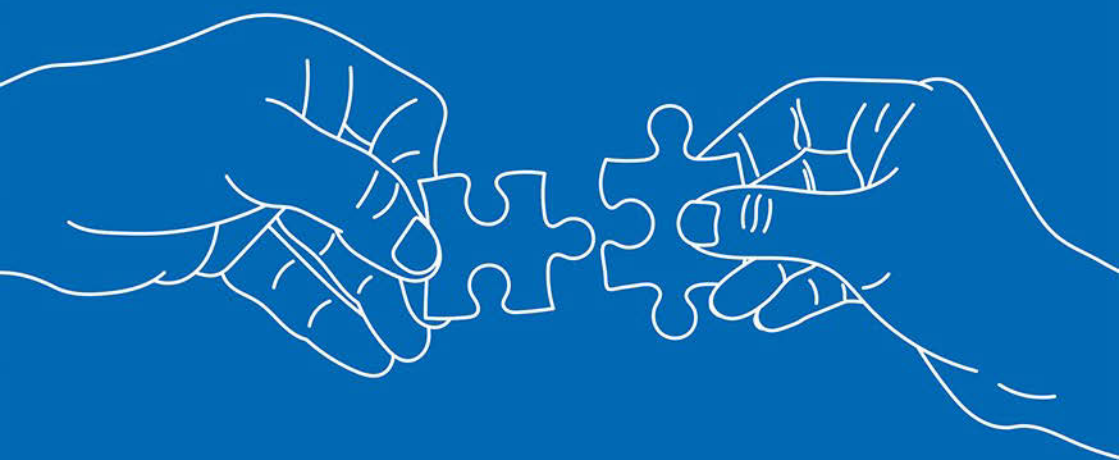


Kerstin Schmidt, Joost van Loon (Hg.)

HERAUSFORDERUNG SOLIDARITÄT

Konzepte – Kontroversen – Perspektiven



[transcript] K'Universale

INTERDISZIPLINÄRE DISKURSE
ZU FRAGEN DER ZEIT

Kerstin Schmidt, Joost van Loon (Hg.)
Herausforderung Solidarität

Editorial

Die Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt greift in einer speziellen interdisziplinären Vortragsreihe regelmäßig bedeutsame und drängende Fragen gegenwärtiger Gesellschaften auf. In den *K'Universale*-Ringvorlesungen stellen Expertinnen und Experten aus verschiedenen wissenschaftlichen Disziplinen und ausgewiesene Spezialistinnen und Spezialisten aus außeruniversitären Feldern ihre Zugänge zum jeweiligen Thema vor. Sie eröffnen damit einen Diskursraum und ein Übungsfeld zum verantworteten Umgang mit gesellschaftlichen Grundsatzzfragen. In ihrer Pluralität fordert die Vortragsreihe zu eigener Positionierung heraus.

Die Buchreihe *K'Universale – Interdisziplinäre Diskurse zu Fragen der Zeit* macht die Beiträge der jeweiligen Ringvorlesung zugänglich und ergänzt sie mit weiteren Stimmen aus dem geistes- und kulturwissenschaftlichen Spektrum.

Die Reihe wird herausgegeben von Gabriele Gien, Ulrich Kropac, Bernhard Sill und Angela Treiber.

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Kerstin Schmidt, Joost van Loon (Hg.)

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Just like the previous volumes in the series, this volume also emerged from a lecture series at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. We would like to thank the authors for their dedicated contribution to this volume and also the other speakers who contributed to the lecture series in various formats. We would like to thank Dr. Michael Winklmann for organizing the events in the winter semester 2020/21, for preparing the manuscript and for his dedicated and valuable cooperation. Our thanks also go to the Presidential Board of the University for generously covering the printing costs. Furthermore, we would like to thank transcript Verlag for including this volume in their publishing program.

Eichstätt, January 2024
The editors

Introduction

Kerstin Schmidt & Joost van Loon

Climate change, the destruction of rainforests and biomass, the rapid collapse of biodiversity, the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the many ongoing violent conflicts and wars throughout the world are but a tip of the iceberg when considering the apocalyptic unravelling of planet earth in the 21st century. It is becoming increasingly difficult to provide convincing arguments against the assertion that we are doomed. In the face of this, academic writing on a relatively abstract concept such as “solidarity” may indeed seem somewhat futile. It is as if readers are being asked to completely bracket off the devastating reality of a planetary apocalypse in favour of indulging in comparatively frivolous ruminations about how the world could have been a better place if only ...

However, what else can academics do? We are condemned to seek possibilities of linking analyses with speculations about how improvements could be made to human and non-human lives. This is the calling of the sciences and humanities since their inception, not only in the so called Age of Enlightenment in Europe, but long before it, in civilizations such as those of India, China, Egypt, Persia and ancient Greece. This work is a bit like that of the orchestra on the Titanic as it was sinking into the depths of the Atlantic Ocean: a band played on amidst the growing panic and chaos of a realization that the end is coming.

In the face of this planetary apocalyptic damnation, we decided to take a closer look at the concept of solidarity as it seems aptly fit to function as a last beacon of hope. As a concept that appears in both broad public as well as academic discourse, solidarity has been invoked, almost exclusively, to refer to something positive. Regardless of the substance, the act of showing solidarity is considered valuable. In the social sciences, solidarity can also be deployed more technically as a stand-in for “social bond”. A well-known example here is the work of Emile Durkheim, who in his *Division of Labour*¹ argued that as industrial society unfolds, societal integration inevitably and increasingly depends on what he referred to as “organic solidarity” to compensate for the intensification of functional differentiation. He distinguished between organic solidarity and mechanical solidarity to contrast modern and pre-

1 Durkheim, Émile: *De la division du travail social*, Paris, Félix Alcan, 1893.

modern modes of sociality. Whereas mechanical solidarity derives from “identities” related to similar interests and existential conditions and are therefore highly suitable for small scale kinship-based and tribal life forms, organic solidarity is the ability to abstract from concrete interests, related to immediate experiences, to develop a collective consciousness able to imagine a “greater good” that incorporates different interests and therefore potential conflicts.

However, although apparently more analytical and neutral, Durkheim’s sociology does not question the benevolent nature of solidarity. Solidarity is implied as being a prerequisite for the survival of human collectives. In this sense, his use of the concept is very similar to its earlier deployment in the most pivotal text of the modern social teachings of the Catholic Church, *Rerum Novarum*, by the then Pope Leo XIII.² Here, the concept of solidarity functions as a political abstraction of the practice of “neighbourly love”.³ The idea of neighbours in an urbanized, industrial society is indeed based on the universal condition of the stranger, as famously deployed by sociologists such as Georg Simmel and later echoed by (among others) Zygmunt Bauman.⁴

When Émile Durkheim commenced his project of establishing Sociology as an independent academic discipline in France, it was exactly during the time that the Catholic Church had opened up the “social question” for an expansion of the Church into the realm of labour relations in industrialized countries. Slavery and colonial exploitation were largely absent from such discussions, as were questions surrounding gender relations. As many contributors to this edited collection have demonstrated (most notably Otoo, Earnshaw, Oldehus, Covi, Marchi and Gibson) those absences have had major repercussions for the way in which leading concepts of solidarity have also functioned as vehicles for securing privileges by means of excluding other voices. A continuously recurrent example of this is the false opposition between solidarity and freedom, which presupposes a notion of a sovereign individual, that by its very historical-material anchoring is the patriarchal bourgeois projection of white masculinity that working class men were invited to aspire to as a means of deflecting broader collective formations.

However, even in this more limited domain of class struggle, the political stakes were extremely high, as in many European countries as well as the USA there was a growing dissatisfaction with the rampant exploitation of the many by the few. Those

2 *Rerum novarum. Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on the Conditions of Labor.* https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html

3 This conception reflects three of the five variants of solidarity as listed by Andreas Wittel and Götz Bachmann in this volume: cohesion, care and concern and directly opposes the two remaining ones: power and struggle.

4 Simmel, George: The stranger. In G. Simmel (Ed.). *On individuality and social forms.* Chicago University Press, 1973, 143–149. Bauman, Zygmunt: ‘Modernity and Ambivalence’ in M. Featherstone (ed.) *Global Culture,* London, Sage, 1990, 143–169.

adversely affected by socio-economic inequality started to organize themselves in trade unions and activist movements – which in some cases included broader alliances such as those with suffragettes and abolitionists – and posed a real threat to the status quo of bourgeois society as well as the hegemony of the nation state. *Rerum Novarum* should thus be understood as an attempt by the Church to strengthen its function as part of maintaining hegemonic nationalism (which strongly relied on the exploitation of women, children and those with non-white skin) as a new covenant regulating the “separation” of Church and State.

On the one hand, *Rerum Novarum* addressed “the few”; that is, those whose wealth is based on and reproduced by ownership of capital c.q. the means of production. They were confronted with a figure of Jesus Christ who had told a rich man that he should give all his possessions to the poor and follow him, to obtain salvation. Jesus was famously quoted as saying: “It is easier for a camel to crawl through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God”.⁵ Even if Jesus was actually stressing that it was impossible for a human being to obtain salvation without the grace of God, he was certainly not denying that wealth could become a major obstacle if one becomes attached to it.⁶ A rich man had to become poor to become righteous.

On the other hand, *Rerum Novarum* addressed the many (but not everyone) and called upon them to be reasonable with their demands and loyal to their masters. They should be generally content with their plight and not politicize inequality as injustice. Instead, they should negotiate in good faith, taking into account the heavier burden that was allegedly placed on the shoulders of their masters. It is in this vein, that men and women (even if largely absent from the text) are called to sacrifice their bodies, their health, their autonomy, either in the family, on the cotton fields, the factory or in the army. It is always the many who are asked by representatives of the few to sacrifice their lives for the sake of “their” nation.

Hence, we can see two different modalities in which solidarity is being invoked (or as O'Connor in his contribution to this volume calls it “modal concepts of solidarity”): as a sacrifice of wealth for the sake of justice (either through charity or through taxation) and as a sacrifice of personal autonomy and even well-being for the sake of peace. At that time, this dual casting within *Rerum Novarum* provided the defenders of the national hegemon an excellent opportunity to build a bridge across the class divide where both interest groups⁷ (might we still call them classes?) could meet each

5 Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25 and Luke 18:25. Apparently, this was such a remarkable and important event that three of the four gospels referred to it.

6 This is very similar in the teachings of Buddha (the Noble Eightfold Path) and resonates strongly with what Patrick O'Connor in his contribution refers to a “modal concept of solidarity”, namely as an intelligible form-of-life.

7 It is again clear that the reduction of the problematic of solidarity to that of class struggle obfuscated issues related to gender and race. That is, the life forms propagated by *Rerum*

other somewhere in middle of that which had been presented as a win-win situation for more justice and more peace.

Durkheim was equally interested in sustaining the national hegemon, which he simply referred to as “society”. His concern too was with the fragile order of industrial capitalism and all its undesirable side effects. By reducing (a selection of) the evils of industrial capitalism to mere moral deficiencies, *Rerum Novarum* provided a call to practicing solidarity as a means to obtain salvation. This was recognized by Durkheim while at the same time stripped of its apparent religious ethos. Durkheim forged an alliance between this modern religious doctrine and a series of other popular ideas of the late 19th century, in particular liberal humanism and evolutionary biology. Humanism, world religions and evolutionary biology have all informed these sociological reflections and have enabled Durkheim to develop his discipline as a “science of morals”⁸ to become an alternative to the cold-hearted calculations of the homo economicus, the cynical opportunism of the Machiavellian homo politicus (including the sociobiology of Herbert Spencer) and the hysterical romanticism of nihilism. Indeed, solidarity had become the universal societal antidote against everything that threatened the allegedly moral embedding of the social order.

An imminent critique of *Rerum Novarum* starts with that which has been omitted from it, even though these omissions are still part of the very logical premise of the entire exercise. The absence of any sustained analysis of colonialism and patriarchy as part of the social question - that is the reduction of the social question to national issues of labour relations that exclude domestic labour and the labour involved in childbirth as well as the modes of economic exploitation that involved slave labour and forced labour – resulted in a subordination of the teachings of Christ to that of the interests on nationhood, which thus undermined the very catholic appeal of the encyclical.

Although not engaged in a theological analysis of the solidarity, Giovanna Covi – in her contribution to this edited collection – provides us which a more recognizably Christian conception of solidarity. She draws on a concept of mercy that is “cast outside a relationship of sovereignty”, which empowers those who are excluded from the luxury of being able to show compassion or pity, as this presupposes the ability to exercise dominion over others. Following Covi, this means that mercy as a mode of solidarity does not reside with the dominant or with domination, but originates from something more universal: motherly love. For Catholics, motherly love is immediately associated with the Marian principles of Christian life forms. By being predominantly concerned with the Petrine principles of the Church, *Rerum*

Novarum under the aegis of solidarity could easily coexist with various other forms of exploitation, for example within families or in colonial settings.

8 Durkheim, Émile: *Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique*, Paris, Payot, 1894.

Novarum cannot conceive of mercy as operating outside of sovereignty and is thus unable to avoid its link with guilt.

It is for this reason that in this volume Anna-Lena Oldehus cites bell hooks in a critique of White Feminism to deploy a universal notion of women's victimhood as the basis for its call for solidarity. Victimization still invokes notions of guilt, not merely in terms of inculpating others, but above all by exculpating the self. By assuming "the standpoint" of "the woman", White Feminism created its own version of the view from nowhere.⁹ The comfortable "view from nowhere" which resembles the bourgeois ideal of novel-readership (and which Benedict Anderson explicitly referred to as a key aspect of the formation of nationalism¹⁰), is being challenged and disrupted (for example through the selective provocation of "white tears") by changes in modes of address, points of view and even the deployment of different languages. Instead of a unified victimhood, which is a white privilege, Oldehus stresses that "speaking through difference" is an asset for solidarity.

Decolonial and Feminist readings thus generate notions of solidarity that do not fit in with those of Durkheim or *Rerum Novarum*. It is no coincidence that such alternative modes of thought stem from literary criticism rather than the social or political sciences. It is one of the main challenges of this edited collection, that we have tried to assemble a truly interdisciplinary bricolage. This is not to dismiss the contributions from the more traditional "disciplines", that have had long track records of wrestling with the intersections between analytical and normative engagements with solidarity. They do have been for more open to engaging with modal concepts of solidarity that do not presuppose a notion of sovereign individuality and a view from nowhere. What all have in common, however, is the predicament that the planet is now at a critical existential limit and we are all in this together; that is, the need for solidarity may have become an actual occasion of existential necessity and therefore an ontological rather than a moral obligation.

It is perhaps wise, therefore, to start from the other side of the fence. One thing that is somewhat remarkable about the generic moral positivity associated with the term solidarity is the fading away of its actual efficacy in the neo liberal world order, especially since the collapse of the welfare state as an organizing principle of late capitalist society. For Neoliberals, solidarity had become too expensive. Being an offspring of the unholy trinity of the cold-hearted homo economicus (which has always been the anchor point of liberalism), the deceitful homo politicus of Machievellian power manipulations and the cynical nihilist of anarcho-fascist death cults,

9 Also see: Haraway, Donna: "Situated Knowledges: The Sciences Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No.3, p. 575–599, 1988.

10 Anderson, Benedict: *Imagined Communities, Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 1983.

Neoliberalism unapologetically embraces what Albert O Hirschmann referred to as “interest-driven calculations” as opposed to passion-driven loyalty.¹¹

Whereas Jörg Althammer, in his contribution, rightly points out that even the most radical notions of “free markets” require mutual trust and a willingness to cooperate, he also makes it clear that an economic ethics of solidarity requires structural, institutional settings that guarantee a symmetrical distribution of bargaining power as well as a reservation wage that is at least equal to “the costs of living”. Exactly these two institutional pillars of a functional market economy have been undercut by the neoliberal onslaught.

In their contribution to this volume, Andreas Wittel and Götz Bachmann helpfully list five versions of solidarity, that each highlight a core concept: “cohesion, care (for the weak), power, struggle, and concern. All contributions to this volume – at least implicitly – invoke more than one of these concepts, but with different emphases. Whereas everyone acknowledges that solidarity implies cohesion, almost all also stress the need to consider care in relation to vulnerability as well asymmetrical power relations that establish certain privileges and entitlements as beyond incultation. It is in relation to those, that the last two elements, struggle and concern, become inevitable. What is clear that struggle and concern make visible that solidarity can only be a genuine possibility, if it does not presuppose a view from nowhere, but instead are bound by interests.

Technologically enhanced by several generations of digital calculation machines, neoliberalism does not need to rely on mobilizing passions to secure its ability to establish a hegemonic world order, even if it often still did so (for example on terms of what Stuart Hall described with reference to the Thatcher governments in the UK as “authoritarian populism”).¹² For a neoliberal technocratic hegemony, solidarity is at best a cheap asset and at worst an expensive liability.

We are now forty years into the neoliberal vortex and cracks are beginning to appear. Not only have the invisible costs in terms of ecological destruction become visible and noticeable and also start to have actual financial implications, we also face the mounting costs of collapsing finance systems, the fallout from warfare in terms of refugees as well as lasting global political instability, the costs of having to do politics with organized crime that managed to exploit the lack of regulation and global anarchy deliberately created by the neoliberal movement to increase the escape velocity of capital and – of course – the return of cynical, passionate interests that are directly poised against the universal aspirations of modern enlightenment. It is exactly at this intersection of global crises, that calls for more solidarity

11 Hirschmann, Albert O.: *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*, Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 2004.

12 Hall, Stuart, Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clark J., and Roberts, B.: *Policing the Crisis, Mugging, the State and Law and Order*, London, McMillan Press, 1978.

are being invoked as the only remaining remedy against all ills we – especially when we identify as the hegemonic global north of western imperialism – have bestowed onto the entire planet. The cooling down of solidarity in the neo liberal world order has reached a point where the order is collapsing and perhaps in need of a great reset, at least this is what is often suggested by those who stir fear for a so-called “Great Reset”.¹³

Therefore, in this edited collection, which is partly based on a lecture series under the title of *K-Universale: Zur Frage der Solidarität: Konzepte – Kontroversen – Perspektiven* (on the question of solidarity: concepts – controversies – perspectives) which (predominantly in a digital format) took place at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt between October 2020 and February 2021, we raised the question why in times of crisis (this was in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic before vaccination campaigns had been rolled out), there always seems to be an increased call for “more solidarity”?¹⁴ This calling is often made without any qualification or critical reflection even if it is being offered as the only solution to the crises we currently face.

The objective of this edited collection is to develop a critical, multidisciplinary contextualization of the “big idea” of solidarity, which addresses both past and present controversies, socio-cultural and epistemic-political assumptions, and wider problems that a facile use of the concept of solidarity cannot cover up. It contains contributions from a wide range of academic disciplines and research fields, which makes clear that the concept of solidarity tends to shift shape according to the discursive formation it is being called up.

However, rather than emphasizing that the concept is fluid, we should consider an alternative exercise in social and political thought, including those invoked in cultural practices, namely one that considers solidarity as a *real abstraction*. Here, we are not implying some kind of magical mimesis, resonating with Marx’ critique of capitalism, by contrast we would like to create space for the idea that solidarity is a

13 The phrase “the Great Reset” is the title of a programme developed by the World Economic Forum as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The programme, which is spear headed by Klaus Schwab, aims to establish a global economic recovery and stabilization by means of modes of global governance that are likely to marginalize or completely bypass democratically elected institutions. For this reason, it has been widely referenced as proof of the existence of a globalist conspiracy. See, Schwab, Klaus and Mallaret, Thierry: *Covid-19: The Great Reset*, Davos, World Economic Forum, 2020. It was first, however, coined as the title of a book published in the wake of the global finance crisis of 2007/2008 by Richard Florida: *The Great Reset: How New Ways of Living and Working Drive Post-Crash Prosperity*, New York, Harper, 2010.

