or left behind. The irreversibility of the past means that reconnecting—or reconfiguring—the fragmented past is a matter of both mourning it and creating *different* kinds of relations within it (for there are no means to heal it *as it was*). Were we to occupy the affective tear opened up by the first travel ban, we might perceive more distinctly the imperial formations, or *colonial durations*, that structure the United States—its foreign policy throughout the years, its wars and manipulations, its selective immigration laws—and tie these to the ways in which the white supremacy and racism upon which it was built have been rephrased and sustained over time. For those for whom the travel ban came as a surprise, or those who argue that it is a radical departure from U.S. immigration policy, could the interval of hesitation be sustained so that the whole past of white supremacy—its policing of internal and external borders and of the mobility and life possibilities of citizens as well as noncitizen “aliens”—appears in its complex relations? With the second and third iterations of the ban, rationalizations took hold, and courts began to allow the ban in qualified form, normalizing its existence.<sup>74</sup> I am not arguing that the travel ban should not be challenged in court, but if redress is limited to canceling the travel ban or limiting its scope, another hesitation is elided, wherein the fissures of the colonial past could have been felt.<sup>75</sup>

And when those of us exempt from the ban feel relief and move on, hoping to be liminally included in the whiteness of the republic<sup>76</sup>—instead of feelings of anger and sadness that link diaspora Iraqis to those in Iraq, to other Muslims, and to those dispossessed within the United States or at its borders—another opening to affectively deepen our hesitations and make them critical (without analogizing) is left behind. When it seems that it is only sadness that we have left as Iraqis, can we reconfigure and live fragments of the past, felt through colonial fractures?<sup>77</sup> Through the strength of grief and in mourning rituals—their percussive embodiment and song—we scrape the wounds of a *longue durée* (disregarded by Eurocentric and Arabist perspectives). In the buried memory of the revolution against British occupation in 1920, we touch the potential of religious tradition for liberation and anticolonial work.<sup>78</sup> This popular rebellion had deep social roots and unity across ethnic and religious groups, but the role of Shi’a theological guidance made it a “subaltern memory”<sup>79</sup>—unrecognizable for (post)colonial secularism and doubly misrecognized if viewed through the sectarian lens of prevailing politics in postinvasion “democratic” Iraq. We are submerged by the 1991 popular uprisings in the south and north, at the end of

the Kuwait war, that were so violently repressed and betrayed.<sup>80</sup> From the multiplicity of Iraqi women's lives, I feel a stridency and force of friction, which is more than resilience, and that surprises those expecting submissive Muslim women; in the diversity of Iraqi feminisms, we glimpse the imbricated complexity of activism in-between, or beyond, religious/secular and conservative/progressive dichotomies.<sup>81</sup> As we cultivate our *sensibility* for the ebb and flow of the past, the dismembered past lives with us. We remember our ability as Iraqis to find uncanny humor in situations of terror—a humor that intertwines with and does not negate the sadness of the past.<sup>82</sup> And a diasporic Iraqi finds in a French philosopher an echo of the reconfigurations of the past that her lived Muslim practice made proximate.<sup>83</sup>

Memories of *what might have been*—of preserved and hitherto impossible or dead possibilities—are neither retrospective nor nostalgic illusions. In affectively recentering an absence, they make felt the ghost of a different present. This ambivalent affect takes place in the interval of hesitation but does not fill it.<sup>84</sup> The affect of useless memories, it leaves hesitation incomplete, unfulfilled, and hence prolongs this hesitation. It makes room for the possibility of different ways of living, for that which cannot be captured in the logic of utility, which cannot be recuperated as progress—that which helps us survive the everyday when there is no recourse to hope.

## NOTES

I wish to acknowledge the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

1. "Executive Order 13769 of January 27, 2017: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States," *Federal Register* 82, no. 20 (February 1, 2017): 8977–82. With the exception of Syria, the initial executive order does not explicitly name the countries whose nationals are to be banned entry to the United States (for a review period of ninety days). Rather, it cites U.S. Code: "section 217(a)(12) of the INA, 8 U.S.C. 1187(a)(12)" (8978). This is an act (passed December 2015, with countries added in 2016) that restricted the visa waiver program for people who had traveled to Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Syria, Libya, Somalia, or Yemen and for dual nationals of the first four countries.