14 As Ellerich-Groppe et al. and Sarropoulos demonstrate in their contributions to this volume, there have also been calls for more “individual freedom”, which logically imply “less solidarity” but here the quiet part was more often than not said out loud, which in itself underscores the general thesis.

product of the same real abstraction that Marx referred to as capital, based on the medium of money.¹⁵ That is, rather than treating calls for more solidarity as a kind of antidote against the alleged dark side of modernity (i.e. neoliberalism), we need to maintain, that its link to that which is considered a major medium by which this dark side has reordered the world, is the same as the one that enables solidarity to spread with such relative ease in public as well as academic discourses.

In *Intellectual and Manual Labour* Alfred Sohn-Rethel proposes the outrageous thesis that western philosophy, and in particular German idealism, was enabled by the process of real abstraction set into motion by the capitalist mode of production.¹⁶ The critical response to this swiftly pointed out the anachronism, that western philosophy is derived from Plato and was not completely reinvented by Kant.¹⁷ However, Richard Seaford, among others, delivered a thoroughly historical account of the introduction of coinage in Greece, India and China, and the development of “talking about thinking” as a profession, which we now call philosophy.¹⁸

The late David Graeber provided an incredibly detailed analysis of debt, which both he and Seaford understand to be the foundation for the existence of money.¹⁹ Debt – which is a reminder of the gift that was not really given as a gift²⁰ – is thus understood as the base of continued prehensions between entities that can never cancel each other out and are thus doomed to continue a seemingly endless sequence of actions and reactions that we can call “history”. Money is the medium of all real abstraction, as it enables a comparison of values between entities that appear to be of completely different qualities. It also enabled philosophers to talk about (moral) values in the same way that economists talk about economic values.

In this volume, Giovanna Covi also makes a clear link between solidarity and debt by pointing out that solidarity is itself split in terms of *soldo* (money) and *soldato* (soldier, which references robustness) The phrase *in solidum obligari* means the obligation to pay one's debt in full. Here fullness as a quantity or measure and fullness as resistant matter fold onto each other. Hence, if we accept this premise, then we also must concur that when a concept of solidarity is invoked it can always be traced back

15 Marx, K.: *Das Kapital. Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*. Erster Band, Hamburg 1867.

16 Sohn-Rethel, Alfred, *Intellectual and Manual Labour: A Critique of Epistemology*, Historical Materialism Book Series, volume 224, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2021, 22.

17 Engster, Frank and Schröder, Andreas: “Alfred Sohn-Rethel's große Idee und ihr Problem: Das Maß als blinder Fleck der Kapitalismuskritik”, in Schlaudt, Oliver and Willman, Françoise Alfred Sohn-Rethel (1899–1990). *Controverses autour d'un philosophe matérialiste, Recherches Germanique HS15*, 2020, S.157–176.

18 Seaford, Richard, *Money and the Early Greek Mind: Homer, Philosophy, Tragedy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004; Seaford, Richard, *The Origins of Philosophy in Ancient Greece and Ancient India: A Historical Comparison*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019.

19 Graeber, David, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, New York, Melvillehouse, 2011.

20 Cf. Derrida, Jacques, *Given Time 1: Counterfeit Money* Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1991.

to some kind of debt. Implying both deficiency as well as guilt, debt is the invocation of accountability. Logically speaking, one can only declare solidarity if one is being held accountable for a debt already incurred. The mere fact that an act of solidarity is, by contrast, more often treated as an initial act, as a gift that is not a repayment, an expression of moral value rather than monetary value, this testifies to the necessity of denying that it is derived from real abstraction. We can see these tensions in relation to the legal obligation to pay taxes. To refer to paying taxes as an act of solidarity defies the idea of solidarity being a moral obligation, as tax evasion is a crime (unless you are very wealthy, then it is an option). However, referring to paying taxes as being held accountable to debt that has already been incurred, would not be widely considered as an act of solidarity either, although most people throughout history and across cultures do recognize the moral obligation to pay off debts. Real abstraction transforms debt into guilt and thereby opens the door to moral impositions.

Hence, by linking solidarity back to debt, we can also understand a bit better, why the term itself is being stretched between normativity in which solidarity is treated as substantial referent (for example in ideological, philosophical or theological discourses), and performativity in which solidarity is treated as a sign operating in various discursive practices which at the same time is demonstrated and enacted in concrete deeds. If we take Christianity as an example: Solidarity as one of the pillars of the social teachings of the Catholic Church (*Rerum Novarum*)²¹ and can be linked to the notion of unconditional Love as *Agape* (*Deus Caritas Est*).²² It figures as a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ. A concrete practice (that is, the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews) becomes a concept that can then be deployed by someone else (for example in trade unions; civil rights movements; or as part of practices of intersectionality etc.) and retain its original value (that of the originary gift). As the suffering and crucifixion of Christ cannot be phrased as an act of solidarity, because there was no debt to pay off, we are all held accountable. It is from this accountability that solidarity emerges. Hence solidarity is real abstraction because it is generated as a value from concrete practices that were already framed as being derived from debt.

It is only by forgetting debt, that solidarity can be rephrased as sacrifice. For example, when during demonstrations of Black Lives Matter protests in Portland Oregon in 2020, African American protestors were being subjected to police brutality, white (mostly young) people joined them in acts of solidarity, often being at the front lines in attempts to reduce police violence. By putting their bodies on the line, one could say, they offered to sacrifice themselves, risking injuries and arrests for

21 Op. Cit.

22 *Deus Caritas Est. Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI on Christian Love.* https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html.

the sake of the human rights of non-white Americans. When they too got beaten, many mothers joined the front lines, dressed in bright yellow t-shirts, forming another line of defence. When the police started to use tear gas to disperse the mothers, the husbands came to the front line, armed with leaf blowers to disperse the tear gas. These can all be referred to as acts of solidarity. However, without considering the initial debt, these acts then become themselves instigators of debt, as BLM protestors would now be in debt themselves to these white people who were protecting their rights to protest. It is for this reason that Sharon Dodua Otoo in her contribution, warns us against conceiving solidarity as a gift. It is not a primary act of sacrifice, but a secondary act of being held accountable for a debt already incurred. In the case of the BLM protests in Portland, this means that we have to understand all the acts of solidarity in the broader context of slavery and systemic racism.

The concept of decolonialism can equally be understood as an attempt to retrace historically, the real abstraction of solidarity, for example in relation to concepts such as “economic development”, “civilization” or even “progress”. Acts of solidarity with people who are still paying for the destruction of their livelihoods, for the appropriation of their agricultural lands, their rivers, their forests, their crops, their natural resources and so on, that do not acknowledge the debt that they are to be held accountable for, that refuse their accountability, are not acts of solidarity at all, but mere payments with counterfeit money. Therefore, the first step of decolonialization is being held accountable.

With this move, we can also readdress Hirschmann’s opposition between passions and interests. Conceiving solidarity primarily in terms of passions (for European philosophy ultimately perhaps being modelled on the passion of Christ), for example as acts of loyalty or recognition, as modes of forging communal ties between groups that have been affected by similar forces (e.g. threats or misfortunes), as means to put the common good before individual desires, often invokes notions of kinship, for example brotherhood or sisterhood. Deleuze and Guattari referred to a major mode of sociality within the nomadic war machine as “agnatic solidarity”. It is easy to see how this works in, for example, fraternities such as the Proud Boys or the Oath Keepers and their role in the failed coup d’état in the USA on January 6th 2021. They were expressing solidarity with the commander in chief, Donald Trump, as the adopted father of their tribes. They were even willing to lay down their lives for him or – as it turns out – spend long prison sentences on his behalf.

However, if we understand solidarity as being held accountable for a debt already incurred, then the opposition between passions and interests is not so clear cut. Loyalty and disloyalty both have a price. Passions have costs and benefits and can be invoked to serve particular interests. Debts can be invoked to demand acts of solidarity, both through bribery and through blackmail. All of a sudden, Hirschmann’s

vocabulary²³ used to explain why corporations increasingly deploy financial incentives to retain their most valuable employees rather than rely on their loyalty, can be ripped from its reactionary ecology. Instead of talking about passions versus interests, we should follow Gabriel Tarde and deploy the concept of “passionate interests” as a central concern not just for political economy but also for cultural studies.²⁴ That is, if we consider, for example, the emphasis placed by Stuart Hall²⁵ on referring to Thatcherism as “authoritarian populism” it should not be separated from referring to Thatcherism as a “regime of accumulation”.²⁶ Invoking passionate interests as a unifying concept for understanding political, economic, social and cultural practices also helps us understand why the treatment of neoliberalism (aka the Great Reset) and global fascism (aka the Great Awakening) as binary opposites is completely false.²⁷ Neoliberalism and Fascism have very similar genealogies.

In *Difference and Repetition*, Gilles Deleuze laid down the challenge to not use exclusive categories for analytical simplicity, but to treat them as modalities that are not separated from intensities.²⁸ This should also be applied to the divide between passions and interests and that is exactly what the language of hot/cold is supposed to do. The intensity of the passions could be referred to as heat and this clearly can be seen in solidarity movements such as those of nationalism or religious fundamentalism. The intensity of interests is referred to as cold, in the sense of being able to shrug off any emotional attachment that does not directly serve the interests at stake, for example, assassins need to be cold at heart to do their job. This is a major reason why drones are so brutally “effective” when it comes down to killing off their targets with large amounts of collateral damage (for example, family members of the target). Drones do not care; they have no emotional attachment to anything.

Despite being able to distinguish between hot and cold associations, the spectrum itself is that of “passionate interests”. Solidarity should not be reduced to loyalty. Agnatic solidarity may be considered highly passionate because it invokes a sense of loyalty as a commitment beyond a reasonable threshold, for example in terms of a sacrifice of life and limbs, however, it does not preclude a sense of reciprocity that the other might do the same for you. Hence, once again, solidarity is best understood as a response to being held accountable for a debt already incurred.

23 Hirschmann, Albert O.: op cit.

24 Latour, Bruno, and Lépinay, Vincent Antonin, *The Science of Passionate Interests. An Introduction to Gabriel Tarde's Economic Anthropology*. Chicago, Prickly Paradigm Press, 2009.

25 Hall, Stuart: Op. cit.

26 Bonnett, Kevin, Bronley, Simon, Jessop, Bob, and Ling, Tom: Authoritarian Populism, Two Nations and Thatcherism, *New Left Review* 147, P. 32–60, 1984.

27 See Dugin, Alexander: *The Great Awakening versus the Great Reset*, Budapest, Arktos Media, 2021. This book has been hailed as the philosophical-anthropological justification for Putin's imperialism and interests in undermining western democracy.

28 Deleuze, Gilles: *Difference and Repetition*, London, Athlone, 1994.

Solidarity, however, can be more or less passion-driven and more or less interest-driven. It is for this reason that the concept of solidarity follows exactly the same trajectory as that of value: both are real abstractions of passionate interests.

This differentiation is necessary when considering the contributions to this edited collection. The contributions should not be read in terms of normative questions about what good (versus bad) solidarity looks like, but instead to the question of what solidarity may look like in different settings. Different disciplines focus on particular discursive practices; this causes conceptual discussions of solidarity to shift, inviting more abstraction to enable translations. The epistemological risk here is a fallacy of misplaced concreteness: treating an abstract, substantively normative notion of solidarity as if it were embodied in concrete uses of the term. Instead, we should reverse our approach: starting from concrete, material and embodied practices of solidarity to their real abstraction in ideological, religious, ethical and moral discursive formations. Solidarity as engaged in processes of real abstraction should still be scrutinized and explained.

Opening this volume, Sharon Dodua Otoo engages with both highly personal, autobiographical reflections and extracts from her own writings to invoke a concept of solidarity in relation to encounters across racial and ethnic boundaries, which are fundamentally structured by the tight intersections between (post-)colonialism and (industrial) capitalism, and how these have played out in concrete, everyday experiences. Far from being innocent and pure, these experiences testify to aforementioned issues of debt and remuneration. Being paid for writing about experiences of the marginalized is thus at the same time an affirmation of solidarity as being held accountable for a debt already incurred. This highlights that solidarity is inherently relational.

Wolfgang Benz pursues the question of solidarity not in terms of its conceptual anchoring, but instead in terms of its historical significance in relation to (responses to) practices of antisemitism endorsed by National Socialism during the time of the Third Reich. What is most remarkable in this detailed historical account is the way in which many more Germans joined and encouraged anti-Semitic practices, compared to the few that took a stance against them. That is to say, expressions of solidarity were framed in identity-political terms in an antagonistic relationship between “us” and “them”. That is, the Christian foundation of solidarity as “love thy neighbour” as an acknowledgement of a common humanity, had been swept aside with a much more barbaric form of agnatic solidarity. This also shows the generic superficial quality of culturally entrenched “Christian values” in concrete practices of everyday life during times of crisis. Instead, we should focus on the actual performative aspects of solidarity: that is, solidarity is a practice.

Based on a cultural Marxist approach, Sarah Earnshaw considers two different documentaries dealing with aspects of intersections between gender and class, focusing on performative practices of solidarity in the face of systemic exploitation.

Deploying the concept of suture, she invites us to associate practices of solidarity with stitching together different “textures” which we might perhaps also consider in terms of “interests”. By focusing on the central role of personal experiences of both practices of exploitation and of organizing resistance, we are enabled to understand in much greater detail the work involved in suture, and thus in making realizing solidarity. What stands out here is not an ideological grounding of practices of solidarity, but performative associations that are modulated by precarity and necessity.

Conceiving solidarity as “an activity premised on upholding and forsaking different priorities”, Patrick O’Connor stresses its modal qualities as being “intelligible as a type of dispositional attitude” and necessarily contingent and thus at risk of failure. Focusing on three films by the Belgian Dardennes brothers, he explores different dimensions of “politics in ruins” in the margins of society. As with Sarah Earnshaw’s concept of suture to highlight interdependency under conditions of gendered proletarianization, the precarity of existence has eroded any notion of broader political implications as all notions of the political have been subsumed by transactional relations of market forces. However solidarity beyond idealism is still possible; namely as “an expansion of the scope of mutual obligation, which requires a recognition of the modal being of character”. One could perhaps simplify this modal concept of solidarity as the recognition that others are equally afflicted by the burdens of having to make decisions that are always-already indebted to the burden of possibility: “a recognition that the struggles to survive belong to everyone”.

Whereas O’Connor focuses on cinematic modes of working through possibilities of practicing solidarity, Nicole Schneider provides an analysis of still images as potential modes of engaging solidarity. Her concrete orientation is on the role of different photographic images of the Black Lives Matter protests in the USA before 2020. By stressing the inevitable connections between photography and narrative practices, the imagery of protests “negotiate solidarity as they position their spectators in relation to the scenes depicted”. Looking at and forming images is always-already a practice of (dis)engaging with others. For Schneider, the key issue is fixation as an issue of entanglement. The real challenge is whether this entanglement can become an enactment of solidarity and thereby unsettle “the visual dimensions of political structures in society”.

From the previous chapters, we can already deduce that the focus on practices of solidarity inevitably draws our attention to their relationality and performativity. However, it becomes equally clear that such practices *take place* in concrete, actual occurrences. That is, they are always situated. In his contribution, Christian Preidel considers the spatial dimensions of practicing solidarity in relation to community building. Drawing on the German sociologist Martina Löw, he understands practices of solidarity as the social spatialization in terms of place-taking, place-making and building. Neighbourhoods are relatively concrete places of community building and the development of ethnic enclaves has clearly been detrimental to the forma-

tion of multi-ethnic sociabilities. Notions such as “communities of care” and “communities that care to listen” – which resonate with initiatives developed across the world within parishes and faith-related settings – may sound somewhat idealistic, Preidel argues however that they can be concretized through actual projects such as “urban gardening” as well as developing shared myths.

At first sight, this notion of community building may seem to completely contradict Jörg Althammer’s emphasis on the role of market transactions in the development of solidarity. However, as soon as we strip the concept of solidarity from its idealist sugarcoating, we can see that Althammer understands it as an existential necessity. At the same time, by refusing to adopt the naïve position that an interests-driven *homo economicus* would by “himself” come to the rational conclusion that to act in solidarity provides the best results in terms of costs and benefits, Althammer stresses that there remains a need for an ethical-institutional embedding of market transactions and economic operations in terms of securing mutual trust and the willingness to cooperate.

Alongside geography and economics, sociology too has a specific interest in researching practices of solidarity. In their contribution, Niklas Ellerich-Groppe, Larissa Pfaller and Mark Schweda focus on the discursive constellations surrounding the asymmetrical distribution of risks and responsibilities during the Covid-19 pandemic, and in particular in relation to the practices of lockdown and quarantine that define this time as a “state of exception”. As we have already seen, the Christian notion of neighbourly love is often invoked to justify the call for solidarity as an unconditional moral appeal. However, the state of exception during the Covid-19 Pandemic made it clear that such a notion does not prevent conflicting moral appeals. Liberal and communitarian notions of morality have quite different understandings of the importance of individual responsibility and the role of the state as the guardian of public interests. Therefore, the authors refer to transactions between duties and responsibilities in relation to different generational interests as a “moral economy”, and refrain from imposing an all-encompassing conception of solidarity in favour of a modal, relational, performative and situated one.

Equally closely connected to the Covid-19 pandemic is the contribution by Andreas Sarropoulos, which concerns a medical-ethical analysis of solidarity in relation to issues surrounding organ transplantations and vaccinations. Starting from the accurate observation that in public discourse, calls for solidarity are often pitched against a respect for individual autonomy and personal self-determination, Sarropoulos invokes concepts such as duty, personal responsibility and social justice. His first example is that of organ donorship for medical transplantations. The central question here is how to balance the needs of potential donors – whose bodily autonomy cannot simply be overruled by an external necessity – and those of people for whom an organ transplantation is a matter of life and death, for whom a framework of a collective imposition of solidarity might be more beneficial. He

pleads for a specific moral invocation of obligation: namely the duty to collectively consider the issue of “minimal obligation” regarding the embedding of decisions regarding to making-available of organs for transplantation.²⁹ This also requires considering that necessity of protecting the right to bodily autonomy, hence the need to insist on a voluntary engagement as the inevitable foundation of practices of solidarity. In his second example, he considers moral implications of compulsory vaccinations against Corona viruses. Whereas this controversy is most often conceived as one between collective imposition and individual freedom, the alternative of voluntary vaccinations also implies a dilemma: in terms of risk-taking: vaccination-risks versus infection-risks. Sarropoulos, however, reminds us, that the bigger issue regarding collective responsibility involves the entire public health system, which by default implies everyone. During the pandemic, the public health systems around the world were on the brink of collapsing. Again, Sarropoulos is not advocating for a compromise between personal autonomy and collective responsibility. For him, solidarity – as a selfless act without expecting anything in return – clearly favours the recognition that a debt has already occurred. However, it still requires a personal recognition of that debt.

Debt also plays a significant role in Anna-Lena Oldehus’ contribution to this volume. Focusing on Junot Diaz’ widely acclaimed novel, *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, she echoes bell hooks’ sustained attack on “white Feminism” which especially during the 1970s and 1980s had failed to acknowledge “the enemy within”. By failing to acknowledge both racism and the political-economic forms of exploitation under capitalism, the feminist project of a unified sisterhood based on female solidarity was doomed to fail. Oldehus turns to Junot Diaz’ writings to show what it means to expose whiteness, which she stresses is the first necessary step to lay the foundations of a more sustainable form of inclusive solidarity. She invokes the concept of white fragility to highlight that whiteness is often protected because it is made invisible, for example in terms of the anticipated readership of novels. By being able to assume the universal position of the anonymous, all knowing spectator, whose view from nowhere allows her to see and know everything without being held accountable, the call to solidarity becomes void and meaningless. Oldehus demonstrates how Diaz makes *whiteness* visible, both by means of the modes of address and content of the literary work as well as by challenging the bourgeois notions of the novel in terms of invoking stylistic disruptions. By mixing up narrator positions, modes of address, languages and writing styles, Diaz is constantly challenging

29 This “minimal obligation” echoes Isabelle Stenger’s cosmopolitical maxim: “decisions must take place somehow in the presence of those who will bear their consequences”, cited in Haraway, Donna: *Staying With The Trouble: Making Kin In The Cthulucene*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2016, p.12.

the reader to question herself and thereby nurtures “a self-reflective capacity to talk *about* those differences”.

There are close connections between these observations and Giovanna Covi’s chapter on the poetics of merciful solidarity. Like other contributors, she takes on the false opposition between solidarity and freedom. This opposition is deeply embedded in both a liberal ideological assumption that pitches the individual against the collective as well as the patriarchal notion of sovereignty, from which compassion and pity are derived: an act of compassion or pity always presupposes a privileged entitlement of authority. Following Emmanuela Zurli, Covi anchors solidarity not in the sovereign individual act of endowment but instead in motherly love. She couples this with Bryan Stevenson’s question that we should ask in the face of a call of mercy: “do we deserve to kill”? Covi thereby develops a concept of mercy that delivers a promise that a non-violent future is possible. This leads her to Judith Butler’s concept of vulnerability as “relational and necessary for thinking resistance”, which favours a notion of self-organization on the basis of reciprocal dependency. Deploying Michelle Cliff’s *Free Enterprise: A Novel of Mary Ellen Pleasant*, Covi shows how these ideas might actual be through of more practically through the biography of a frontier African-American woman who became a capitalist-abolitionist and the mother of the civil rights movement in California.

Often invoked as a means to establish a “common sense of we”, Lisa Marchi posits that solidarity should never be taken for granted, even in extreme cases such as opposing armed conflicts. She provides three examples of anti-war poetry (from Denise Lavertov, June Jordan and Etal Adnan) that by mobilizing “images, affects, grammars and a syntax” attempt to “defy the linguistic erosion produced by war but also give the readers and ‘imagination of peace’”. Here, solidarity is enabled to shows itself as a shared, entangled precariousness in a receptive, rather than spectatorial, perspective, as the latter implies a view from nowhere that bears no responsibility and cannot be held accountable for the debt that had already been incurred. This expresses the possibility enabled by poetic encounters, to move beyond grief allowing a longing for solidarity to emerge from a burst of imagination, interrupting the otherwise continuous flows of hatred-filled war propaganda.

Andreas Wittel and Götz-Bachmann explore the question whether new forms of solidarity are emerging in the digital economy? In order to do so, they focus on the much-hyped possibilities for developing a digital commons that could provide an alternative socio-economic infrastructure to the one controlled by neoliberal capitalism.³⁰ Through two examples of emergent digital commons – software commons

30 Yanis Varoufakis argues that to deploy the term capitalism to describe the political-economics of in the digital age is deceptive. As an alternative, he suggests that it is more accurate to describe the digital mode of production as “technofeudalism”. See: Varoufakis, Yanis, ‘Technofeudalism’, *Yanis Varoufakis* (blog), accessed 2 August 2022, <https://www.yanisv>

(e.g. Open Source) and knowledge commons (e.g. Open Access) – they explore the extent to which these forms can foster sustainable modalities of solidarity. Their findings do not provide grounds for optimism. Instead of fostering any kind of broader common solidarity, the software commons, for example, merely promotes a protective solidarity of a particular profession: that of the programmers who are engaged in a struggle over securing favourable working conditions for themselves. Likewise, the knowledge commons has been flirting with various notions of solidarity in the face of corporate hegemony but has not been able to bypass the myths of accessing knowledge as liberating, without being able to provide any critical edge to what alternative this knowledge is supposed to offer. Rather than enabling modal forms of solidarity that could establish a viable alternative to neoliberal technofeudalism, actually existing initiatives to establish a digital commons are too entrenched in libertarian notions of post-political individual freedom.

In the final chapter in this volume, Helen Gibson provides a radical conception of solidarity based on the practice of midwifery during enslavement in the USA. Her starting point is the commodification of African women's bodies as the pinnacle of the slave trade and the US slavery system. Reproductive labour is thus to be understood as a practice of extraction and of value creation. This provides a necessary counterpart to analyses of slave capitalism that focus on commodification and productive labour performed African male bodies. Yet, at the same time, the focus on writing stories – which she calls “orienting stories” – around the figure of the “Granny Midwife” provides another angle that has a direct bearing on understanding the pivotal function of solidarity as a means of organizing resistance against the dehumanizing forces of colonial capitalism. Invoking the notion of self-care as a cornerstone of what Gibson refers to as “a Womanist practice of divinely inspired knowledge” and stands in direct opposition to the practices of commodification of African women's bodies as it enables these women to “endure the burdensome and bear what is unbearable”. Here solidarity is understood as being a modality (Spirit) of caring that is more than love of self and love of community, disrupting both theological and eschatological accounts of justification. “In recognizing Spirit, granny midwives have always planted the seeds of love and of community”.

Despite their vast interdisciplinary and thematic diversity, these contributions show that critically thinking through the concept of solidarity points to crucial weaknesses in most of the widely held assumptions that feed into it: (1) Solidarity is not the opposite of individual freedom. (2) Solidarity does not stem from the entitlement of a sovereign entity, but instead from being held accountable for a debt that

aroufakis.eu/category/technofeudalism/ and Varoufakis, Yanis and Morozov, Evgeny; ‘Discussing Crypto, the Left & Technofeudalism with Evgeny Morozov’, *Yanis Varoufakis* (blog), 23 April 2022, <https://www.yanisvaroufakis.eu/2022/04/23/discussing-crypto-the-left-technofeudalism-with-evgeny-morozov-crypto-syllabus-long-interview/>.

had already been incurred. (3) Solidarity is relational. (4) Solidarity is not a state of mind but a modality of dispositional praxis and thus performative. (5) Solidarity is situated and embodied and does not stem from a view from nowhere.

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For those who have been in crisis

Sharon Dodua Otoo

As part of the lecture series on solidarity, Nicole Schneider presented her talk: “Black Lives Matter and the Images of Protest”. I watched her lecture to help prepare for my own. I was interested to see which connections Schneider would make between art and activism, as well as to see how she would handle the question of her own political identity in relationship to her research. Those were the scholarly reasons. The other reason I listened to her talk was because, as far as I can tell, she was the only other participant in the series who did not hold a professorship. I was relieved for a moment – only to discover that she had in fact just completed her doctoral thesis. I do not have this either. However as I had already accepted the invitation to participate in this series, I continued to watch.

While Nicole Schneider spoke from a different position, about a different field in a different national context, I do think our work is in dialogue with each other. In my lecture I will also consider the connections between art and activism, but instead of photography and visual images, my focus is on creative writing and literary images. I will also reflect on identity, but whereas Nicole Schneider positioned herself as a white academic who researches Black protest in the United States, I speak as a Black writer-activist directly involved in Black protest here in Germany.

Solidarity is often conceived of as something we perform, or should perform, for the benefit of others. For example, white people engaged in antiracist activities, should have the benefit of Black people, Indigenous people and other people of colour as their priority. I believe this to be true, but also insufficient. Already in the 1970s, a group of Aboriginal rights activists from Queensland, Australia stated: “If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together” - a quote which is often attributed to Lilla Watson, a member of the group, but she insists that the principle was formulated collectively. Another example is Taiwan's exemplary handling of the COVID-19 crisis. The nation's Digital Minister, Audrey Tang, attributed their success to the strategy of appealing to the rational self-interest of its citizens. According to Tang: “If you say: Wear a mask to protect the elderly, then people who do not live with the elderly or do not care about them will not wear a

mask” whereas “If you say: Wear a mask to protect yourself from your own unwashed hands, then that affects everyone.”

The concept of solidarity must take the fact that some individuals are unspeakably selfish more seriously – and I definitely include myself in the group of “some individuals”. As my children will attest, I apply the “first put own oxygen mask on in the event of an emergency” principle not only in aeroplanes, but for other aspects of parenting, too: The only way my family can do well is if I’m doing well.

Another aspect of solidarity that I would like to think about is how it ties in with privilege and marginalisation. Nicole Schneider ends her talk with the example of two non-Black people who met at a demonstration commemorating the 50th anniversary of the civil rights marches in Selma, Alabama. One carried a backpack full of water, one carried umbrellas. Both had understood that their role would not be to take the lead or to centre themselves in any other way, but it would be to provide Black protestors with refreshments and shelter from the sun. She calls this supportive solidarity.

Unlike Nicole Schneider herself and the two people she mentions in the scenario above, I am speaking from within a Black movement, so my concept of antiracist solidarity is tied very closely to the aeroplane oxygen-mask self-interest paradigm. However, also within Black movements there are varying levels of privilege and marginalisation. For example, these can be measured across class, religion, gender, disability status, refugee status, age and/or sexuality. And within Black communities there are real challenges around colourism, around social proximity to whiteness, as well as anti-Africanism, which typically results in media attention being most afforded to those members of the Black community who are light-skinned, who have at least one white parent and/or who sound or appear “non-African”. Therefore, even within Black movements there are questions of positionality. Who speaks? And who is therefore side-lined? And how do these decisions reproduce and manifest structural forms of racism at an individual level? How does supportive solidarity work there?

As far as I can tell, of all the invited speakers, I am the only Black person. And we have already established that I am the only one without a doctorate. Considering that countless conferences and panels in German-speaking countries take place with no Black participants at all, this can be regarded as progress. However, I know of at least two other professors in Germany who would have been more than qualified to speak on the subject of solidarity: Professor Dr. Maisha Auma of the Hochschule Magdeburg-Stendal and Professor Dr. Louis Henri Seukwa of the Universität Hamburg. Both of them are Black. I ask myself and I ask us all: how does my presence here, in this context, reinforce certain damaging stereotypes about Black people of African descent in German academia?

It’s important that we keep questioning positionality, of ourselves and others. Groups of marginalised people are not static homogeneous entities but are more

akin to fragile solidarity alliances. Our strength comes not from absence of conflict, but from our ability to negotiate it. It is absolutely in my own self-interest to stand in solidarity with individuals and groups who are marginalised in ways in which I am privileged. Why? Because injustice is ambitious.

Almost a year ago in March 2020, following news of the outbreak of a global pandemic, Germany went into national lockdown for the first time. The severe restrictions on public life introduced by the government due to the outbreak of COVID-19 overwhelmed almost everyone. Many individuals had up until that point not experienced any existential limits at all to their freedom of movement, civil rights or bodily autonomy. Quite unlike those people who, for example, have known how it is to be restricted by the so-called *Residenzpflicht*. This is a law, unique to Germany, which forbids asylum applicants, or those who have been given a temporary stay of deportation, to move beyond certain geographical boundaries – not for temporary visits, not for a day trips, even medical appointments or meetings with legal representatives require permits.

Suddenly privileged people were also confronted with restricted access to their health care, childcare, public transport, social networks and family support. Suddenly they were losing paid work or struggling to juggle home office with home schooling. Suddenly they were in new territory, desperately wondering how they would survive.

Many parents, particularly young mothers in heterosexual relationships, shared their stories under the hashtag #CoronaEltern (corona parents). For me, one of the most interesting parts about the stories they shared was how similar they were to experiences I also had during my time as a single parent of three pre-school and school-aged children. More awareness and more solidarity from other parents at that time might have led to policy changes then, which would have benefited all parents now. More generous sick leave provision, for example, or unconditional basic income, consultation on childcare needs, and the possibility of digital schooling. In cisgender heterosexual relationships, women typically take on the bulk of childcare and household responsibilities. A fact which has a significant impact on their so-called work-life balance, their professional options and career trajectories. If this imbalance had been a priority cause of concern *before* the pandemic, the political response to the situation for many parents *during* the lockdown may have looked very different.

There are of course other more life-threatening examples. If we as a society truly valued Jewish life in Germany, the response of non-Jewish Germans to the gun attack on the synagogue in Halle in 2019 would not be limited to simply hiring more police officers. If the lessons of the genocides in Nazi Germany had truly been learnt, the Deutsche Bahn in 2020 would not even have considered dismantling a monument to honour the Sinti and Roma murder victims, in order to make way for the extension of an urban railway line in Berlin. If public health was of serious concern to the federal

government, mass accommodation centres for people seeking asylum, like the one in Lindenstrasse in Bremen, where at least 200 of its inhabitants became infected with COVID-19 also in 2020, would have been closed right at the beginning of the pandemic. The crisis in democracy is ongoing and people at the brunt of it have been warning everyone else for decades. This is where I write.

As a writer I feel powerless to protect synagogues and I cannot single-handedly abolish inhumane refugee camps. But I can bear witness. I can use my literature in the service of Black lives. I have been asked why I do this and I have been warned not to do this. But as the multiple award-winning Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe once said:

Those who tell you “Do not put too much politics in your art” are not being honest. If you look very carefully you will see that they are the same people who are quite happy with the situation as it is [...] What they are saying is don't upset the system.

For marginalised people, the system desperately needs to be upset. For those who have been in crisis, writers can transform our collective pain – reimagine our humanity – and hand it back to us as art. This is why I write.

Writing is for me a community endeavour. I write creative fiction in order to depict Black lives in a way that does not tokenise, retraumatise, ridicule or further erase members of my community. I think carefully about my position and make an effort to include Black figures in my writing, who are marginalised in ways that I am not. And because my knowledge and my imagination are constrained by the same dominant messages that we are all subject to, I particularly look to share and discuss drafts of my work with people who experience forms of discrimination that privilege me. This is how I write.

I would like to share two examples of my written work. These are extracts from short stories published in a collection called “Winter Shorts” edited by my colleague, Clementine Burnley, and me. The first story, “Whnacig Pnait (Watching Paint)”, is inspired by my third son, Lewis and his experiences in an education system which does not understand dyslexia, a learning disability that affects a person's ability to read, spell and write. Writing this story was one way for me to show that I was listening and trying to understand. In this scene Mustafa, an older friend, is persuading Anokye, the main character, to go to school. Anokye is a 12-year-old Black British boy who has recently moved to Berlin and does not yet speak fluent German.

Extract from “Whtnacig Pnait (Watching Paint)”¹

Mustafa crossed the street one final time that morning, eating the apple as he approached me.

“Let’s go” he said, before taking another bite.

“Where?” I said. “To school? Forget it...”

“Let’s go!” Mustafa interrupted me.

And that was that. I had not wanted to go, but I didn’t really have anything else to do. And even if Mustafa didn’t care about me, at least he was bloody good at pretending that he did. Since moving to Berlin, Mustafa was just about the only person I saw outside of school. Apart from my mum.

As we waited on the platform at *Kottbusser Tor* my mood finally got better. Mustafa stared straight ahead and whistled. He was calm and that helped me to feel the same. I was already standing quite close to Mustafa, but I leaned a little closer and hoped he wouldn’t notice. I closed my eyes and breathed in: a mixture of cigarette smoke, coffee, sweat and cheap after-shave filled my nostrils. I stifled a cough. No wonder this guy was still single.

“Eh! Was machst du?” I opened my eyes and looked up. Mustafa looked slightly disgusted and pushed me away. “Hau ab!”

I took a couple of steps back and said nothing. Luckily in that moment the train arrived. He watched me warily and made sure that I got on first. There were enough free seats for us to be able to sit down next to each other: the first miracle of the morning. Normally the U8 is standing room only at seven fifty. I fixed my gaze on the view through the dirty, scratched up window. My vision was no longer distracted by the tiny images of the Brandenburg gate tattooed all over it.

As the train left the station, Mustafa asked “Why you don’t like school?” I simply carried on looking at the various shades of black that whizzed before my eyes. I could see absolutely nothing and that’s about how much I felt like saying, in answer to such a stupid question.

“*Junge, Schule ist wichtig*”, Mustafa added. I know he knows I didn’t understand so I just carried on ignoring him.

“I didn’t finish school,” he continued “You did know that before?”

Actually, I didn’t. I didn’t care either. I looked at Mustafa and raised an eyebrow. It could have meant “so?” or “really?” depending on how generous Mustafa’s interpretation was.

“Or did you think I dream all my life of being a carrot seller?” Mustafa laughed. His laugh turned into a lengthy smoker’s cough. But at least the questions had

1 Sharon Dodua Otoo: “Whtnacig Pnait (Watching Paint)” in: Winter Shorts, eds. Clementine Burnley and Sharon Dodua Otoo. *Witnessed Series – Edition 5. edition assemblage*, 2015, p. 67ff.

stopped. For now. I sighed and rolled my eyes as I thought about the 20-minute journey ahead of me. And about how long Frau Dernburg would most likely shout at me for being late when I did finally reach school. And then how much she would shout at me again, a few minutes later, for not having done my homework. And then again, maybe an hour later, for not having made any notes throughout her lesson. I thought about how I would probably once again spend the entire lunch break sitting outside Herr Fischer's office: watching them, watching me. How I would receive another letter to take home to my mum. Of course, the evening ahead of me would mostly be taken up by her shouting at me for my "terrible behaviour this morning", for breaking my new glasses, for me losing my drink bottle and for me bringing home yet another red card from school. No one ever said anything good about me. There was nothing good to say. My life was a collection of disastrous moments knotted together by a desperately thin string of hope that there was some point to it and that I would understand it soon.

I spoke after Mustafa had finished coughing.

"I would rather be a carrot seller than a school kid, Mustafa. Trust me." I looked at him straight in the eye. "School is so boring...it's like watching paint dry. It's killing me."

Mustafa sighed, but didn't say anything. The train pulled in at the next station – screeching in fact, because the brakes needed oiling. All the passengers winced, except Mustafa and me. *Moritzplatz*. I knew it was *Moritzplatz* because the recorded voice announced it. And because I have travelled this line now so often, I would recognise it even if I was listening to music and couldn't hear the voice at all. Or even if I was listening to music and had my eyes closed, I would be able to feel where we were by counting the number of times the train had stopped. What I definitely would not be able to do would be to read the station's name. And that wasn't because of my cracked lens. Not the newest glasses, not even a telescope could help me, because the letters in the words I read just don't stay still.

Moritzplatz.

Could also easily be *Mtroizpaltz* or *Mrtiozpatlz* or *Mitorzplta.*

It makes no difference to me at all.

I wiggled my loose tooth with the tip of my tongue again.

*

The next extract is from the story "The Romantics and the Criminals". This was inspired by several conversations I had with the refugee activist Bino Byansi Byakuleka. I met Bino while he was on hunger strike at Oranienplatz in Berlin during the protests which took place there between October 2012 and April 2014. At the time there were various initiatives to support the refugees. Certainly, many of us wanted to show our solidarity with the movement. However, what I learnt

from Bino was that it made little sense to do “for” the refugees. It was important to understand that they were the experts of their situation. They understood best what their needs were. And, most importantly of all, that their needs were not so different to our own. That whatever human rights abuses were meted out on these people, some of the most vulnerable of our society, could easily be extended and applied to increasingly more groups. For example, the *Residenzpflicht* is in another form applied to people on state benefits (so-called *Hartz IV*). They are also required to get special permission before leaving their home area. After visiting a refugee group in 2015, Angela Davis said: “The Refugee Movement is the movement of the 21st Century”.

“The Romantics and the Criminals” is a short story that I wrote with Bino. In the following extract, Happy, the main character, is in a conversation with two police officers. It is the early hours of the morning at the refugee protest camp. Vera, a white German supporter, is also present.

Extract from “The Romantics and the Criminals”²

“Stand up.” Officer two commanded. There was a menacing tone to his voice. Happy saw two chances: simply comply and have an easy night, or play a bit, but forget about any kind of rest. It wasn’t hard to choose.

“Why?” Happy answered. “I haven’t done anything wrong. Why should I stand?”

But by now Vera was heading towards Happy and the two officers. Happy could not be sure that she would stay calm.

“Stand. Up.” Officer two repeated. He touched his baton. This was a tiny gesture, but it sent a clear signal which immediately refreshed Happy’s memory of one particularly fierce beating he had taken at a demonstration last month.