2. "Executive Order 13780 of March 6, 2017: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States," *Federal Register* 82, no. 45 (March 9, 2017): 13209–19. The countries affected were Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.

3. *Ibid.*, 13211.

4. *Ibid.*, 13215.

5. “Proclamation 9645 of September 24, 2017: Enhanced Vetting Capabilities and Processes for Detecting Attempted Entry into the United States by Terrorists or Other Public-Safety Threats,” *Federal Register* 82, no. 186 (September 27, 2017): 45161–72.

6. *Ibid.*, 45162–64. The changes made were probably to better withstand legal challenge. The countries with travel restrictions were Chad, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen.

7. *Ibid.*, 45163.

8. *Ibid.*

9. In its decision of June 26, 2017, the Supreme Court granted a partial stay of injunctions that had been issued by lower courts against the second executive order. This allowed part of the second travel ban to go into effect, specifically “with respect to foreign nationals who lack any bona fide relationship with a person or entity in the United States.” *Trump v. International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)* and *Trump v. Hawaii*, 137 S. Ct. 2080 (2017), 2087.

10. *Trump v. IRAP*, 138 S. Ct. 542 (2017); and *Trump v. Hawaii*, 138 S. Ct. 542 (2017). The Supreme Court orders granted a full stay of preliminary injunctions issued by lower courts against Trump’s third travel ban (“Proclamation 9645 of September 24, 2017”); these injunctions had been partial (see note 16 below). The Supreme Court has allowed the third travel ban to be applied in full, pending review. The full ban went into effect on December 8, 2017 (its partial reach had been implemented on October 18, 2017). In the meantime, the Ninth and Fourth Circuit Courts of Appeals (partially) affirmed different versions of injunctions on December 22, 2017, and February 15, 2018, respectively, but had to immediately stay those decisions due to the prior Supreme Court orders. *Hawaii v. Trump*, 878 F.3d 662 (9th Cir. 2017); and *IRAP v. Trump*, Nos. 17-2231-33 and 17-2240, 2018 U.S. App. LEXIS 3513 (4th Cir. February 15, 2018).

11. On April 25, 2018, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *Trump v. Hawaii* (this case had gone through the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals). The second case *Trump v. IRAP* (which went through the Fourth Circuit) is on hold pending a decision in the earlier case. See Memorandum for Cross-Respondents, *Trump v. IRAP*, No. 17-1270 (S. Ct. April 11, 2018).

12. “Proclamation 9645 of September 24, 2017,” 45162. It claims a “tailored approach with respect to nonimmigrants” (45164).

13. *Ibid.*, 45164–65.

14. For Muslim citizens and residents of the United States, the implication seems to be that surveillance is not only necessary but already taking place. So it goes for “dual nationals,” whose second country needs to monitor them and share that information with the United States.

15. Since waivers are necessarily case by case (in contrast to “exceptions,” which are categorical), the ability to apply for a waiver provides only an infinitesimal opening, with the management of risk weighing against the applicant and

“consular nonreviewability” impeding the extent to which a decision can be challenged. *Ibid.*, 45168–69. For dual nationals, see 45168. For Green Card holders, see 45171. The difficulty of obtaining a waiver can be perceived in the persistent questions regarding waivers that the Supreme Court posed to the government’s solicitor general during oral arguments in *Trump v. Hawaii*. See Transcript of Oral Arguments, *Trump v. Hawaii*, No. 17-965 (S. Ct. April 25, 2018), 30–38, 76–80.

16. Following the model of the Supreme Court, when it restricted the second travel ban in *Trump v. IRAP*, 137 S. Ct. 2080 (2017), the federal District Court of Maryland and both Fourth and Ninth Circuit Courts of Appeals used *connectedness*—having “a credible claim of a bona fide relationship with a person or entity in the United States” (2088)—as a measure for *exempting* noncitizens from the third travel ban. (This did not apply to North Korea or Venezuela.) *IRAP v. Trump*, 265 F.Supp.3d 570 (D. Md. 2017); *Hawai’i v. Trump*, 878 F.3d 662 (9th Cir. 2017); *IRAP v. Trump*, 2018 U.S. App. LEXIS 3513 (4th Cir. 2018). In contrast, the District Court of Hawai’i did not use *connectedness* to the United States as a norm, only allowing the portions of the ban against North Koreans and Venezuelan officials to be applied; this reflected plaintiffs’ petitions that addressed only discrimination regarding the majority-Muslim countries in the ban, unfortunately leaving other national exclusions unquestioned. *Hawai’i v. Trump*, 265 F.Supp.3d 1140 (D. Haw. 2017). However, this ruling was partially vacated by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, which again instituted the criterion of “bona fide relationship” (*Hawai’i v. Trump*, 878 F.3d 662 [2017]). It should be noted that the Supreme Court effectively suspended the exemption according to “bona fide” *connectedness*—which it itself had introduced to mitigate the second travel ban—by granting a full stay of injunctions against the third travel ban in its orders of December 2017 (*Trump v. IRAP* and *Trump v. Hawaii*, 138 S. Ct. 542 [2017]).