“What’s going on?” Vera asked. She was breathless and agitated. She turned to officer two. “*Was wollen Sie von ihm? ICH bin die Ansprechpartnerin!*”

“It’s ok, it’s ok” Happy said, slowly rising to his feet. “Here you go, I’m up.” He smiled cheekily at officer one and then gave officer two his best poker face expression.

“Are you the one they call Happy?” Officer two asked, looking him squarely in the eyes. Happy did not blink. He simply responded: “I am he.”

Officer one shifted nervously from one foot to the next. Officer two stood firm.

“Where are the documents for the registering of this protest?” he asked.

2 Bino Byansi Byakuleka & Sharon Dodua Otoo: “The Romantics and the Criminals” in: Winter Shorts, eds. Clementine Burnley and Sharon Dodua Otoo. Witnessed Series – Edition 5. edition assemblage, 2015, p. 37ff.

Happy sniggered. Always the same. Always the same. He looked around at the thirty-something tents, some in better conditions than others. In the moonlight the place looked calm and peaceful. *Oranienplatz* had looked like this since the refugees and their supporters had arrived last October. How would it even be possible for this protest to have been going on for so long without the correct documentation? Happy would have loved at this point to have asked the officer for evidence of *his* permission to ask to see evidence of *Happy's* permission to protest. There was bound to be a paragraph so-so-and-so about it somewhere. Germans loved nothing more than laws and documents. Everything in this country was surely regulated by a stiff-looking East German woman sitting behind a desk surrounded by a collection of pens and rubber stamps.

“*Das hatte ich aber gerade schon mit ihren Kollegen durch!*” snapped Vera. She was cold, exhausted and frustrated. She had changed so much since the beginning of the protest. Happy didn't yet understand enough German to know exactly what she was saying, but he guessed from her tone and her body language that she was telling the officers that the paperwork had already been checked.

“*Ich rede mit dem Asylant hier...*” started Officer two. Officer one took a step back. Vera's face flushed bright red. Happy had heard that word “*Asylant*” before. Almost always from Nazis. Or people who were not too good at disguising their right-wing allegiance. Someone in one of the nearby tents coughed.

“*Er ist eine geflüchtete Person!*,” she hissed. Clouds of warm air left her mouth as she spoke. Happy studied her face carefully to try and work out what was now going on.

Officer two smirked. “*Wie dem auch sei...*”

“*Hier sind die Papiere...*” Vera held up a folder. “*Nun lassen Sie ihm in Ruhe!*”

Happy held the – by now – cold cup in his left hand and reached out to Vera with his right. He pulled her to one side while the officers carefully studied the folder she had given them.

“Listen Vera,” he whispered, “please, please stick to English when I am around, ok?”

She nodded. Ashamed. He had told her and the others several times that this was a refugee protest. Not a Good-German-Person-Charity-Event. The refugees were to represent themselves at all times. The supporters could translate, but could not simply take over.

“He just wanted to see the registration documents. It's just games...”

“And why did you get angry?”

Vera looked at the ground and adjusted her hair. As usual, it was tied back in a ponytail. Whenever she got nervous, she would try to make it even tighter. “He used this word: *Asylant*. It's a racist word for refugees...” She then looked back up again at Happy. “Fucking hell.”

Happy watched the officers poring over the folder, trying to find something that they could complain about.

“Well at least this way, they are showing who they really are...” Vera sighed.

“Exactly!” Happy smirked “They are being honest – not bad!”

*

One difficult aspect of collaborations like these is the question of remuneration. How ethical is it for artists who claim to stand in solidarity with marginalised communities to profit financially or otherwise from their creative work with or about them? Where, for example, a white photographer captures award-winning images of Black people protesting? Or where a non-refugee author wins prizes for a novel based on the experiences of asylum-seekers?

None of the authors whose work was published in the short story collection that my two stories also appeared in was paid. “Winter Shorts” is part of a book series that I curate in partnership with the Münster-based publishing collective edition assemblage. The book series is called “Witnessed” and provides an English-speaking platform for people of African descent who have lived in German-speaking countries to commit their experiences and analyses to paper. I founded the book series because I wanted to share my access to the publishing industry with other Black writers. This was intended as an act of solidarity. However, this book series is unfunded and this needs to change.

Since I initiated the Witnessed Series, back in 2012, I have become a professional creative writer. This has given me opportunities, for example access to a much wider audience, but it also presents difficulties. Can I write in solidarity with Black communities while accepting paid reading and lecture engagements based on an expertise that I have gained through my activist training?

My interim answer is: Take the money! This is an aeroplane in trouble situation! But to use my relative safety to hand out oxygen masks to others: Use my influence to highlight the work of my siblings, while at the same time reflecting on my own implications in discriminatory structures, and to keep chipping away at them.

It’s a process. I don’t presume to get it right. But I do hope that with every piece of creative writing, I will improve.

November 1938 – Solidarität in der »Reichskristallnacht«

Wolfgang Benz

Im Pogrom gegen die jüdischen Bürger schlug am 9. November 1938 die Stunde der Bewährung für alle, die Humanität, christliche Moral, bürgerlichen Anstand und Solidarität mit Hilfsbedürftigen ernst nahmen. Es waren aber nicht viele, die den misshandelten und verfolgten jüdischen Mitbürgern, Freunden oder Kollegen Hilfe leisteten, sie verbargen, ihnen zur Flucht halfen, sie im Untergrund schützten. Den Berichten über Solidarität und Hilfe steht die Erkenntnis gegenüber, dass die Mehrheit schweigend die Ereignisse hinnahm, dass viele sich vor dem Regime duckten oder sich gar, vom Judenhass angesteckt, dem Mob anschlossen. Die »Reichskristallnacht« war ein Lehrstück für geübte, vor allem aber verweigernde Solidarität.¹

Auf dem Berliner Kurfürstendamm beobachteten zwei Offiziere der Deutschen Wehrmacht am Abend des 9. November 1938 den Pogrom gegen die jüdischen Bürger des Deutschen Reiches, den der Volksmund »Reichskristallnacht« nannte, für den hilflose Betroffene neuerdings das monströse Wort »Reichspogromnacht« benutzen. Die Offiziere schämten sich, sie erheben die Stimme, mahnen zu Vernunft und Anstand. Der wütende Haufen verjagt sie unter Drohungen, und beendet einen missglückten Akt der Solidarität, so ist es in der Londoner Times zwei Tage nach dem Ereignis zu lesen.² Zum Entsetzen, mit dem die Welt nach Deutschland blickte, gehörte das Erstaunen, dass nicht nur fanatische Nazis die Täter waren. Schweigendes Gaffen der Mehrheit, klammheimliche und offene Freude Unbeteiligter über die Not der Juden kennzeichneten das Geschehen. Nicht nur SA-Leute und andere Parteigenossen, die auf Befehl Synagogen in Brand steckten, jüdische Geschäfte zerstörten, Wohnungen verwüsteten, Menschen verhöhnnten, misshandelten und zu

1 Wichtigste Literatur: Benz, Wolfgang: Gewalt im November 1938. Die »Reichskristallnacht«. Initial zum Holocaust, Berlin 2018; Graml, Hermann: Reichskristallnacht. Antisemitismus und Judenverfolgung im Dritten Reich, München 1988; Pehle, Walter H. (Hg.): Der Judenpogrom 1938. Von der »Reichskristallnacht« zum Völkermord, Frankfurt a.M. 1988; Gross, Raphael: November 1938. Die Katastrophe vor der Katastrophe, München 2013.

2 Heiden, Konrad: Eine Nacht im November 1938. Ein zeitgenössischer Bericht, hg. von Markus Roth, Sascha Feuchert und Christiane Weber, Cöttingen 2013, 39.

Tode hetzten, waren die Täter. Zu viele sahen das Treiben nur in gleichgültiger Apathie, wohl auch in schweigender Ablehnung, und zu viele sahen die Katastrophe mit freudiger Erregung, und zu viele ließen sich anstecken und wüteten wie die Täter, die in Uniformen der SA, der SS, der NSDAP auftraten oder in ziviler Kleidung, um den »jäh aufwallenden Volkszorn«, den Goebbels befahl, zu agieren.

In der Nacht des 9. November 1938 begann der Holocaust, in den Tagen danach ließ das NS-Regime die Maske fallen, enthüllte seine wahre Natur. Als Vorwand diente das Attentat des 17jährigen Herschel Grünschan auf den Legationssekretär Ernst vom Rath in der deutschen Botschaft in Paris. Der junge Jude protestierte mit seiner Tat gegen die brutale Abschiebung von Juden polnischer Nationalität aus Deutschland. Die Nachricht vom Tod des Diplomaten traf am Abend des 9. November die im Alten Rathaus in München versammelten NS-Größen, die dort wie jedes Jahr ihre Traditionsfeier zum Putschversuch von 1923 begingen. Es war der richtige Moment für die Inszenierung des Pogroms. Die Stimmung war durch eine Pressekampagne, die dem Pariser Attentat vom 7. November folgte, schon angeheizt. Hitler und Goebbels verabredeten das Weitere, dann verließ Hitler den Raum, und Goebbels legte mit seiner Hasstirade gegen die Juden los, predigte Rache und »Vergeltung«.³

Er wurde von Funktionären der NSDAP und Führern der SA verstanden, sie gaben die Botschaft weiter an die Unterführer, die Kreisleiter und Ortsgruppenleiter im ganzen Reich. Die Parteigenossen sprangen aus den Betten. In Räuberzivil und auch in Uniform demonstrierten sie ab Mitternacht »die gerechte Empörung des deutschen Volkes«. Antisemiten, fanatische Nazis, Mitläufer und opportunistische Nutznießer der NS-Herrschaft machten die Straßen zum Ort des Terrors gegen eine Minderheit. Brandstiftung und blinde Wut gegen Menschen und Sachen, die Zerstörung jüdischer Geschäfte, Plünderung, Misshandlung, Mord an jüdischen Bürgern waren grelle Zeichen, dass die Früchte von Aufklärung und Emanzipation im Staat der Nationalsozialisten verachtet und verschleudert wurden. Deutschland demonstrierte der Welt, dass es nicht länger ein Land der Vernunft und des Rechts sein wollte. Die zivilgesellschaftliche Solidarität, die fünf Jahre vorher bei der Boykottaktion gegen Juden am 1. April 1933 noch von vielen öffentlich agiert wurde, war nirgendwo zu beobachten.

Die Schreckensnacht und die ihr folgenden Tage verliefen im ganzen Deutschen Reich – zu dem seit Frühjahr 1938 auch Österreich und seit Herbst auch das Sudetenland gehörten – in ganz ähnlicher Form. Vor Gebäuden der Jüdischen Gemeinde, vor Synagogen, vor Geschäften und Wohnungen bekannter Juden erschienen die krawallseligen Horden, johlten Judenhass, erbrachen die Türen, verwüsteten das Innere und legten schließlich Feuer. Die Feuerwehr hatte ausdrücklichen Befehl,

3 Der Hergang ist offiziell rekonstruiert im Bericht des Obersten Parteigerichts der NSDAP an Göring vom 13. Februar 1939, Nürnberger Dokument PS 3063.

brennende Synagogen nicht zu löschen, sie sollte lediglich Nachbarhäuser schützen, wenn der Brand überzugreifen drohte. Im ganzen Land machte sich der von damals honorigen Leuten, SA-Führern, Bürgermeistern, NSDAP-Funktionären geführte Mob das Vergnügen, in jüdische Wohnungen einzudringen, Mobiliar zu zerstören und verängstigte Juden, angesehene Kaufleute, Rechtsanwälte, Rabbiner und andere Leute von Reputation zu misshandeln und zu demütigen, sie etwa im Nachthemd durch die Straßen zu jagen.

Die Aufforderung zum Pogrom durch die NSDAP kam einem bei vielen Parteigenossen seit der »Kampfzeit der Bewegung« brachliegenden Aktionsbedürfnis entgegen. Die in der SA und anderen Gliederungen der Partei Organisierten waren seit langer Zeit wieder einmal zur Ausübung von Gewalt aufgefordert, die sie nun im Konsens mit der Staatsmacht ausleben konnten. Das Bewusstsein, an einer parteikonformen Machtdemonstration teilzuhaben und die Erinnerung an die Kampfzeit vor 1933 bildeten für sie die Hauptmotive der Aggression, der Zerstörungswut gegen Menschen und deren Eigentum.

Der Vandalismus der im organisierten Pogrom Tobenden sprang aber auf Unbeteiligte über. Als Frucht antisemitischer Propaganda, als Folge nationalsozialistischer Indoktrination oder aus dumpfer Aggression, aus entfesselter Sensations- und Zerstörungslust. Beispiele sind gerade aus kleineren Orten überliefert, vielleicht auch deshalb, weil die Anonymität der Täter dort weniger gewährleistet war als in der Großstadt. Die »Reichskristallnacht« ist das eindrückliche Lehrstück, wie leicht Menschen durch Demagogie zu lenken sind. In Hoyerswerda und Rostock wiederholte sich der psychologische Affekt nach der Wende, in Freital und Cottbus, in Dresden, Chemnitz und vielen weiteren Orten ist die aufbrandende Wut geängstigter und in ihrer Angst von populistischen Scharfmachern bestärkter und aufgestachelter Bürger gegen Minderheiten – Muslime, Flüchtlinge, Asylbewerber, gegen »Fremde« – in unseren Tagen wieder zu erleben.

Das Zusammenrotten von Bürgern, die sich unter Anleitung von Demagogen in Bestien verwandeln, ist leicht zu stimulieren. Mann oder Frau mussten im November 1938 nicht Parteigenossen oder obsessive Antisemiten sein, um Gewalt gegen Juden zu üben. In Rostock-Lichtenhagen wiederholten sich 1992 und in Chemnitz 2018 anders inszeniert die massenpsychotischen Entladungen, die in der »Reichskristallnacht« 1938 das Pogromgeschehen gegen deutsche Juden charakterisierten. Entgegen der Selbstbeschwichtigung der Anständigen waren 1938 nicht nur SA-Männer und Mitglieder der NSDAP die Gewalttäter gewesen. Entgegen der gern geglaubten Legende, man habe die Aktivisten aus anderen Orten herbeitransportieren müssen, weil Einheimische nicht bereit gewesen seien, gegen jüdische Nachbarn, Geschäftsfreunde, Mitbürger Gewalt zu üben, waren die Ortsansässigen aber mit Lust gewalttätig gewesen. Das führten die Prozesse vor Augen, die in den ersten Nachkriegsjahren von der deutschen Justiz geführt wurden. Das beweisen unzählige Erlebnisbe-

richte der Opfer. Das ist auch den Akten des NS-Regimes zu entnehmen. Die Suche nach der Solidarität mit den Opfern ist dagegen mühsam.

Die Novemberpogrome gehören, da kein Mangel an Quellen besteht, zu den hervorragend dokumentierten Ereignissen des Dritten Reiches. Das von Goebbels in der Nacht des 9. November 1938 entfesselte Pogromgeschehen war inszeniert und zentral gesteuert. Die Gewaltakte gegen die jüdische Minderheit waren von Staat und Partei gewollte Demonstrationen. Sie erfolgten keineswegs gegen die Stimmung des Publikums. Viele beteiligten sich freudig. Zunächst Unbeteiligte gerieten rasch in den Sog der vandalisierenden Avantgarde, Neugierige vermischten sich mit den tobenden Fanatikern zum marodierenden, johlenden, gewalttätigen Mob, der sich durch die Gassen des Orts wälzte, dem sich Frauen, Kinder und Jugendliche anschlossen. Sensationslust trieb die Menschen auf die Straße, wo unter dem Eindruck des Geschehens aus Nachbarn plündernde Eindringlinge, aus individuellen Bürgern Partikel kollektiver Raserei wurden. Das lässt sich mit vielen Beispielen belegen.

Wegen Beteiligung am Pogrom in Treuchtlingen in Mittelfranken standen 56 Personen, alle Bürger des Ortes, in den Jahren 1946 und 1947 vor Gericht. Unter ihnen befanden sich acht Frauen. Ihr Anteil an der Barbarei erlaubt Rückschlüsse auf die weibliche Mitwirkung, die meist nur durch Hinweise auf höhnisches Lachen aus der Menge heraus, durch gaffende Neugier oder in der Rolle plündernder, stehlehdender wegtragender Passantinnen berichtet wird. Nicht nur in Treuchtlingen waren Frauen wütende Mitwirkende am Landfriedensbruch.

So beteiligte sich Sofie O. nicht nur durch anfeuernde Rufe, sie schlug auch Fensterscheiben im Haus eines jüdischen Arztes ein. Nora A. veranlasste die SA zur Rückkehr in ein bereits verwüstetes jüdisches Anwesen und forderte zu weiterer Zerstörung auf mit dem Ruf »Bei Gutmann langt's noch nicht, was alles zusammengeslagen ist«. In einem anderen Haus schlitzte sie Betten und Polstermöbel auf, zur Brandstiftung der Synagoge schleppte sie das Benzin herbei, im Schaufenster eines jüdischen Geschäftes zertrampelte sie Waren und einer um Hilfe rufenden Jüdin rief sie zu: »Schau, daß Du rauskommst, Judensau! Sonst erschlagen wir Dich!«

Hannchen B. äußerte vor der brennenden Synagoge ihre Befriedigung und Amalie B. erklärte vor einem jüdischen Anwesen: »Schaut's, der Judensau langt's noch nicht! Da müssen wir die SA nochmals holen!« Worauf ein Trupp die Verwüstungen fortsetzte. Ottilie H. zerstörte die Auslagen eines Geschäftes. Leni K., die große Schulden in einem jüdischen Laden hatte, drang mit der Menschenmenge in das Haus ein, um die Geschäftsbücher zu vernichten.⁴

4 Das Verfahren vor dem Landgericht Nürnberg-Fürth wurde am 29.12.1945 eröffnet, das Urteil datiert auf den 14.11.1947, Institut für Zeitgeschichte München, Archiv Gn 02.10.

Die Geschehnisse des 10. November 1938 in der hessischen Kleinstadt Büdingen waren sowohl im Grad der Rohheit, als auch in der Anteilnahme der Bevölkerung typisch für die Exzesse im ganzen Deutschen Reich. Das Landgericht Gießen stellte dazu Jahre später fest: »Zunächst wurden zahlreiche jüdische Einwohner von Büdingen von nicht mehr zu ermittelnden Tätern aus ihren Wohnungen geholt und in das Amtsgerichtsgefängnis gebracht. Am frühen Nachmittag rottete sich eine größere Menschenmenge zusammen, die durch die Straßen der Stadt zog und Gewalttätigkeiten beging. Während zahllose Neugierige von der Straße aus zusahen, drangen einzelne Haufen, zumeist aus Jugendlichen und Schulkindern bestehend, in die jüdischen Wohnungen ein, zertrümmerten die Möbel und andere Einrichtungsgegenstände, zerschlugen Fensterscheiben und Geschirr, schlitzten die Betten auf und warfen Möbelstücke, Wäsche und andere Dinge auf die Straße. Diese Umtriebe, die hin und wieder etwas abebbten und später wieder von neuem aufflackerten, dauerten bis in die Abendstunden.«⁵

Den Tatbestand jäh aufflammender Rohheit im hessischen Büdingen, der sich ähnlich auch in Baden-Baden, in Berlin, in Kiel, in Dortmund und Gelsenkirchen, in Salzkotten usw., in Kleinstädten und Dörfern ereignete – juristisch klassifizierbar als Aufruhr und Landfriedensbruch, Freiheitsberaubung und Nötigung – rekonstruierte die Erste Strafkammer des Landgerichts Gießen Anfang 1949. Einer der Angeklagten, ein Metzgergeselle, war zur Tatzeit achtzehn Jahre alt. Er gehörte weder der Hitlerjugend noch der NSDAP an, galt als fleißig und tüchtig. Seine Tat bestätigten Zeugen und der Angeklagte selbst. Am Nachmittag des 10. November verließ er nach der Arbeit den Schlachthof, schloss sich einer Menschenmenge an und betrat das Haus der Familie Hirschmann. »Als hier die annähernd 60jährige Frau Hirschmann, die mit ihrem gelähmten Mann in der Küche saß, von zwei jungen Burschen die Treppe hinuntergestoßen wurde, folgte L. ihnen, faßte Frau Hirschmann auf der Straße plötzlich und trieb sie etwa 300 m die Schloßgasse entlang durch die Menge. Er hatte sie dabei an den Kleidern gepackt, schlug auf sie ein und trat sie mit seinen Metzgerstiefeln, wohin er sie gerade traf. Als einige Jugendliche der alten Frau mehrmals ein Bein stellten, so daß sie zu Boden stürzte, riß er sie jedesmal wieder hoch, trieb sie weiter vor sich her und schrie, er wolle sie ins Wasser werfen.« Unnötig zu sagen, dass das Opfer dem Täter, der zu einem Jahr Gefängnis verurteilt wurde, nie etwas zuleide getan hatte.⁶

So entsetzlich wie unverstänglich die Exzesse waren, wenn Jugendliche ohne erkennbare Bindung an den Nationalsozialismus als Täter in Erscheinung traten, so waren die Untaten der Antisemiten und Hitleranhänger nicht weniger abscheulich.