17. The exclusionary logic—by which exemption from the travel ban required “a credible claim of a bona fide relationship with a person or entity in the United States” (*Trump v. IRAP*, 137 S. Ct. 2080 [2017], 2088)—was challenged by some plaintiffs. To their credit, IRAP et al. appealed the limitation to “bona fide” *connectedness* from the start and petitioned the Supreme Court to add the following question to its deliberations on the third travel ban: “Whether the preliminary injunction was properly limited to individuals with a bona fide relationship to a person or entity in the United States.” Petition for Writ of Certiorari, *Trump v. IRAP*, No. 17-1194 (S. Ct. February 23, 2018), ii. IRAP et al. wished their case to be consolidated with *Trump v. Hawaii*; however, their case was put on hold pending the outcome of that earlier case (see Memorandum for Cross-Respondents, *Trump v. IRAP*, No. 17-1270 [S. Ct. April 11, 2018]). Hence the question of “bona fide relationship” was not considered by the Supreme Court in the oral arguments of *Trump v. Hawaii*, which it heard on April 25, 2018.

18. This “injunctive relief” has proved short-lived, since the Supreme Court orders of December 2017 (*Trump v. IRAP* and *Trump v. Hawaii*, 138 S. Ct. 542 [2017]) granted a stay on all injunctions and allowed the full weight of the third travel ban to be applied. The third travel ban makes explicit that its intention is to ban even those foreign nationals of designated countries “who have a credible claim of a bona fide relationship with a person or entity in the United States” (“Proclamation 9645 of September 24, 2017,” 45171). For “close family members” (defined narrowly as “spouse, child, or parent”) and for those with “significant contacts with the United States,” it provides the unpredictability of case-by-case waivers, weighted against risk assessment and insufficient data, not categorical exceptions (45168–69).

19. But the cost of such an action would likely mean being refused entry to the United States in the future.

20. This is a variation on María Lugones’s concept of “world-traveling,” albeit more pessimistic. I am closer to Mariana Ortega’s critical understanding of world-traveling and in-betweenness, which includes survival and resistance but not necessarily playfulness. Mariana Ortega, *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 133–36; María Lugones, “Playfulness, ‘World’-Traveling, and Loving Perception,” *Hypatia* 2, no. 2 (1987): 3–19.

21. *IRAP v. Trump*, 2018 U.S. App. LEXIS 3513, at 66. This is a *constructed* invisibility that relies on the attitude of ignorance and disregard (habitual or willful) of dominant U.S.-centric perceivers. Indeed, the “tailored approach” of the third travel ban can be read as an attempt to cover over the racial and imperial logic of borders, to make them invisible (“Proclamation 9645 of September 24, 2017,” 45164)—at least for those willing to look away. By pointing to criteria of information-sharing and risk assessment and by listing the inadequacies of each of the targeted countries individually (albeit in vague and redacted terms), the travel ban projects a mask of neutrality (45162–67). In the oral arguments to the Supreme Court in *Trump v. Hawaii*, the government’s solicitor general emphasized the “tailored” nature of the proclamation, its “neutral baseline,” and its “neutral criteria.” See Transcript of Oral Arguments, *Trump v. Hawaii*, No. 17-965 (S. Ct. April 25, 2018), 10, 15, 19, 29. More worrying was the admission of respondents’ council that this proclamation could pass—from a constitutional point of view (though not a statutory one)—were the context of anti-Muslim animus generated by Trump’s statements and tweets in office and the history of the past two executive orders to be disregarded, or were Trump to have disavowed his statements (61–66, 68–71). (This seems to fall in line with how the constitutionality question, regarding the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, has been previously addressed.) In response, the government’s argument was that Trump had renounced “the Muslim ban” and “praised Islam as one of the great countries [*sic*] of the world” (81). What becomes clear listening to the oral arguments is how a tailored racism could be constructed—masked and rationalized—under the thin guise of “foreign policy and national security” (82). After my essay went to press, the Supreme Court issued a decision in *Trump v. Hawaii*, supporting rather than undermining this tailored racism (see note 75).

22. While a longer argument is needed than I have space for, I understand *Iraqiness* to be racialized as an occupied and “formerly” colonized national formation—*damnés* in Frantz Fanon’s sense. See Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality of Being,” *Cultural Studies* 21 (2007): 240–70. Since this colonization and destructuring is continuing, I say “formerly” with a grain of salt. While Arabs became legally “white” in the United States, they have historically, and certainly since 2001, been racialized as “in-between” and “not-quite-white,” especially when they are also Muslim. Sarah Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 157. Racialization, here, includes “cultural” racisms that are also forms of bodily, temporal, imaginary, and geographic othering.

23. The possibility of movement can serve as a proxy for racialization. Ashley Bohrer’s essay in this volume shows how universal human rights of travel and commerce provided a “color-blind” justification for early modern colonization and racism in the Americas.

24. For racialized and foreign bodies, the border is not invisible. Indeed, I would be tempted to describe a passport as bodily extension, *stuck* prosthetic—or phantom limb—at once with dis-abling weight and painful, sensiblizing dimensions. Hence, *living with, or through, a passport* is a particular modality of “living in the borderlands,” to recall Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987), 25, 42.

25. Specifically, the deportation of *taba’iyya* by Saddam Hussein in the lead-up to the war with Iran in 1980. *Taba’iyya* were predominantly Shi’a Iraqis registered as of “Iranian dependency” (a status passed down from the days of Ottoman rule). They were taken from their homes and expelled to the border with Iran, often entire families but sometimes breaking up families. Neighbors would disappear overnight, their houses confiscated.

26. Trump’s travel bans, for all their arbitrary bluntness, are not new. A longer analysis is needed to show how they both reiterate and differently inflect U.S. immigration law, in particular the history of immigration and naturalization law prior to 1965, which discriminated based on national origin, ethnicity, and prior to that “racial prerequisite.”

27. *Sensible* is used in a similar vein in *banlieues sensibles* or *quartier sensible*—as code for a “difficult” neighborhood, whose inhabitants generally come from immigrant backgrounds (Arab, Muslim, North African, African, or nonwhite, even when no longer first generation). See this sense of *sensible* in *Le Nouveau Petit Robert: Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française* (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert–VUEF, 2003).

28. Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience: “Throwing Like a Girl” and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

29. Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952), 110. See also Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris: La Découverte, 2002), 280, 282.



30. Henri Bergson, *La pensée et le mouvant* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1938), 101–2.
31. Gilles Deleuze, *Critique et clinique* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1993), 135–43.
32. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *L'Œil et l'Esprit* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1964).
33. Alia Al-Saji, "A Phenomenology of Hesitation: Interrupting Racializing Habits of Seeing," in *Living Alterities: Phenomenology, Embodiment, and Race*, ed. Emily Lee (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), 150–55.
34. Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 18.
35. For more on ignorance, see José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Kristie Dotson on "contributory injustice" in "A Cautionary Tale: On Limiting Epistemic Oppression," *Frontiers* 33, no. 1 (2012): 24–47; and Mariana Ortega, "Being Lovingly, Knowingly Ignorant: White Feminism and Women of Color," *Hypatia* 21, no. 3 (2006): 56–74. I cite Ortega's reformulation of *looking, listening* that should not be separated from *checking and questioning* (especially when interpreting women of color) in my early concept of critical-ethical vision as "seeing that listens, checks and questions" (a precursor to hesitation). See my "A Phenomenology of Critical-Ethical Vision," *Chiasmi* 11 (2009): 391 (contra Robin James's reading in this volume, which elides this critical dimension of my concept).
36. Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France," *Public Culture* 23, no. 1 (2011): 121–56.
37. To name a few, Linda Martín Alcoff, Kristie Dotson, José Medina, Charles Mills, Mariana Ortega, Falguni Sheth, Shannon Sullivan, and Ann Laura Stoler. In this essay, I prefer to use the term *disregard* because of its affective connotations and because it can comprise different layers of not noticing and misperception (knowingly willful, complicit, negligent, complaisant)—while retaining agential responsibility for our own passivities and an undercurrent of stubbornness or recalcitrance. This ambivalence is conveyed by Fanon when he says, "L'Européen sait et ne sait pas" (*Peau noire, masques blancs*, 192). Here, I am sympathetic to the concepts of "active ignorance" or "meta-ignorance" described by José Medina, since his understanding of activity includes the epistemic attitudes, habits, and vices that maintain ignorance, as well as complicity in oppressive situations (*Epistemology of Resistance*, 39, 107, 141). I am also sympathetic to Ann Stoler's "imperial dispositions of disregard" that capture the ambivalence, messiness, and "self-deception" involved in holding together knowing and ignoring activities in everyday colonial life. Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 247–49, 255–58. But I do not call disregard "active," because my interest, beyond the active/passive dichotomy, is in how we participate in the social-historical institution of a phenomenological field of colonial meaning and racial difference that prefigures and motivates what is worth noticing.