5 Urteil des Landgerichts Gießen, 6.1.1949, Institut für Zeitgeschichte München, Archiv Gg 01.08.

6 Urteil des Landgerichts Gießen, 6.1.1949, Institut für Zeitgeschichte München, Archiv Gg 01.08.

Die Parteigenossen zeigten sich nach dem Untergang des Dritten Reiches auch weniger tapfer als während des Pogroms, erinnerten sich nicht, wollten nicht am Tatort gewesen sein, beteuerten ihre Unschuld und dass sie nichts gegen Juden hätten, wie ein Mannheimer Apotheker, der in der »Kristallnacht« als Berserker so gehaust hatte, dass sich seine Berufskollegen – im März 1946, mehr als sieben Jahre nach der Tat – einstimmig mit Abscheu wegen seines »menschen- und standesunwürdigen Verhaltens« von ihm distanzierten.⁷

Die Inpflichtnahme von Kindern und Jugendlichen für den Pogrom durch Erwachsene ist ein Indiz dafür, dass in kleinen ländlichen Verhältnissen wenig Distanz zu den Absichten des Regimes gegenüber der jüdischen Minderheit herrschte. In zwei hessischen Dörfern zog am Vormittag des 10. November unter Führung des NSDAP-Ortsgruppenleiters und des Bürgermeisters eine ständig wachsende Menschenmenge umher und übte Gewalt gegen Juden. Etwa 200 Schulkinder waren vom Rektor auf Verlangen des Bürgermeisters unter Führung ihrer Lehrer zur Demonstration befohlen worden. Sie streiften durch die Gemeinde und folgten der Aufforderung, die Fenster jüdischer Häuser einzuwerfen, bis sie völlig außer Rand und Band gerieten.⁸

Dem steht die Würde der Opfer gegenüber. Die 76jährige Hedwig Jastrow, pensionierte Schuldirektorin, vergiftete sich am 29. November 1938 in ihrer Wohnung in Berlin-Wilmersdorf. Sie hinterließ einen Brief, in dem sie betonte, dass die Mitglieder ihrer Familie seit über hundert Jahren loyale deutsche Bürger gewesen waren. Sie verbat sich Wiederbelebungsversuche und schrieb, es liege kein Unfall vor und es handele sich nicht um einen Fall von Schwermut: »43 Jahre lang habe ich deutsche Kinder unterrichtet und in allen Nöten betreut und noch viel länger Wohlfahrtsarbeit am deutschen Volk getan in Krieg und Frieden. Ich will nicht leben ohne Vaterland, ohne Heimat, ohne Wohnung, ohne Bürgerrecht, geächtet und beschimpft.«⁹

Der Pogrom wurde für viele zum Ventil für Mord- und Zerstörungsgelüste, die öffentlich abregiert werden durften. Schändlich waren die Reaktionen von Schadenfreude und Genugtuung über das Schicksal der Juden, die sich in Plünderung, Erpressung und Denunziation äußerten und vor allem auf Bereicherung zu Lasten der rechtlos werdenden Juden zielten: Es ging in den folgenden Wochen um die Übernahme der zu »arisierenden« Geschäfte, um Wohnungen, um Büros, Arztpra-

7 Urteil des Landgerichts Mannheim, 24.6.1948, Institut für Zeitgeschichte München, Archiv Gm 02.05.

8 Urteil des Landgerichts Gießen, 2.3.1949, Institut für Zeitgeschichte München, Archiv Gg 01.23.

9 Abschiedsbrief Hedwig Jastrow, 29.11.1938. In: Bundesarchiv u.a. (Hg.): Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945. Bd. 2, München 2009, 512.

»Sauhund« verhöhnt, mit Fußritten traktiert. Der grölenden Menge musste er ein Plakat zeigen, auf dem zu lesen war »Tischler ist ein Volksverräter, er gehört nach Dachau«.

Bemerkenswert ist, dass Tischler über die öffentliche Schmähung hinaus nichts passiert ist. Er durfte sich insgeheimer Solidarität erfreuen. Sein Vorgesetzter, der Landshuter Landgerichtspräsident, wusste bei der dienstlichen Behandlung der Angelegenheit so geschickt die offizielle Lesart vom »spontanen Volkszorn«, der zum Pogrom geführt habe, mit der tatsächlichen Steuerung der Ereignisse durch die NSDAP zu konterkarieren, dass Tischler alle Hürden vom angedrohten Strafprozess (wegen Verstoßes gegen das »Heimtückegesetz«) bis zum Parteiverfahren unbehelligt überstand. Sein Gesuch um Versetzung in den Ruhestand wurde damit gegenstandslos. Die Rehabilitierung in der NS-Zeit bereitete ihm allerdings 1947 beim Entnazifizierungsverfahren Schwierigkeiten. In zweiter Instanz 1948 wurden sie dann ausgeräumt.¹¹

Weniger glimpflich kam Julius von Jan, Pfarrer im württembergischen Oberlenningen, davon. In seiner Bußtagspredigt am 16. November 1938 hatte er in aller Deutlichkeit den Pogrom verurteilt: »Ein Verbrechen ist geschehen in Paris. Der Mörder wird seine gerechte Strafe empfangen, weil er das göttliche Gesetz übertreten hat. Wir trauern mit unserem Volk um das Opfer dieser verbrecherischen Tat. Aber wer hätte gedacht, daß dieses eine Verbrechen in Paris bei uns in Deutschland so viele Verbrechen zur Folge haben könnte? Hier haben wir die Quittung bekommen auf den großen Abfall von Gott und Christus, auf das organisierte Antichristentum. Die Leidenschaften sind entfesselt, die Gebote Gottes mißsachtet, Gotteshäuser, die anderen heilig waren, sind ungestraft niedergebrannt worden, das Eigentum der Fremden geraubt oder zerstört, Männer, die unserem deutschen Volk treu gedient haben und ihre Pflicht gewissenhaft erfüllt haben, wurden ins Konzentrationslager geworfen, bloß weil sie einer anderen Rasse angehörten! Mag das Unrecht auch von oben nicht zugegeben werden – das gesunde Volksempfinden fühlt es deutlich, auch wo man nicht darüber zu sprechen wagt«. Der unerschrockene Pfarrer schloss seine Predigt mit der Fürbitte, Gott möge Hitler und der Reichsregierung Einsicht und den Geist der Buße schenken.¹²

Neun Tage nach der Predigt erschien ein Trupp von 200 Nationalsozialisten vor dem Oberlenninger Pfarrhaus, prügelte den Pfarrer nieder und schleppte ihn

11 Beckenbauer, Alfons: Das mutige Wort des Dr. Tischler zur Kristallnacht in Landshut. In: Verhandlungen des historischen Vereins für Niederbayern 98 (1972) 21–36; Benz, Wolfgang: Die Entnazifizierung der Richter. In: Diestelkamp, Bernhard/Stolleis, Michael (Hg.): Justizalltag im Dritten Reich, Frankfurt a.M. 1988, 126.

12 Wortlaut der Predigt bei Denzler, Georg/Fabricius, Volker: Christen und Nationalsozialisten, Frankfurt a.M. 1993, 340f.

ins Gefängnis Kirchheim/Teck. Nach vier Monaten Haft wurde er aus Württemberg ausgewiesen, war dann in Bayern als Pfarrverweser tätig. Im folgenden Jahr wurde er wegen Verstoßes gegen das »Heimtückegesetz« zu 16 Monaten Gefängnis verurteilt, später auf Bewährung entlassen, schließlich zur Wehrmacht eingezogen. Im September 1945 kehrte er in sein Pfarramt nach Oberlenningen zurück.¹³ Aus den Reihen der Bekennenden Kirche erfuhren Pfarrer Jan und seine Familie Fürsorge und Zuspruch, die Amtskirche zeigte sich dagegen zurückhaltend. Ein Erlass der Kirchenleitung in Württemberg vom 6. Dezember 1938 nahm Bezug auf die Bußtagspredigt mit der Bemerkung, es sei »selbstverständlich, daß der Diener der Kirche [...] alles zu vermeiden hat, was einer unzulässigen Kritik an konkreten politischen Vorgängen gleichkommt.«¹⁴ Der Kirchenleitung war so viel am Frieden mit der staatlichen Obrigkeit gelegen, dass sie auf die Solidarität mit dem Oberlenninger Pfarrer verzichtete, ganz zu schweigen von den fehlenden Emotionen gegenüber der jüdischen Minderheit.

Das Verhalten der drei Männer, die sich in der Stunde der Not solidarisch zeigten, entlarvt die Lebenslüge der Mehrheit, die nach dem Ende des NS-Regimes beteuerte, man habe nichts machen können gegen den Terror, man sei gleich ins KZ gekommen oder umgebracht worden, wenn man aufgemuckt habe. Deshalb hätten sie, bei aller Missbilligung, nichts unternommen.

Solidarität ohne Wenn und Aber übte ein Berliner Paar und dessen Freundeskreis. Die Journalistin Ruth Andreas-Friedrich und ihr Partner, der Dirigent Leo Borchard, hatten jüdische Freunde. In der Pogromnacht fanden sie sich in der Wohnung der beiden ein und baten um Obdach, Hilfe und Trost. Das Haus war schließlich voll von jüdischen Personen auf der Flucht vor dem inszenierten Pogrom der Reichskristallnacht. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich und Leo Borchard waren nicht nur in der Schreckensnacht solidarisch. Sie halfen bei der Ausreise, betreuten Zurückbleibende, versteckten Untergetauchte. Aus ihrer Solidarität und der ihres Freundeskreises entstand die Widerstandsgruppe »Onkel Emil«, die bis zum Ende der NS-Herrschaft unentdeckt blieb.¹⁵

Die Phantasie derer, die sich wie Pfarrer Jan der Untaten des NS-Regimes schämten, die Zivilcourage zeigten wie Reviervorsteher Krützfeld oder die sich nach dem Pogrom Juden gegenüber solidarisch zeigten wie die Berliner Gruppe »Onkel Emil«, reichte im November 1938 noch kaum weiter als zur Vorstellung, die Machthaber wollten die Juden gewaltsam ins Ghetto zurücktreiben oder schlimmstenfalls endgültig aus Deutschland jagen. Bis Auschwitz reichte keine Vorstellungskraft.

13 Gerlach, Wolfgang: Als die Zeugen schwiegen. Bekennende Kirche und die Juden, Berlin 1987, 238.

14 Denzler/Fabricius: Christen und Nationalsozialisten, 343.

15 Benz, Wolfgang: Protest und Menschlichkeit. Die Widerstandsgruppe »Onkel Emil« im Nationalsozialismus, Stuttgart 2020.

Wie hätte sie das auch können, überstieg doch das Bevorstehende, die mit dem Pogrom erst eingeleitete letzte Ausgrenzung, noch lange die Phantasie sogar der meisten deutschen Juden als den vom nationalsozialistischen Rassenwahn zuerst Betroffenen.

Der Abscheu der gesitteten Welt über die Ereignisse in Deutschland war grenzenlos. Die internationale Presse berichtete ausführlich, was in der Nacht des 9. November 1938 und in den folgenden Tagen geschah. Es fehlte nicht an Protesten und Bekundungen der Verachtung für die deutsche Regierung, die nicht nur zugelassen, sondern angezettelt hatte, was unter dem Signum »Reichskristallnacht« über die deutschen Juden hereingebrochen war. An den »spontanen Volkszorn« glaubte zwar niemand, aber man wusste auch nicht, welchen Grad die Zustimmung der Deutschen zur Rassenpolitik des NS-Regimes erreicht hatte. Die »Washington Post« verglich den 9. November 1938 mit dem 24. August 1572, als tausende Hugenotten in der »Pariser Bluthochzeit« ermordet worden waren. Die europäische Welt habe seither nichts ähnliches mehr erlebt: »Und es ist offensichtlich, daß, wie beim Gemetzel der Bartholomäusnacht, auch bei dem jüngsten grausamen Racheakte gegen die deutschen Juden, die Regierung Pate gestanden hat.«¹⁶

Der Schriftsteller Heinrich Mann erkannte in den von höchster Stelle in Deutschland inszenierten und sanktionierten Untaten des November 1938 zwei Absichten. Der Hitlerstaat mache Reklame auch mit seinen Verbrechen, um die Welt in Schrecken zu halten. Die Menschheit solle erstarren und darüber jeden Widerstand – den er wie viele andere ins Exil getriebene Intellektuelle, Künstler, Wissenschaftler von den Deutschen forderte – vergessen. Der andere Zweck des Pogroms gegen die Juden in Deutschland sei ein pädagogischer, er bestünde in der »Erziehung der gesamten Mitwelt zur Unmenschlichkeit, vermittelt der Gewöhnung an ihren Anblick«. Das kann man als Projekt zur Entsolidarisierung deuten. Entmenschung sei die einzige Lehre des Nationalsozialismus schrieb Heinrich Mann, sein eigentlicher Lehrsatz bestehe in der Botschaft, der Mensch habe kein Recht »auf Freiheit und Würde«, und er habe »selbst das Leben nur so lange der Führer es ihm schenkt«.¹⁷

Im Ausland wurde die Verletzung elementarer deutscher Tugenden wie Respekt vor privatem Eigentum, Sparsamkeit, Achtung religiöser Stätten und nachbarschaftliches Verhalten (womit die ganze Skala von Zurückhaltung bis Hilfsbereitschaft gemeint ist) mit Verwunderung registriert – die alltäglichen Normen bürgerlichen Verhaltens im Rechtsstaat schienen für die Gewaltakte des November 1938 suspendiert. Zutreffend an solchem Befremden, das sich in den Spalten der

16 Zit. nach der von Konrad Heiden zusammengestellten Sammlung von internationalen Reaktionen: Der Pogrom, Paris 1939, 97f.; vgl. auch Volkov, Shulamit: The »Kristallnacht«. In: Context. A View from Palestine, Year Book Leo Baeck Institute 35 (1990) 279–296.

17 Der Pogrom, Paris 1939, Vorwort von Heinrich Mann, S. IV.

internationalen Presse fand, war, dass das Deutsche Reich vor aller Welt demonstrierte, dass es kein Rechtsstaat mehr war. Die bürgerlichen Konventionen galten zwar weiter, nur eben nicht mehr für die Juden und je nach Belieben auch nicht für andere Minderheiten. Solidarität mit den Entrechteten zu zeigen galt zumindest als inopportun.

Der Novemberpogrom ist als ein Ritual öffentlicher Demütigung zu deuten, als inszenierte Entwürdigung einer Minderheit, gegen die latente Hass- und Neidgefühle mobilisierbar waren.¹⁸ Darüber hinaus waren die Novemberpogrome Akte der Entsolidarisierung mit Bürgern, die als Feinde ausgegrenzt waren. Die Entsolidarisierung war staatlich programmiert und durch Propaganda vorbereitet worden. Die Wirkung zeigte sich unmittelbar.

Das jüdische Leben in Deutschland erlosch nach den Pogromen. Am 12. November 1938 konferierten Vertreter des Staats und der NSDAP unter Vorsitz Hermann Görings, des zweitmächtigsten Mannes im Dritten Reich. Die Konferenz beschloss die Enteignung der geschädigten Juden, die Herren besprachen die »Arisierung« des jüdischen Eigentums und diktierten den deutschen Juden eine Sondersteuer auf, in Höhe einer Milliarde Mark.¹⁹ Der messbare, d.h. physische und ökonomische Schaden der »Reichskristallnacht« ist erheblich größer, als im November 1938 von den Anstiftern der Pogrome bilanziert wurde. Mehr als 1400 ausgebrannte und geplünderte Synagogen, mindestens 177 zerstörte Wohnhäuser, 1300 bis 1500 Tote, 30756 Verhaftungen jüdischer Männer, von denen 1000 die KZ Dachau, Sachsenhausen und Buchenwald nicht überlebten bzw. an den Folgen der Haft starben. Die politischen, sozialen und emotionalen Schäden entziehen sich jeder Bilanz und sie sind von Dauer.

Nur wenige Bürger hatten den Juden Solidarität erwiesen. Viele waren zu Gewalttätern geworden, die demonstrierten, wie dünn der Firnis der Zivilisation aller bürgerlichen Wohlanständigkeit aufgetragen ist. Die Erkenntnis aus den Novemberpogromen darf deshalb nicht nur darin bestehen, dass Antisemitismus auch acht Jahrzehnte später lebendig ist und bekämpft werden muss. Erinnern und Gedenken an die Schande der christlichen Mehrheit und das Leid der jüdischen Minderheit sind notwendig. Aber auch das genügt nicht. Die Lektion aus der Geschichte ist erst vollständig gelernt und begriffen, wenn die Diskriminierung aller Minderheiten, sei es wegen ihrer Religion oder Kultur, ihrer Herkunft, ihrer sozialen Situation, ihrer sexuellen Orientierung usw. geächtet ist. Solange Ängste der Mehrheit durch Ressentiments gegen Minderheiten und »Fremde« gelindert werden, sind weitere

18 Vgl. Loewenberg, Peter: Die »Reichskristallnacht« vom 9. zum 10. November 1938 als öffentliches Erniedrigungsritual. In: Bohleber, Werner/Kafka, John S. (Hg.): Antisemitismus, Bielefeld 1992, 39–64.

19 Stenographische Niederschrift der Besprechung über die Judenfrage bei Göring am 12. November 1938, Nürnberger Dokument PS 1816.

Ausbrüche bürgerlicher Rohheit zu fürchten. Deshalb gibt der Erfolg von Demagogen, die ihre Gefolgschaft mit populistischen Phrasen und der Denunziation von »Fremden« in politischer Bewegung halten, Anlass zur Sorge vor neuem Ausbruch des »Volkszorns«. In Hoyerswerda und Rostock erfolgte er Anfang der 1990er Jahre und wurde als Teil der Wendekrise erklärt. In Dresden und Freital, in Cottbus und Chemnitz wüteten Rechtsradikale und Bürger, die sich der Mitte zurechnen, gegen Flüchtlinge und Asylsuchende, gegen Muslime, weil sie angeblich anders, tatsächlich unerwünscht sind. Wiederholt sich dort Geschichte mit neuen Opfern?²⁰ Zu fürchten sind Wutbürger und Querdenker, die in organisierter Aufsässigkeit politisch agieren und sich solidarischer Vernunft, die Demokratie kennzeichnet, entziehen.

Die Verweigerung von Solidarität mit Hilfesuchenden, Flüchtigen, Menschen in Not hat sich längst wiederholt. Die »Reichskristallnacht« war nicht der letzte Pogrom in Deutschland. Und nicht die letzte öffentliche Zurschaustellung verweigerter Solidarität. Im Sommer 1992 raste wieder entfesselter Mob, tobte sich in Brandstiftung und Steinwürfen aus. In Rostock und zuvor schon andernorts, wie in Hoyerswerda spendeten Bürger fremdenfeindlichen Randalierern Applaus, feuerten sie an, vermittelten ihnen, während die Obrigkeit unsichtbar war, den Eindruck, sie handelten im Auftrag der schweigenden Mehrheit, ja, sie hätten gar den Beifall interessierter Politiker, wenn sie mit Krawall und Feuer, mit Hassgesang und Mordversuch eine unerwünschte Minderheit vertrieben oder so lange terrorisierten, bis sie amtlicherseits abtransportiert werden musste, weil ihre Sicherheit vor Ort nicht mehr gewährleistet werden konnte. Andere nahmen die Reaktion staatlicher Stellen als Ansporn, fühlten sich in ihrer Fremdenfeindlichkeit bestätigt und wieder andere zogen eigene Schlüsse zur Nutzenanwendung aus den Ereignissen: Eine Gemeinde in Brandenburg wehrte die Einquartierung von Asylbewerbern dadurch ab, dass sie jugendliche Rechtsextremisten dafür bezahlte, die vorgesehene Unterkunft niederzubrennen. Der Erfolg wurde mit einem Fest gefeiert, bei dem das Bier in Strömen floss.²¹

Das geschah 1993 und war kein Einzelfall. Fremdenhass entlud sich auch in brennenden Wohnheimen, im Gebrüll rechter Aktivisten, die seit 2014 gegen Asylbewerber und Bürgerkriegsflüchtlinge demonstrieren, in Brandstiftung, Pöbeleien, Gewalt. Die Täter sind aber nicht nur Rechtsextremisten. Organisiert in der fremdenfeindlichen, nationalistischen und gegen Europa hetzenden Partei »Alternative für Deutschland« und zusammengerottet in der Dresdner Empörungsbewegung »Pegida« finden sich Bürger aus der Mitte der Gesellschaft im Protest gegen die

20 Benz, Wolfgang: Vom Vorurteil zur Gewalt. Politische und soziale Feindbilder in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Freiburg 2020.

21 Zit. nach taz vom 25.8. 1993 (Gekaufter Anschlag: Stolpe weckt den Staatsanwalt).

demokratischen Errungenschaften Toleranz und Weltoffenheit, die als Lehre der Geschichte der »Reichskristallnacht« unsere politische Kultur bestimmen.²²

In der »Reichskristallnacht« wurde unter regierungsamtlicher Regie das Signal gesetzt zur definitiven, zur physischen Ausgrenzung der Juden in Deutschland, die mit den Nürnberger Gesetzen 1935 und einer Flut von diskriminierenden Verordnungen längst begonnen hatte, die nach dem Pogrom mit der Wegnahme des Eigentums durch »Arisierung«, durch Ghettoisierung, Stigmatisierung durch den Judenstern und schließlich mit der Deportation in die Vernichtungslager im Osten endete.

In Rostock entluden sich 54 Jahre nach der »Reichskristallnacht« Frustrationen und sozialer Stress an unschuldigen Objekten der Aggression, an »Fremden«, auf die ein verbreitetes Unbehagen an unübersichtlichen und als bedrohend empfundenen Zuständen projiziert wurde. Interessierte Politiker haben, als sie »das Ausländerproblem« in Szene setzten, das Ihre dazu beigetragen. In ungläubigem Staunen sahen sie dann zu, wie ihnen die Kontrolle über den Protest entglitt. Der entfesselten Wut der Straße – die auch und vor allem ihnen galt – haben sie stunden- und tagelang nichts entgegenzusetzen gehabt. Unter dem Beifall der in ihrem Ordnungssinn gekränkten Bürger errang die Straße einen vorübergehenden Sieg. Nicht anders war, trotz allem Entsetzen, trotz der Scham und dem Zorn der Mehrheit der deutschen Bürger über die Vorgänge, die Abwesenheit der Polizei, die anschließende Publizität der rechten Szene, die vielfache Nachahmung des Rostocker Aufbruchs bis hin zu den Morden in Mölln und Solingen zu verstehen.

Der Pogrom von Rostock-Lichtenhagen im Stress der Wende 1992 war ein Menekel. Die Belagerung von Wohnheimen, grölende Dorfbewohner wie in Clausnitz, jubelnde Fremdenfeinde in Bautzen, die Feuerwehrleute am Löschen einer brennenden Flüchtlingsunterkunft hindern wollen, verängstigte Flüchtlinge sind Zeichen einer Menschenfeindlichkeit, die zutiefst erschreckt. Trotzdem: Die Ereignisse der Gegenwart sind zwar Zeichen der Erosion der gesellschaftlichen Mitte, von bürgerlicher Rohheit, aber nicht, wie die Pogrome von 1938, von der politischen Führung gewollt. Die Ereignisse zeigen jedoch abermals, wie dünn der Firnis von Zivilisation und Kultur ist, wenn Solidarität gefragt ist.

Die Ereignisse in Rostock und Hoyerswerda und die fremdenfeindliche Wut der Jahre ab 2014 sind, das bleibt festzuhalten, Ausfluss von Unsicherheit, Angst und Dumpfheit von unten, und darin liegt der wesentliche Unterschied zur Schreckensnacht des Jahres 1938. Im November 1938 war die Situation trotz äußerer Ähnlichkeiten anders, die »Reichskristallnacht« war von Staats wegen inszeniert, kaltblütig

22 Benz, Angelika: Stationen bürgerlicher Gewalt. Von Rostock-Lichtenhagen bis Clausnitz. In: Benz, Wolfgang (Hg.): Fremdenfeinde und Wutbürger. Verliert die demokratische Gesellschaft ihre Mitte? Berlin 2016, 69–98.

und flächendeckend kalkuliert und diente als Auftakt für Schlimmeres, für den letzten Akt aggressiver Rassenpolitik des NS-Regimes gegen die jüdischen Bürger des Deutschen Reiches.

Die materiellen Schäden des Novemberpogroms und seiner Folgen wurden im Rahmen der »Wiedergutmachungs«-Gesetzgebung der Bundesrepublik, so gut es ging, behoben. Die immateriellen Beschädigungen der Menschen durch Demütigung und Misshandlung, durch den Verlust von Heimat und Selbstvertrauen, von Glück und Gesundheit waren nicht gutzumachen. Nicht wiedergutzumachen war auch der Verlust an bürgerlicher Sicherheit und an Vertrauen in die Mehrheitsgesellschaft auf Seiten der Minderheit nach dem öffentlichen Entzug der Solidarität.

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Solidarity in Sweatshops and Sex Work

Documenting Women Worker Organisers in Made in L.A. and Live Nude Girls Unite!

Sarah Earnshaw

The call to solidarity almost immediately conjures to mind the raised, clenched fist of protest or the triumphant tones of Solidarity Forever, where the union makes us strong. It is a sentiment that is used somewhat synonymously with community, a shared understanding of struggle and a commitment to the collective. Solidarity in the seemingly natural association with labour and the political Left has been considered as in something of a decades-long crisis – if it ever truly flourished in the US – under the dominance of Neoliberalism. In an increasingly fragmented labour market, an ever more precarious and separated workforce is spread across the ‘global village’ where flows of capital, information, and work are understood to undermine the proximities and shared places from which to foment class consciousness and realise solidarity. Calls for ‘more solidarity’ in struggles for social, economic, racial, gender, and climate justice can take for granted a notion of solidarity as springing forth from an inherent same-ness, a shared fight that is somehow pre-existing but that is stymied or occluded by the powers-that-be. A concept so deeply normalised, I often sign off an email ‘in solidarity’, but in this easy evocation I must admit, I would be at pains to explain what exactly I mean in typing those words.

This taken-for-granted status was questioned by labour historian David Roediger,¹ who began the 2015 American Studies Association presidential address with a reflection on the Black Lives Matter protests of the previous year following the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson and urged caution in imagining solidarity as something that we must simply find and reignite. Rather, he calls for more scholarly engagement with the concept, but argues that such considerations must render an unease with solidarity to unsettle universalisms resting upon rose-tinted histories; while “it remains critical to make a case for solidarity”, for meaningful practice one

1 Vgl. Roediger, David: Making Solidarity Uneasy: Cautions on a Keyword from Black Lives Matter to the Past. In: *American Quarterly* 68 (2016), 2, 223–248.

must be “uneasy about the assumptions it sometimes evokes”.² Tracing an at times contradictory conceptual history across Catholicism to the predominant Marxist and Leftist associations, Roediger explores the practices of US labour solidarity that neglected or were actively premised upon exclusions based on gender, race, and relations of empire. Starting from the recognition then that solidarity is not a given, I draw upon new working-class studies and labour geography as a guide to re-theorise the relational, and cultural, practice of solidarity, which focuses upon the agency of working-class movements in shaping solidarities. The geographer David Featherstone³ has urged solidarity to be thought politically, as a “relation forged through political struggle which seeks to challenge forms of oppression”.⁴ With a focus on solidarity from below, the relation is not naturalised as Featherstone contends with the work and contingency of struggle in a recognition of the “generative, transformative character of solidarity and how solidaristic practices can shape new relations, new linkages, new connections”.⁵ In my contribution, I turn this lens toward cultural production by examining documentaries on labour organising, proposing the form as a means to screen class struggle and as a practice of solidarity.

As the kinds of work that dominate the US labour market shift toward what are variously termed immaterial, affective, and knowledge labours in service, health-care, and technology, in a landscape of deindustrialisation where workers in the US are less likely than ever to join a union with membership rates at just 10.3 % in 2021 (Dept. of Labor), this raises serious questions as to the study of working-class experience, politics, and institutions. A wave of strike action across the US in 2021 and continuing in successive ‘hot labor summers’, broad geographically and in various sectors, alongside refusals such as the Great Resignation and Quiet Quitting, calls for reflection on the role of workers in imagining social justice and the place of class in the US. Scholars in new working-class studies attempt to recentre “the unifying potential of class”, with a focus on the lives, cultures, and perspectives of workers as a “foundation and location for analyses of systems of power, oppression and exploitation”.⁶ Yet this focus does not lose sight of the necessity to address the distinct experience across race, gender, and ethnicity in any pursuit of class-based organising. In linking cultural expression and physical labour, Janet Zandy argues that the field provides an “alternative frame and a way out of the impasse of identity politics and identity fragmentation. By drawing a web of connections based on multiple forms of

2 Ebd., 224.

3 Vgl. Featherstone, David: *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism*, London 2012.

4 Ebd., 5.

5 Ebd., 19.

6 Linkon, Sherry Lee/Russo, John: Introduction: What’s New about New Working-Class Studies? In: Dies. (Hg.): *New Working-Class Studies*, Ithaca 2005, 11.13.

labor, working-class studies demonstrates how the margins are, indeed, the masses, quite literally, the hands that sustain the materiality of the world".⁷ The documentaries under analysis film class from two distinct sites of labour contestation, the sweatshop and the strip show. The Emmy-award winning, Spanish language film *Made in L.A. = Hecho en Los Angeles*, focuses upon Latina garment workers and a legal battle against the fast fashion brand Forever 21, while *Live Nude Girls Unite!* takes the viewer to San Francisco's Lusty Lady peep show to document the successful founding of the first, and until recently only, Exotic Dancers Union in the US. These films are first and foremost organised around labour mobilisation, as documents of legal battles for rights and recognition; however, both films mediate the material and social relations of class across multiple lines of identity and centre workers that are left out of the mainstream discourse on labour.

Upon reading these two choices, it may perhaps jump out as a little gauche to consider together the exploitations of garment workers and exotic dancers. Yet this is informed by a broader association of the two realms as largely populated by women workers. While the films adopt different tones in the storytelling, both track lengthy legal battles, situate the workers in tensions surrounding immigration and feminism respectively, are embedded within the campaigns, and convey the agency of the women at the centre of these stories. Enacting the unease of solidarity, the films also unsettle the assumed ideal type of the worker as the white male labouring in heavy industry, carrying a hard hat and a union card. Media, and particularly film, carry the potential to foreground labour that is often invisible in discussions of work and class. Communication media is a crucial aspect of class formation across a fragmented economy and a tool that can account for the intersections of working-class subjectivity. In the first section of this essay, I will explore the screening of labour and the documentary form; I then turn to the narrative strategies of personal storytelling in these films and the negotiation of public/private; finally, I consider the role of 'place' on film and in the transformative character of solidarity.

1. Screening Solidarity

Labour and the moving image have been bound together from the outset of the technological advance: one of the first examples in the 1890s, Louis Lumière's *Employees Leaving the Lumière Factory* depicts the (mostly women) workers exiting the workplace. Considerations of the medium of film, particularly in the US context, as representing the working classes – and as a projection of class consciousness – inevitably zooms in to the documentary form. To challenge the power of Hollywood in shaping the largely negative and condescending portraits of the working class, film

7 Zandy, Janet: *Physical Labor, Class, and Cultural Work*, New Brunswick 2004, 146.

scholar Tom Zaniello has argued that it has largely fallen on alternative, independent documentary filmmakers – through the radical Newsreel collectives founded in the 50s, agit-prop, cinema-verité, guerrilla styles, to the possibilities of digital doc forms – to film class agency, preserve militant labour history, and explore class in society.⁸ The documentary as a new cinematic form arose in the 1920s, informed by the Modernist modes of technological experimentation and re-theorisation of the medium to imagine new ways of seeing, with documentary as a media that could function as a form of criticism, education, and societal renewal, “a fabrication that thereby brought forward a new reality”.⁹ Documentaries are today a highly marketable and institutionalised genre; it is therefore important to parse the form. Exploring the psychoanalytic of desire in documentary spectatorship, Elizabeth Cowie has examined the relations of identification that can establish a distanced gaze, where the viewer has fulfilled a “certain ego ideal demand” that they are good people who can empathise with suffering. But this requires a cast of victims who are “properly helpless as well as voiceless [...] nor should they be able to provide a sophisticated analysis of their circumstances and its causes, or else they will rival the film and its spectator as knowing subject”.¹⁰ The radical potential of documentary however lies in the possibility to overthrow the dominant register of the ‘truth-teller’, to grant agency in the place of victimisation and in unsettling the distance between the screen and the showing, as a practice of mobilisation.

I draw upon Funke, Robé, and Wolfson’s concept of ‘media suturing’ to analyse the productive potential in video media – particularly documentary and activist film – in class formation. Class consciousness arises not purely from the material conditions of labouring under capitalism, but from “collectivizing processes such as struggle and communication” wherein classes of people can recognise the possibility for change and their historical agency. Noting the more generalised condition of isolated and fragmented work under neoliberalism, the authors note that “communication emerges as one critical vehicle through which class formation takes place in contemporary society”.¹¹ This essay is not the place for sustained engagement with the concept, but suffice to say here that suture theory typically refers to the extent to which viewers are ‘stitched in’ to the imaginary of the cinematic world, thereby losing sight of the fabrication to the extent that one cannot critically reflect upon the artificial construction. Suture is a medical term referring to the stitch that binds a

8 Vgl. Zaniello, Tom: *Filming Class*. In: Russo, John/Linkon, Sherry Lee (Hg.): *New Working Class Studies*, Ithaca 2005.

9 Cowie, Elisabeth: *Recording Reality, Desiring the Real*, Minneapolis 2011, 47.

10 Ebd., 99.

11 Funke, Peter N./Robé, Chris/Wolfson, Todd: *Suturing Working Class Subjectivities: Media Mobilizing Project and the Role of Media Building a Class-Based Social Movement*. In: *Triple C: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 10 (2012), 1, 18

wound or incision. The authors retheorise 'suture' in cinema theory, to ground the practice in the material relations of class formation. The production and distribution of video are argued to play a part in the suturing of different sections of a working class – across lines of ethnicity, immigration status, employment, and gender – in a collective transformation into class-based identification. Media “must be understood as a form of activist practice in and of itself, not only as a way to relay representations of activism happening elsewhere”.¹² The distance that could be inscribed by the screen is then collapsed to activism happening here. The documentaries are not considered “endpoints unto themselves” but instead as sparks that forge solidarities, renew class alliances and inspire organisation.¹³

Now to take this theory to the screen. The US-based, Spanish director Almudena Carracedo set out to make a short piece on sweatshop conditions after reading an exposé in the LA Times. Her encounters at the Centro de Trabajadores de Costura, the Los Angeles Garment Worker Center (GWC), pulled her to follow a three year battle against Forever 21 – filed by 33 garment workers, who had worked in a number of sweatshops across LA in illegal working conditions under subcontractors to the chain – to recognise the workers' rights in the manufacturing of their clothes. The GWC led a national boycott and the film follows the ultimately successful settlement through the lives of three main protagonists: María Pineda, Maura Colorado, and Guadalupe 'Lupe' Hernandez. The portraits of these women, three undocumented garment workers, weave their experience through the collective action of the lawsuit and boycott, and Carracedo navigates the way through the intersections of gender, ethnicity, immigration status, and exploited labour in the garment industry. *Live Nude Girls Unite!* on the other hand, was shot by one of the dancers involved in the unionising of the Lusty Lady, Julia Query, and follows the 85 workers as they go through the bargaining of the first contract – a very tricky process. The dancers collectively organised as a reaction to the club's policies on wage increases, dismissals, sick days, racist practices in scheduling, and the failure of management to enforce the 'no camera' rule, where dancers were being illegally photographed and images shared online without their consent. A comedian, writer, and sex worker, Query's helming of the film plunges us, the viewer, onto the peep show stage, the picket line, and the beige walls of the bargaining rooms.

12 Funke, Peter N./Robé, Chris/Wolfson, Todd: Rewiring the Apparatus: Screen Theory, Media Activism, and Working-Class Subjectivities. In: *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society* 28 (2016), 1, 57–72, 59.

13 Funke et al (2012), 21.

2. Narrating Solidarity

Examining the filmic practices of solidarity in these documentaries, I argue that the narrative strategy of personal storytelling functions as a mediation, not only between the individuals and larger, structural inequality but also as challenging “the unjust distribution of society’s resources for storytelling, or, more technically, the unequal distribution of ‘symbolic power’”¹⁴. The personal narrative, beyond producing an affective anchor, also centres the agency of the subjects in these documentaries, workers that are generally outside of the mainstream media depictions of labour and class. Grappling with *The Subject of Documentary*, Michael Renov has discussed the role of autobiography in film as a navigation of “who we are”, an expression of agency against the lofty industries of representation as in news, entertainment, and advertisement media.¹⁵ While noting critics have claimed the move toward the personal as a reactionary, individualist backlash, Renov argues that productions on the margins exercise a radical potential of collective resistance in “coupling liberatory public testimony and private therapy”.¹⁶ The personal narrative storytelling of these documentary films can be read as mediating between the private strife and the workplace dispute as well as the suture of the specific, local labour practices and the more general systems of exploitation within which these industries – sex work and sweatshops – are situated. The negotiation of the public testimony and private therapy is central to solidarity formation across a fractured working class. Labour organising often snowballs from the gradual recognition across a workforce that everyone is experiencing similar frustrations – as in *Live Nude Girls Unite!*, there came an instance where the women realised “you’re as angry as I am”. Part of the relational processes of solidarity building involves the breaching of the private in order to recognise the collective frustrations. The documentary form is one media which can provide a platform of intimate storytelling, where the individual portrait speaks to the common and shared, while also differentiated, experiences of oppression. In the documentaries under analysis here, the viewer is shown the burgeoning solidarities as workers recognise the collective struggle, but in this screening of class – alongside immigration status and gender oppressions – the films themselves contribute to the suturing of working-class subjectivity.

14 Couldry, Nick. *Media and Democracy: Some Missing Links*. In: *Media and Social Justice* (ed.) Jansen, Pooley, Taub-Pervizpour (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011) 47; See also, Canella, Gino. *Social Movement Documentary Practices: Digital Storytelling, Social Media and Organizing*. In: *Digital Creativity* (2017) 28, 1, 24–37.