38. Fanon coins the phrase “ankylose affective du blanc” (*Peau noire, masques blancs*, 119). Despite both outwardly resembling paralysis, “tetanization” and “affective ankylosis” point to contrasting ways of feeling the weight of the past and hesitating. The first describes the hypersensibility and bodily sensitivity of racialized and colonized *damnés*. The second captures the affective rigidity of colonial subjects, their ability to compartmentalize and freeze the histories from which they stem, and the recalcitrant disregard and lack of hesitation of racializing habits of perception.

39. I find Saidiya Hartman’s sense of *redress* particularly compelling, since she makes clear that it cannot *heal* the past but is experienced as loss and discontinuity. Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 73–74.

40. This means that we do not know what will come with a philosophical reworking.

41. I describe the past as “ontological” because I want a concept of the past that does justice, at once, to its weight and incompleteness. This is to acknowledge both that it could have been otherwise and that contingency has differentially become “necessity,” structurally grounding our lived present. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1945), 208–9. In this de-essentialized ontology, conditions of possibility not only are structuring *of* experience, but also arise and transform immanently *within* it.

42. Henri Bergson, “Le souvenir du présent et la fausse reconnaissance,” in *L'énergie spirituelle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1919), 110–52; Gilles Deleuze, *Le bergsonisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966).

43. Henri Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1927 [1889]), 75–77.

44. Merleau-Ponty says: “Il y a de moi au passé une épaisseur . . . qui est obstacle et liaison.” Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *L'Institution, La Passivité, Notes de cours au Collège de France, 1954–1955* (Paris: Éditions Belin, 2003), 36.

45. Merleau-Ponty describes the past as “une présence ambiguë [ambiguous presence]” in *Phénoménologie de la perception*, 422. He understands temporal difference in terms of the structure of *chiasm* in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964)—a structure that, I would argue, is not fully reversible.

46. Bergson, *La pensée et le mouvant*, 14–15.

47. Bergson, *L'énergie spirituelle*, 131–32. Also Henri Bergson, *L'évolution créatrice* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1941 [1907]), 248, where he uses the image of rising and condensing vapor.

48. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma 2, L'image-temps* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985), 109; Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 81. Deleuze is citing Bergson, *L'énergie spirituelle*, 131–32. Deleuze also provides a diagram (*Cinéma 2*, 109/*Cinema 2*, 295).

49. Bergson, *L'énergie spirituelle*, 130, 135–36.

50. Merleau-Ponty has described the invisible as the “lining [*doublure*]” of the visible in his later work (*L'Œil et l'Esprit*, 85).

51. A concept with multiple uses from Merleau-Ponty and Levinas to Derrida and Deleuze.

52. Merleau-Ponty evokes “*simultanéité*” *passé-présent* in the working notes to *Le visible et l'invisible*, 297. *Simultaneity* is in quotation marks since it belongs to a narrow way of construing past and present as separate instants whose coexistence is a challenge for thought. In contrast, Merleau-Ponty holds that the past already *adheres* to the present, which is not an instant but “dimensional” (297). In the same note, time is described as a “vortex [*tourbillon*]” (298).

53. Henri Bergson, *Matière et mémoire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1939 [1896]), chap. 3.

54. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma 1, L'image-mouvement* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1983), 21.

55. Deleuze, *Cinéma 2*, 156–57/*Cinéma 2*, 119–20.

56. Bergson, *Matière et mémoire*, 184–85, 190.

57. My point is that there can be creation of possibility. While Bergson is usually read as dismissing the idea of the possible, I have argued elsewhere that he only rejects it when it is a projection of the present onto future. Creation of possibility (“retrograde movement”) within the relation past-present is not simply illusion but integral to nonlinear duration. Bergson, *La pensée et le mouvant*, 13–15, 109–16; Alia Al-Saji, “When Thinking Hesitates: Philosophy as Prosthesis and Transformative Vision,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 50, no. 2 (2012): 351–61.

58. Bergson, *L'évolution créatrice*, 19. These are more than metaphors (16). Bergson does not read the past *as if* it were a living body that grows, ages, and scars; rather, he learns to think the being of the past from life and aging. Beyond Bergson, I try to render the mind/body, life/matter (and recollection/habit) distinctions inoperative with respect to the past.

59. I thank Gary Wilder for bringing to my attention Michel Serres’s “crumpled handkerchief.” Since I had completed this essay before it came to my attention, I can only address Serres’s concept briefly. Serres describes a topological time where points that were distant (when the handkerchief was laid flat) become proximate (when it is crumpled in one’s pocket). Michel Serres, with Bruno Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*, trans. R. Lapidus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 60. My theory differs from Serres’s in three important respects. First, his “polychronic” picture collapses the difference of past-present and the asymmetry of future-past; all points of time can touch and be transposed, even though Latour pushes Serres to articulate justifications or means to explain this. For me, it is the “memory of the present” that *suggests* reconfiguration or folding of the past. Second, Serres speaks of crumpling in terms of connections (64) but not *transformations between* folds (which I think of as irreversible chemical reactions in living dough). Indeed, because he uses fabric, the folding would seem to be reversible (he mentions tearing, but its materiality is not

explored [60]). Serres references the *Baker transformation* later in the interview (65) but does not address the materiality of kneading dough. Third, Serres's method is one of *rapidity*, while I use hesitation to induce a slowing down; I want to dwell on the intermediary steps, in the intervals, which Serres skips over (67–69).

60. Deleuze, *Cinéma 2*, 156/*Cinema 2*, 119. What the Baker transformation means, in Deleuze's account of cinema, is that regions of the past continually fragment as they are rearranged, showing their "technical stress" (158/120). It is important to critically assess this mathematical model by turning to its prior use in Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order out of Chaos* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1984), 269–77. As Prigogine and Stengers note, the Baker transformation is "deterministic" and reversible for a defined point on the surface (269–70). But it models an unstable dynamical system with stochastic, probabilistic behavior whenever the evolution of a "region"—with small uncertainty in the initial conditions—is concerned. Here randomness and irreversibility emerge (276). I note that this *irreversibility*—for which Prigogine and Stengers argue extensively—is central to my account of the past but ignored in Deleuze's reference.

61. I thank Mariana Ortega and Cynthia Paccacerqua for reminding me of Anzaldúa's dough. In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa evokes the making of tortillas to understand *la mestiza* as "an act of kneading" (103). Crucially, "we" are constituted from every ingredient, utensil, material support, and step of the process, including grinding and kneading motions and the hungry mouth (103–4). This is "alchemical work" (Anzaldúa cites Prigogine to stress that substances interact unpredictably to produce new and more complex structures [103, 120]). Anzaldúa reminds me to emphasize that the past is not separate matter that consciousness kneads and reconfigures; rather, *we are the dough*, we are our past, which folds and unfolds itself, keeping in its material texture the trace of this duration.

62. See Bergson, *L'évolution créatrice*, for the image of the past as "boule de neige" (2) and "tendance" (5).

63. I owe *entr'ouvert* to Vladimir Jankélévitch, who uses it in his critical reading of Bergson on religion (specifically Judaism), though not with respect to the past. Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Henri Bergson* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), 274–76.

64. Bergson, *Matière et mémoire*, 181.

65. Deleuze reads Bergson's cone as "[un] état complet de coexistence," containing virtual levels "marquant tous les intervalles possibles dans cette coexistence"; these intervals are "purement idéels" (*Le bergsonisme*, 55).

66. Bergson, *Matière et mémoire*, 272. Versions of the past should not be understood to ideally precede their formation through collective and individual experience in the present.