15 Vgl. Renov, Michael: *The Subject of Documentary*, Minneapolis 2004.

16 Ebd., XVI.

2.1 Sewing Solidarity

The documentarian behind *Made in L.A.* credits her being a native Spanish speaking woman and filmmaker working alone as enabling her to gain the trust and intimacy that is mirrored in the “unobtrusive, intimate verité study”, accompanied by a desire to “capture the lyrical beauty and the details of this colorful, diverse Los Angeles that few outsiders experience”.¹⁷ Carracedo notes her impression of the workers “need to tell their personal stories” and their surprise in her interest. The film is then positioned as providing a glimpse into those ‘other’ California’s that are hidden: not only the horrors of the exploitation experienced but the lives, labours, and communities that these workers have also built and sustained in LA. In verité style, there is no narrator from which to wrest the authoritative voice-over. Carracedo plots the growth and amplification of the local actors as reflecting an “all American experience” of the immigrant fight to “assert their voice in our society”; ultimately, she argues the film is “a story about the decision to stand up, to say, ‘I exist. And I have rights’”.¹⁸ Three women helm the narrative, each with distinct stories that intertwine at the GWC, in their experience as undocumented workers, as Latina women, and as garment workers. Maura Colorado from El Salvador is a single mother who came to the US 18 years before to support her family, leaving three young sons. María Pineda is a Mexican mother of three, whose husband’s abuse of alcohol and controlling behaviour – on top of the gruelling sweatshop work – influence her organising capacities. And finally, Guadalupe (Lupe) Hernandez is a single Mexican woman, who had joined her sister in LA to escape the confines of caring for an abusive father and six brothers after her mother’s death.

The documentary opens by situating the protagonists within their private, domestic space, each telling their individual story and how they ultimately came to seek the help of the GWC. The sequences are shot with an intimate focus upon the women, cutting every so often to a personal effect or another family member, this gives the audience a picture of their lives both in and out of work as well as highlighting the intertwining of their workplace exploitation and private circumstances. Maria sits at her home sewing machine, her children playing around the house, sat in the same chair she has worked long hours of overtime for no pay, where she explains the trials of sweatshop conditions and the difficulties of juggling family life through gruelling hours. We join Lupe in the ritualised routine of applying make-up, the everyday scene sets her story within the multiple strains of being a woman and her own insecurities. Finally, Maura is shown watching a VHS home movie from 1987, that is full of ‘roach poop’ and with the tape wearing out. The shot flits between grainy

17 Rogow, Faith: *Made in L.A. P.O.V. Discussion Guide*, PBS, American Documentary, Inc., 2007, 2.

18 Ebd.

footage of her family in El Salvador, including the three young sons that remained, and her emotional reactions. The ephemeral material of the tape frames this moment of remembrance and sense of longing. The immobility and stillness of workers trapped by economic considerations is further compounded by the precarity of undocumented status where the fear of deportation is exploited by sweatshop managers. The narrative focus of the three introductions reflects the organising strategies of the GWC itself, as building a “more broadly conceptualised labor movement” that centres the mostly women workers who “face multiple, interconnected layers of oppression – as workers, as immigrants, and as women”.¹⁹ The GWC is presented as something of a nucleus from which to recognise the shared experience of struggle and to provide a space of collective support and empowerment.

Over the course of the Forever 21 campaign, the protagonists are shown asserting their voice. During the nation-wide boycott, we see Maria and Maura speaking to students at prestigious campuses – UCLA and Georgetown respectively – as worker-activists. Carracedo captures the preparatory moments beforehand, where both women are visibly nervous at the prospect of public speaking and of sharing what have been humiliating experiences. Before each engagement, GWC organiser Joann Lo urges the women to talk about being a woman, a worker, “all of it together” and advising that “you’ll have more impact if you talk about your own experience”. The narrative arc of the film traces the finding of confidence, and ultimately power, in the collectivising processes of the campaign, perhaps most evidently in Lupe’s journey as she is hired as the Latino organiser at the GWC. From her place of experience as a migrant garment worker, Lupe is shown explaining the importance of collective organising with a constructed model of a pyramid of power. Noting that some workers there couldn’t read, she illustrates the ability of workers to shake the foundations in a physical display of punching out the bottom: if 150,000 workers unite “we must feel that strong and powerful, because we are that powerful”. By stating that individual petitions cannot achieve the same impact, Lupe communicates the power of a united class consciousness to effect real change. Stitching the protagonists into the mass of garment workers, Carracedo includes sequences of labouring bodies and in particular close shots of hands feeding material through the machines. Scenes of information evenings on California workers’ rights as well as organising meetings show discussions that note the health and safety dangers of sweatshops, and particularly the exhaustion. A structuring motif of the film is time, specifically the long and drawn-out months of the boycott, and the toll that this takes on fraying solidarities at the GWC. This underscores the huge personal expense of free time, a valuable commodity, of workers to organise and fight. As the boycott drags on, even

19 Sullivan, Richard/Lee, Kimi: Organizing Immigrant Women in America’s Sweatshops: Lessons from the Los Angeles Garment Worker Center. In: *Signs* 33 (2008), 3, 527–532, 531.

after the appeal is won and lengthy settlement negotiations set in, the frustration of the organisers, lawyers, and workers flare in a constant struggle to keep up the fight.

The strains and the fears of the workers, at the whim of employers who consistently underpay or fire people without hesitation, are invoked by Lupe who describes the immigrant experience as dreaming of the wealth of jobs in the US but what they find are “jobs of exploitation”. While she does not explicitly refer to racism in the exclusion and exploitation of Latino communities, she notes that “if you’re undocumented and you don’t know English you can’t do anything else. You basically don’t exist”. To explore the contemporary conditions of this workforce – doing the jobs that no one else will – the film interweaves histories of immigrant women as exploited workers in the US garment industry. The largely Latino, often undocumented, workers that populate sweatshops in LA is related to the generations of Asian immigrants who had come before. Everyone at the GWC is fluent in Spanish and the Asian American organisers heading the Forever 21 campaign are filmed leading protests, educating workers on their rights, and rallying the three protagonists. The shared history is invoked by Joann who expresses a sense of personal connection to the seamstresses in her own parents’ struggle as immigrants and in noting that her mother could not speak English. Media Studies scholar Camilla Fojas argues the organisers “represent a form of cross-racial coalition against worker competition based on race”: Asian and Latino communities have so often been excluded not only as a threat to the ‘domestic’ (read: white) US labour market but also pitted against one another in grabbing the available jobs, “though these groups also suffer equally from marginalization as racialized outsiders deemed foreign and unassimilable”.²⁰ The perceived sacrifice to become a part of the US fabric sews divisions across immigrant groups with similar class interests. From the Chinese Exclusion Act to national origin quotas, racist policy and rhetoric around immigrants here to ‘steal’ jobs have been organised around labour. As racialised groups held outside of US identity, the disposability of the clothes is mirrored by the disposability and deportability of the workers behind every stitch.

Recognising the place of the sweatshop workers in the ‘American dream’ and in US society provides a salient narrative framing and Lupe is posed as our guide in this history. Travelling as part of the national boycott, Lupe visits the Lower East Side Tenement Museum as well as Ellis Island, with Carracedo filming her reactions to and engaged consumption of the exhibits. The worker-activist is very clearly deeply affected by the historical recurrence; upon learning the conditions that the mainly Jewish, Eastern European immigrants faced, Lupe appears both dejected and angered that “things are just the same”. Spotting photographs of organisers in the early 20th century, taking notes to relay this to her fellow workers back in LA, Lupe is struck by the banners reading ‘Organize. Unity in Strength’. This personal discovery

20 Fojas, Camilla: *Migrant Labor and Border Security in Pop Culture*, Oxon 2017, 31.

and sympathetic connection also sews contemporary sweatshop conditions – and the Forever 21 campaign – into the legacies of immigrant women organising. This section of the workforce has been a major force in US labour history, such as in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, a sector that has now largely fallen outside of the remit of unionisation,²¹ but which remains active in alternative organising strategies, apparent in worker-activists such as Lupe: the strength of unity then continues into the present.

2.2 The Good Fight in Glitter and Heels

Live Nude Girls Unite! is similarly embedded within a (successful) labour struggle in California. Following the unionising of the dancers at the Lusty Lady with the support of the Services Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 790, as their campaign began to pick up national notoriety, one of the workers – Julia Query – was inspired to capture their journey for posterity. The film follows the contract negotiation struggle, the real battle, which pitches the women and the SEIU negotiator against a notorious anti-union law firm hired by management. Alongside filmmaker Vicky Funari, they shot a feminist film about working women that documented the dancers as radical collective organisers. The documentary filmed from the margins of organised labour was described by Roger Ebert as “an advertisement for the possibilities of the consumer digital video camera”.²² As accessibility to digital communication technology that can capture, edit, and distribute such a film has expanded beyond recognition since 2000, the documentary speaks to the possibilities of filming and framing class and labour from the workers’ perspective, to wrest “symbolic power”. Query provides the narrative voice and as a central protagonist is funny, arresting, and brutally honest, a tone that is underscored by sequences of her on stage at one of her other jobs as a stand-up comedian. The documentary is compiled of a mix of behind-the-scenes footage of the peep show, interviews with workers, animated sequences, action from the picket line, news reels, as well as shots from the long hours spent at the bargaining table. The resulting assemblage is a film that functions as an educational tool, an autobiographical journey, and a forum to debate the intersections of feminism and sex work.

While the documentary is about the difficulties of securing rights for sex workers against unfair labour practices, it is also about a schism that exists within feminism as to how women should pitch their fight within – and against – the patriarchy. Noting her background as a former grad student, exotic dancing as a con-

21 Vgl. Sullivan, Richard/Lee, Kimi: Organizing Immigrant Women in America's Sweatshops: Lessons from the Los Angeles Garment Worker Center. In: *Signs* 33 (2008), 3, 527–532, 528.

22 Ebert, Roger: *Live Nude Girls Unite!* [Review] <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/live-nude-girls-unite-2001>.

scious choice for the women of the Lusty Lady foregrounds an agency that is so often negated in media representation of sex workers. In one of her comedy routines, Query quips that “I love working at a peep show because I’ve never worked with so many women who have college degrees. Mostly women’s studies and philosophy. It’s like they figured out what to do about patriarchy – take their money!” The transformative relation of solidarity is not only necessary between the workers in taking on management, but as is underscored time and again throughout the film their appeal is also for other workers to recognise sex work as an issue of labour and class and for feminists to take seriously the possibility of autonomy and agency within sex work, as part of a society that oppresses both women *and* workers.

Query very consciously draws attention to the film as a part of the organising efforts as well as to her own role in driving the narrative. The documentarian-dancer-organiser as an agent in the storytelling is captured in multiple shots against the mirrored walls of the peep show, as the reflection of Query’s camera stares back at us, the viewer. Further, Query’s relationship with her mother is used as a secondary, complementary narrative framework, even noting overtly at one point that her so-called ‘second coming out’ to her mum will provide a plot device and a tension that is self-reflexively recognised in the creative process. Query’s middle-class upbringing, born amidst the US civil rights movement and raised by a feminist single-mother who is a professor and prominent activist for the health protection of street sex workers in New York, provides a dramatic arc of the film. Posing her mother as something of a quintessential, women’s movement era feminist of the second wave, a woman who had rebelled against her parents’ wish to marry a doctor by becoming one, Query notes that as her daughter, she was primed to fight the ‘good fight’. The fronts had simply opened up in an unexpected place, “here amid the neon lights, the fake hair, and the high heels was the good fight I dreamed of fighting”.

In his cautionary call to sit with the unease of ‘solidarity’, Roediger notes his own early associations with the word, and the only too easy assumptions of solidarity in the ‘good fights’ – such as with the United Farm Workers or the Vietnamese revolution. The appeal for “sober reflection on the difference that differences make even in how unity is apprehended” he argues is not defeatism but intended to free solidarity from the “impossible expectations leaving us coming up forever short of an unexamined ideal”.²³ It is exactly this rub that Query and the Lusty Lady dancers come up against which the film relays not just in the moralised exclusions of sex workers from the ‘good fights’ of organised labour and feminism, but in the family dynamics of Julia and her mother, Joyce.

In the confrontation scene that shows her ‘second coming out’, Query can be seen signalling to direct the camera, at one point saying that it should be closer,

23 Roediger, David. Making Solidarity Uneasy: Cautions on a Keyword from Black Lives Matter to the Past. In: *American Quarterly* 68 (2016), 2, 223–248, 225.

which highlights the importance of capturing the struggle as part of the labour mobilisation. Her mother's initial admonishment recognises that all work is demeaning but imparts a deeper level of shame: "we have to swallow pride in almost every kind of work, but it is much better to work with your mind than with your body". Query sets this mother-daughter struggle within the debate which continues to rage among feminists regarding sex work. To explain the fissures in interpretations of female empowerment and selling sex, a series of quotes are overlaid on images of Query dancing on stage; Catharine MacKinnon, billed as 'feminist scholar' argued that "pornography turns a woman into a thing to be acquired and used"; Nina Hartley, 'feminist porn star', asserts the possibility of agency in that "a woman can choose a job in the sex industry and not be a victim. She may become stronger, more self-actualized"; and finally, Julia Query, 'feminist worker', notes in the voice-over that "after hours of dancing and watching men cum and go", she can only describe it as "boring", thereby stitching herself, and her co-workers and colleagues across the industry, into the discourse. In exploring not only Query's choice to work as a dancer, but showing a diverse array of workers who have joined the show, the film expresses a feminist politics that accounts for the "varied responses to the conditions and social obstacles of women's exploitation" while retaining the ability to take individual experience to a transformative relation:

It is these women's shared sense of injustice at the hands of capitalist power that eventually allows them to recognize the possibilities of female solidarity and collective confrontation for creating spaces to resist social and political domination.²⁴

Throughout the documentary, the distinction between public and private – where sex work is pushed to the realm of the personal – is unsettled. The notion that sex cannot be work – either because it is pleasurable or as a shameful exploitation which should not be encouraged – is a critique continually levelled at the activists and challenged in the documentary. During bargaining negotiations, the place of women in the production/consumption of pleasure is exposed in the categorisation proposed by the anti-union law firm. Three months into bargaining, management argued that the preamble should describe the job as "temporary, part-time, fun employment". The assumption then excludes dancing from the public realm of work and even further, asserts that it must bring the women personal enjoyment.²⁵ A stand-up segment by Query sets this exclusion within labour history, as she wonders if the steelworkers would be faced with such an insult. The film at multiple points also sites

24 Borda, Jennifer L.: Negotiating Feminist Politics in the Third Wave: Labor Struggle and Solidarity in Live Nude Girls Unite. In: *Communication Quarterly* 57 (2009), 2, 117–135, 126.

25 Vgl. ebd. 129.

the peep show stage as the shop floor and the dressing room area as the gathering point of camaraderie, where workers don their uniforms and crack jokes between shifts. Look past the make-up, the wigs, the tan lines, and the question remains, what makes this workplace different from any other?

Sex workers, activists, and writers Juno Mac and Molly Smith have tackled the negation of sex work as work in *Revolting Prostitutes*, where they argue that this not only pathologises those in the industry but that this line of argumentation presumes work to be good. Asking sex workers if they would do so without compensation surely begs the same question for much employment.²⁶ Rather, waged work is itself exploitation and it is only through the broader fight for solidarity in a larger recognition of class status that the many intersections of exploitation can be tackled. Linking the struggle to recognise sex work to the history of gendered work, Mac and Smith invoke the 70s 'Wages for Housework' movement: "naming otherwise invisible or 'natural' structures of gendered labour is central to beginning to think about how, collectively, to resist or reorder such work".²⁷ The recognition of 'women's work' as work – the emotional, domestic, and sexual – is not to support the exploitation of wage labour but rather to make possible the protections and assertions of rights. One of the dancers, 'Naomi' unpicks the layers of structural oppression:

They're not exploited just because they are exotic dancers. It has to do with the fact that the club's fucked up, the management's fucked up, they're not getting their tips. If that was in place then, no, I don't think they would be exploited just because they're job is selling pussy.

The moral indignation, and transposed shame, is invoked by the anti-union law firm who take umbrage with the language used by the bargaining team and other workers. The women's use of the word 'pussy' in negotiations as well as in signs such as "no contract, no pussy" was an issue for the lawyers who accused the women of "sexually harassing themselves". Asked to explain this limit to speech, a shop steward relays that one of the lawyers had argued "I don't let my kids talk that way, why should I let you?" This statement not only infantilises the women, as unable to engage in adult conversation, but the patriarchal male figure policing their language also somehow continues this blur between the public and private, where the women have to be disciplined as uncouth girls, rather than respected and recognised as organised workers who are campaigning for representation.

Staging the labouring body is a trope of capturing class on film and filming dancers complaining of aches and pains or keeping their minds occupied by think-

26 Vgl. Mac, Juno/Smith, Molly: *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Workers' Rights*, London 2018.

27 Ebd., 79.

ing of appointments after clocking-off sets the work in the everyday. Alongside the attempt to devalue the work as 'fun' is also the notion of temporary and part-time. This is surely important in relation to the growth of service-related employment not just in the US but globally, in a labour market increasingly characterised by positions that are precarious, freelance, and flexible. Documentary film can thus contribute to the necessary "reconceptualization of how workers position themselves in relation to occupations where a worker's performance is the product being sold".²⁸ Working-class subjectivity in antagonistic relation to neoliberal capital demands a solidarity that practices a unity across difference.

Navigating this difference, a series of animated sequences also punctuate the film to contextualise the local struggle within the history of US labour as well as in feminist debates surrounding sex work. As educational breaks, the animations include depictions of the difference between an 'open shop' and 'closed shop' in union contract language – the audience not assumed to be au fait with labour organising jargon – as well as an image flitting between a woman burning her bra in the 70s to a woman holding her bra aloft in a strip tease performance, placing the dancers struggle in the trajectory of women's liberation. Inserting the Exotic Dancers Union within a genealogy of social justice organising, we can see "the filmmakers attempt to resuscitate the image of the embattled union worker as a component of the American national imaginary".²⁹ Thus, films such as *Live Nude Girls Unite!* contribute to a revival and remaking of the beleaguered figure of the working class. The conclusion of the film ties the two stories, the successful negotiation and the grudging acceptance of her mother. Alongside the difficult – yet collective – concessions made to secure a contract, Joyce's difficulty to accept her daughter's involvement in sex work disrupts any easy allusion to the ties of solidarity and back-patting over the good fight. Query's union activism is ultimately her mum's source of pride, that "she empowered or helped to empower these women to make their working conditions better": which Query responds was possible not because of her individual qualities, her wit, intelligence, or strength, but only because of the collective struggle. This resolution then tentatively proposes labour organising as a means to improve the exploitative conditions of exotic dancing, and the film itself as a means to educate and to spark struggles.

28 Ward, Anne E.: *Capturing the Labor of Sex Work: The Pedagogical Role of Documentary Film*. In: Juhasz, Alexandra/Lebow, Alisa (Hg.): *A Companion to Contemporary Documentary Film*, Malden 2015, 192.

29 Ebd., 197.

3. Placing Solidarity

These documentaries, embedded within local labour organising and driven by personal narrative, are grounded in place: in the labour landscapes of LA and SF as well as the sites of solidarity building in the GWC and Lusty Lady. Linkon and Russo have noted the importance of place in class identity and solidarity “because the forms and structures of work, the way class intersects with ethnicity and race, and the language of class are shaped by the industries that tend to dominate particular places”.³⁰ A focus on place however does not translate to containment and separation, the relations between places can speak to the commonalities of class, the global reach of economic structures, as well as the competition for jobs where corporate greed forces job losses and relocation in a race for ever-cheaper workforces. Both films reflect the site-specific experience of the workers in these cities, while also recognising the national and international industries of which they are a part. In tracing the transformative relations of solidarity, documentary can contribute to the contextualising of “maps of grievance”. This term is theorised by Featherstone to highlight the practices of connection between and across places in common grievances, that are constitutive not only of political identity but can unpick and challenge the seemingly disparate relations of power.³¹ Such mapping functions to make legible a structural critique of a fractured labour force and unsettles a neoliberal frame of individual responsibility.