67. In *Matière et mémoire*, Bergson also diagnoses aphasia not as loss or destruction of memory but as failures in "attentive recognition," in how bodies actualize the past (118). But Stoler's and Bergson's accounts diverge on the question of activity.

68. Stoler, "Colonial Aphasia," 141, 151–52 (citing Serguei Oushakine), 154–55.
69. I am recalling "the rot remains" from the poem "Ruins of a Great House" by Derek Walcott, where he describes empire as "ulcerous crime" and "rotting lime." Cited in Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 1–2. I intend "rot" not as erasure but as fragmentation and distortion.
70. Edouard Glissant, *Le discours antillais* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1997), 226; translation mine.
71. Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, 188, 209.
72. For *engluer*, see *ibid.*, 32, 224. For muscular spasms, see Fanon, *Les damnés*, 280.
73. For "coevalness," see Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014 [1983]). For how "coloniality" constructs this linear time, see Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from the South* 1, no. 3 (2000): 533–80. Also see Walter Mignolo's essay in this volume.
74. Beginning with the Supreme Court in *Trump v. IRAP*, 137 S. Ct. 2080 (2017), which allowed the second ban to take effect "with respect to foreign nationals who lack any bona fide relationship with a person or entity in the United States" (2087). See notes 9 and 16. While this qualification seemed to mitigate the harm of the ban and render it less objectionable for some, there was resistance; in particular, I note the objections of IRAP et al. in *Petition for Writ of Certiorari, Trump v. IRAP*, No. 17-1194 (S. Ct. February 23, 2018). See note 17.
75. Though it is difficult to predict Supreme Court decisions, I suspect that some form of travel ban will remain—or be reinstated—whether the third ban in its entirety or a qualified version that exempts those with "bona fide" relationships to the United States. The two decisions from the Ninth and Fourth Circuit Courts of Appeals that have proceeded to the Supreme Court affirm, at least, a qualified ban. *Hawai'i v. Trump*, 878 F.3d 662 (9th Cir. 2017); and *IRAP v. Trump*, 2018 U.S. App. LEXIS 3513 (4th Cir. 2018). Oral arguments in *Trump v. Hawaii* were heard by the Supreme Court on April 25, 2018; *Trump v. IRAP* is on hold pending the former case. Listening to oral arguments, we learn that the text of the third travel ban "does not look at all like a Muslim ban" to some members of the Supreme Court (Transcript of Oral Arguments, *Trump v. Hawaii*, No. 17-965 [S. Ct. April 25, 2018], 66). This raises the specter of a "tailored" travel ban that could pass—at least on constitutional grounds—as long as it disguises Muslim exclusion under national security and information-management criteria and so long as the president disavows his anti-Muslim past. My essay had already gone to press when the Supreme Court issued its decision in *Trump v. Hawaii* on June 26, 2018. This decision unfortunately confirmed my prediction; the third travel ban was upheld and injunctions limiting it were struck down. *Trump v. Hawaii*, No. 17-965 (S. Ct. June 26, 2018).

76. Aspirational whiteness can be found in early Arab immigrants' petitions for inclusion in the United States (more successful when they were Christian, from what was then Syria). Gualtieri, *Between Arab and White*, 76–78.

77. Nadjé Sadig Al-Ali, *Iraqi Women: Untold Stories from 1948 to the Present* (London: Zed Books, 2007).

78. Pierre-Jean Luizard, *La formation de l'Irak contemporain: Le rôle politique des ulémas chiïtes à la fin de la domination ottomane et au moment de la création de l'état irakien* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2002), 381–443.

79. Zahra Ali, *Women and Gender in Iraq: Between Nation-Building and Fragmentation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 50.

80. We are buoyed, then go under, with the 1958 “postcolonial” Iraqi republic, which in its short-lived and contentious life turned oil revenues toward social justice but ended with a violent Ba’thist coup.

81. *Ibid.*, 246–90.

82. See, for example, Ahmed Saadawi’s novel *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (Freiberg: Al-Kamel Verlag, 2013).

83. In the Shi’a tradition, the door of *ijtihad* (striving or theological interpretation that innovates) remains open; one chooses which *marja’* (interpretative authority) to follow. There are also other streams in Islam for which the past is open; significant for understanding this is Muhammad Iqbal, who brings Islam and Bergson together. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 40–44; see Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *Bergson postcolonial* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2011), 109–12.

84. Deleuze, *Cinéma 1*, 96.