Women are not only more likely to be employed in the garment industry but are also the main target of fast fashion advertising, as well as the condemnation of consumption. Across documentary, academic, and social media commentary, Rimi Khan has analysed the gendered subject of much of the discourse surrounding fast fashion activism.³² Where critique had previously focused on corporate greed, Khan notes that while contemporary discourse does not completely ignore corporate guilt, ultimately the (white, typically young) women consumers (from the Global North) are shouldered with more responsibility than ever, where their personal choices offer a way out. The ability to make the ‘right’ choices to consume sustainable and ethical brands are then placed within the moral frame, a schema that does not account for the multiple intersecting constraints upon choice. The binary moral distinction of ‘rational choice’, that places an enlightened, stylish woman at the centre, sidesteps any real sustained engagement in a reproduction of free market logic. The critique therefore stays on the level of the status quo and in promoting a ‘conscious consump-

30 Linkon/Russo, Introduction, 13.

31 Vgl. Featherstone, David: *Resistance, Space and Political Identities: The Making of Counter-Global Networks* Oxford, 2008.

32 Vgl. Khan, Rimi: *Doing Good and Looking Good: Women in ‘Fast Fashion’ Activism*. In: *Women & Environments* 96/97 (2016) 7–9.

tion', "it's only proposed solution is a distinctly individual and neoliberal one".³³ This white saviour frame also fails to suture a solidarity with the garment workers across the world who have been engaged in labour struggles at huge personal cost. While Lupe is shown talking to young women in the neighbourhood to educate about the true costs of these brands, the target of the national boycott is to hold accountable those who are reaping huge profits off the backs of garment workers hunched over machines. The shirking of responsibility of Forever 21 was initially assured by the use of subcontracting: it was only through conversations at the GWC that patterns began to emerge across six different factories, all producing for Forever 21, that the workers could file a joint claim.³⁴ The garment workers on film are shown as the active agents in struggling for recognition, not passive victims waiting to be saved by the conscious consumption of the enlightened viewer to buy ethically. While education on consumption choices and boycotts are legitimate campaigns, a sole focus on individual consumers obscures sites of accumulation above as well as the mappings of grievance from below: the documentary refocuses on nodes of connection carried through the voices and actions of workers in, across, and beyond their workplace.

The title, *Made in L.A.*, invokes the cultural capital that brands have cashed in by touting their products as 'American-made'. The idea then is not only that domestic products are a marker of quality, but this label can obscure the abysmal conditions which garment workers are forced to endure. As working-poor Latina women, the social and cultural barriers to 'making it' in LA are high, where corporations can exploit the fear and invisibility of the non-English speaking, often undocumented, women workers. The organiser Kimi Lee notes in the film that 95% of Forever 21 production was taking place in LA at that time, so a success in holding this company accountable could have a huge effect on the labour struggles across the city. The practice of subcontracting fractures workers across contracts, employers, and sites, while the GWC seeks to harness collective power in a place of connection and community. Beyond this, *Made in L.A.* also signals toward the local industry as one site in a global tapestry of production and consumption. However, one can also say that the lawsuit, the solidarity, and the women that we see on the screen as activists and organisers were also somehow made in LA.

The close of the film revisits each of the women a year after the settlement success. Maria has separated from her husband and while she continues to work in the garment industry, she only works "what's fair, 8 hours". She continues for her children, to give them the opportunity to flourish in the US, a classic immigrant parents'

33 Ebd., 7.

34 Vgl. Archer, Nicole A./Gonzalez, Ana Luz/Lee, Kimi/Gandhi, Dimmi/Herrera, Delia: The Garment Worker Center and the "Forever 21" Campaign. In: Milkman, Ruth/Bloom, Joshua/Narro, Victor (Hg.): *Working for Justice: The L.A. Model of Organizing and Advocacy*, Ithaca 2010, 160.

tale. We join Maura in English class, in the hopes of finding another job as garment work is becoming scarcer. She notes a growing trend of factories moving to other countries. While these interconnections are only alluded to, the factories have relocated to the Global South where labour laws and protections are weaker. There is a clear recognition of the ripples across the industry, where a win can also prove a loss, and the exploitations in LA have to be contextualised in global uneven geographies of accumulation. Lupe's journey from seamstress to organiser in the film provides an ending that takes her further afield, to a global struggle for workers' rights. In the final moments, Lupe is in Hong Kong to protest the World Trade Organisation, placing the GWC within a global, intertwined movement. Looking out and surveying the city, Lupe reflects on how far she has come not just geographically but in herself: "the more I learn the lonelier I feel. Ignorance somehow protects you". Yet from this melancholic note, she retains hope in relaying her mother's ability to make a "yummy omelette" from any scraps of food: "You take what you have and from something bad you can create a masterpiece." This final sentence of the film stresses the improvisation and resilience in poverty, the often unrecognised labours of women, as well as the complications and contradictions in the transformative processes of solidarity. The more one can see, the structures become exposed, and with that the width and depth of the problem.

Moving to Northern California, *Live Nude Girls Unite!* similarly engages in a local mapping of San Francisco that branches out, stretching across the US. Query notes her relative privilege in the SF stripper scene in choosing the *Lusty Lady* as "it had a reputation as the hip, feminist peep show with good working conditions". Posing the question of why other clubs in SF had not unionised as they had, the filmmakers embark upon a local investigation of labour mobilisation in the lap dancing scene, which takes the viewer through the worsening conditions of exploitation, where the precariously employed dancers are expected to do more for less money: "the film provides a kind of Marxist socialist analysis of the evolution of the sex industry and the resulting devolution of the sex worker".³⁵ In a race to the bottom for profit, when one club allowed illegal activity – such as customers touching dancers – or removed precautions, the rest followed. One of the interviewees discusses the common practice of the 'stage fee', where dancers pay to work. Initially around 5 to 20 dollars, in the 7 years since it had been instituted the fee could be upwards of 150 dollars, a rapid inflation accelerated by clubs in competition to wring the most money with no legal obligations. The platform upon which the workers can sell their labour, the very labour that the club is dependent upon, is sold to them at an exorbitant rate. Unlike the *Lusty Lady* where workers were classed as employees, dancers at other clubs were 'independent contractors' who cannot unionise,

35 Borda, Jennifer L.: Negotiating Feminist Politics in the Third Wave: Labor Struggle and Solidarity in *Live Nude Girls Unite*. In: *Communication Quarterly* 57 (2009), 2, 117–135, 131.

therefore the clubs could benefit from a fractured labour force in direct competition for the chance to make money. An effort to create a ground for solidarity had been attempted in the 1990s with the formation of the Exotic Dancers Alliance, acting together to try and improve standards. However, the action was met with denial by working class institutions, as one of the dancers relays the reaction of the Head of the Labor Commission who frankly noted that if it were agricultural or garment workers, he would be more inclined to help, but that he could not “chose to waste the taxpayers’ resources on this ‘class’ of workers”. Solidarity then only extended so far, and certainly not to those regarded as below the working class. Breaking out beyond the city limits, the epilogue traces ‘the ripple effect’ of their successful bargaining. Query notes they had received calls from clubs in almost every state from dancers hoping to unionise. Taking her camera along, we join Julia on a trip to the Showboat in Alaska, where dancer Megan decries the fancy lifestyles of the owners financed off the back of their insecure labour without benefits, as well as to the dancers in the famous union town of Philadelphia, who note that 90 % of their customers are union and would not cross a picket line. These travels underscore the importance of the first Exotic Dancers Union in inspiring other strippers as well as the centrality of the communication function of the documentary itself as a pedagogical tool of class struggle.

4. Conclusion

The fights for fair labour practices in these two industries remain active sites of organising. In September 2021, California Governor Newsom signed into law Senate Bill 62, known as the Garment Workers Protection Act, designed to tackle wage theft and hold brands accountable to the garment workers making their products. Among other things the Act prohibits piecework, where workers are paid by the garment, and instead brings garment employees to the state minimum wage. The Lusty Lady has now shut up shop – after the workers bought the club in 2003 it was run as a worker cooperative until closing in 2013 – but there have been a number of actions across the US recognising strippers as employees, not independent contractors, and in 2023 the second strip club union was recognised. In 2018, a dancer Brandi Campbell sued the Centrefold Club in Ohio for unfair dismissal, and the National Labor Relations Board upheld a ruling that Campbell was an employee, therefore protected by federal labor law. The continued practice of strip clubs denoting their workers as independent contractors is a problem that expands beyond the industry:

from Uber and Lyft drivers to yoga teachers, large numbers of workers in a range of industries are misclassified as independent contractors rather than employees,

a move that allows employers to get away with denying them benefits [...] and rights to which they're entitled by law.³⁶

The Lusty Lady legacy and value of coalition can be seen in the successful campaign at another California strip club. Dancers at the Star Garden Topless Dive Bar in LA, with the support of Strippers United founded by Lusty Lady alum Antonia Crane, began picketing in March 2022 to protest unsafe working conditions and in May 2023 became the only unionised US strip club when they joined the Actors' Equity Association.³⁷ Thus, the unifying potential of class, in an economy dependent upon the fragmentation of labor, is more important than ever. As I have argued, the documentary form can function to suture struggles as an organising tool and as a key component in class formation, by recognising a shared fight and holding space for the imagining of other ways of being.

As director and labour researcher Judy Branfman has argued, “a great deal of organizing is taking place, often outside ‘traditional’ workplaces and frequently tied more closely to the immigrant-rights movement than the formal labor movement”: labour documentaries have the potential to capture changing patterns and to re-contextualise labour in US society as “worker organizing is occurring in powerful and unexpected ways across the country, often getting significant attention – and building new movements for justice that could benefit from more filmmaker participation”.³⁸ I would argue then that (labour) solidarity is not necessarily in crisis but as class remains so powerfully rejected in studies of intersectionality in US society – and still stuck on the traditional Fordist imaginary of the male labouring in heavy industry – it is imperative to look at other workers, workplaces, and forms of organising. The documentary form, as I have analysed here with respect to narrative strategies as well as the spatial mapping of grievance across industries, has the potential to capture the difficulties in practicing solidarity and forming what Featherstone described as the “transformative, generative character of solidarity” from below, in centring worker agency. With the expansion of accessible technology and platforms on which to share independent media, filming class is easier than ever, yet Zaniello warns that “the danger always exists that these new and important films and the struggles they define will not persist without support and effort by interested

36 Press, Alex N.: Strippers Are Workers With the Power to Unionize. In: Jacobin (31 Aug 2020) <https://jacobinmag.com/2020/08/stripping-adult-dancing-unions-strike>.

37 Actors' Equity Association Press Release: Dancers at LA's Star Garden Topless Dive Bar Become the Nation's Only Unionized Strippers (16 May 2023); Crane, Antonia. Let's Hear it for the Strippers' Union. In: The Nation (31 May 2023) <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/strippers-union-vote-nlrb/>

38 Branfman, Judy: Eyes on Labor: Documentaries on Work in the Neoliberal Era. Research & Policy Brief, Los Angeles: UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment: No. 20 (April 2015), 2.

viewers, teachers, trade unionists, community organizers, and researchers”.³⁹ For the revolution to be realised, solidarity must be screened.

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Screening Solidarity

Possible Lives in the Films of the Dardenne Brothers

Patrick O'Connor

In this essay I will develop a theory of solidarity as a modal concept. I will use the works of film-philosophers and film-makers Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne to show how this modal solidarity is tenable in late capitalism. My goal is to enhance how we can understand solidarity philosophically, and to offer an exemplar of how research can be conducted at the intersection of film-philosophy, film-theory, philosophy itself, and sociology. The Dardennes, I argue, more than just adding colour to concepts through their filmic and philosophical work, also provide indispensable insights into how solidarity can emerge in late capitalist societies in the face of practices which imperil collective experiences, such as globalising economies, outsourcing, privatisation of public interest industries, the defanging of collective bargaining and the dismantlement of old working-class kinship networks.

Solidarity has been studied most extensively in sociology. The most obvious index is Émile Durkheim's classic *The Division of Labour in Society*, which gives us the distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity to which I attend herein. In the first section, I trace the conceptual lineage of solidarity by engaging Durkheim's foundational account. I appreciate Durkheim's argument on the necessity of differentiation for solidarity formation but deviate from his stricter dualist claims. Solidarity, I argue, is a form-of-life, a manner of being, an activity premised on upholding and forsaking differing priorities. In the second section, I proceed to develop the implications of solidarity as a modal concept. By modal, more specifically, I mean that solidarity is intelligible as a type of dispositional attitude, a disposition *towards* acting-upon matters of concern, norms, priorities, things which might and might not be carried out to maintain the practical identity of a group.¹ 'Modal' signifies that solidarity is intelligible as activities between purpose and achievement, ends and

1 I am guided here by Robert Brandom's notion of alethic modal relations of incompatibility and consequence. States of affairs of the objective world need to be thinkable as matters of what can and cannot be combined. This is Brandom's version of Hegel's 'determinate negation.' Cf. Brandom, Robert: *A Spirit of Trust. A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2019, 141.

means, and success and failure. Solidarity is necessarily contingent, since any act of solidarity can succeed or fail. A number of implications follow from this. I show that solidarity is connected to a concept of life as an activity of self-maintenance, as not necessarily connected to value, and as contingently formed relations: ersatz groups, as it were. Once I have established these points I turn, in the final section, to an exposition of how the Dardennes screen solidarity in a modal way. The conceptual value of the Dardennes' work, I suggest, is the way their cinema transcends oppositions between communal belonging and individual atomisation without falling into the trap of making either pole of this distinction unintelligible. In short, they do not resort to dualistic platitudes. The solidarity they imagine in their films is inherently modal, revealing solidarity as forms-of-life that are continually at stake, dynamic, world-building, and enabling groups to cooperate, share projects, and revise commitments as singular beings that remain inherently human. In other words, they screen solidarity as a form of possibility.²

1. Durkheim's Solidarity

Durkheim looms large in any philosophical or sociological discussion of solidarity. In *The Division of Labor in Society* he famously outlines two forms of solidarity: mechanical and organic.³ The work explains the inadequacy of instrumentalist reasoning and utilitarian ethics for explaining the 'cement' binding a society and groups within a society.⁴ Durkheim's mechanical-organic opposition also discloses the historical variation of solidarity, with solidarity evolving across different types of society, either in modern industrial societies which are complex, differentiated, accommodative of rational individual decision-makers, or simpler, smaller, more pre-modern societies which are putatively more natural, integrated and unified through kinship networks.⁵

'Mechanical solidarity' is emblematic of 'simpler' societies, with mechanical denoting not so much the machinic, but a more natural automaticity.⁶ In integrated

2 Often solidarity is depicted as fellow-feeling, an emotional bond to those different to me. This is a weak concept of solidarity as it is passively constructed. For a very good overview of solidarity as a philosophical concept cf. Tava, Francesco: Solidarity today: A problem-based approach. In: Cojocar, Mara-Daria/Finkelde, Dominik/Wallacher, Johannes et al. (Eds.): *Jahrbuch Praktische Philosophie in Gobaler Perspektive*, Freiburg-München 2021, 65–85.

3 Cf. Durkheim, Émile: *The Division of Labor in Society*, Lawrence, KS 2013, 90–92.

4 Ibid, 21.

5 Durkheim defends a strict dualism: 'There are, here two contrary forces, one centripetal, the other centrifugal, which cannot flourish at the same time. We cannot, at one and the same time, develop ourselves in two opposite senses.' Ibid, 91.

6 Ibid.

'mechanical' societies solidarity is 'automatic' because it is tied to natural habits, predilections and cultural sentiments. These constellations of beliefs maintain a common life without thought. Consequently, with mechanical solidarity subjective atomisation is marginal and group or collective thinking is maximal.⁷ In contrast, organic solidarity emerges due to a variety of factors such as technological development, population growth, divergent institutions and multiplication of divisions of labour.⁸

'Organic solidarity' is dependent on mutual reciprocity arising from common interests forming around the specialisation of work. Whereas mechanical solidarity is impersonal, with little space for individuality, organic solidarity requires an individual devoted to a '[...] sphere of action which is peculiar to him.'⁹ Counter-intuitively, the more differentiated a society, the more opportunities are afforded to different groups to develop in-group solidarity. Thus, kinship networks are no longer the decisive factor in forming social cohesion. In advanced societies, organic solidarity compels individuals to find belonging in the roles, norms, professions and services operating in society.

The paradoxical nature of Durkheim's account of organic solidarity is curious. It seems that more differentiation leads to more solidarity.¹⁰ Of course, taken to a logical conclusion, absolute differentiation implies a society of individuals, which would annul solidarity. Durkheim is alive to this danger, explaining how the division of labour can incite social *anomie* or precipitate suicide due to society's inability to include individuals who struggle to find '[...] a basis for existence in life.'¹¹ Solidarity helps provide that basis. It can also alleviate other problems, such as where there are more corpuscular groupings in a society imposing more stringent normative demands and regulations on members. The more one invests in a group, the more likely one is to reject members who dissent, betray or deviate from the assigned roles deemed necessary to upholding in-group values. In contrast, solidarity is a critical social balm, enabling individuals to find meaning in both differentiated and undifferentiated societies. The strength of Durkheim's view is that solidarity is not tied to identity but extends to out-group members. Solidarity, by cohering varying groups, entails it is a necessary condition of any society emerging in the first place; that is, solidarity is coextensive with the survival of, and reproduction of, society in a 'durable way.'¹²

7 Ibid, 104.

8 Ibid

9 Ibid, 91.

10 Ibid, 101.

11 Cf. Durkheim, Émile: *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, London 2005, 219.

12 Durkheim: *The Division of Labour*, 242.

While Durkheim is right to emphasise solidarity contributes to the reproduction of a society across time, the dualism of mechanical and organic solidarity omits to analyse purposive or modal forms of solidarity. By this I mean the ends *towards* which groups form. Solidarity must be the subject of actions and practical identities which have ends in view, whether distant or imminent: tasks which might or might not be accomplished, tasks that are live or at stake. Consequently, solidarity is not necessarily determinable as a particular value. Groups are committed *to*, not subjects *of*, the values of whatever practical forms-of-life they actively solidify around to uphold. If solidarity were not modal in this way, if it were not a disposition *towards*, it would reify into ahistorical values or abstract pieties, with members elevating group value in place of the active priorities in participating, building or sustaining groups.

Durkheim is right to highlight solidarity formed from a differentiation of divisions of labour. After all, work identities generate complementary interests and commitments as much as competing antagonisms and rivalries. However, the condition underlying solidarity is not differentiation of bonds between individuals and groups *per se*; rather, solidarity *is* the provisional commitments, rules and norms adopted in an effort to sustain life over time. Durkheim's oppositions between the individual and the collective, the mechanical and the organic, the sacred and the profane, obscures the necessity of adopting modal practices as necessary to the formation of solidarity. That solidarity must diverge, change or be open to revision implies it is necessarily contingent. Because it is contingent, as a form of life it is a live issue, a palpable matter of concern for those involved, rather than settled, demanding a selection of priorities evolving alongside the self-constitution of the group.

If solidarity is understood as a form of self-sustenance of any group formation, this helps us parse the relations between individual and social roles. For example, solidarity understood as a form of self-maintenance means individuals can participate in, but remain distinct from, any group formation they happen to occupy, simply because an individual can join or leave a group. *Mutatis mutandis*: any group formation depends on the individuals constituting the group but is not necessarily reducible to them, since more members may or may not join. This shows solidarity is both singular and common simultaneously. As a form of life-maintenance, solidarity necessarily requires both individuals and groups to engage in practices of self-maintaining or self-constitution. But individuals and groups do not *necessarily* have to do the maintaining through explicitly organic or mechanical assignation of roles.

2. Solidarity as Modal

There is no prospective necessity for solidarity to sustain itself, nor is there a guarantee of social unanimity in the future, nor indeed that it be devoted to noble purposes. That solidarity depends on activities of life-maintenance entails it is subject

to success or failure. Consequently, solidarity is inherently contingent. What makes solidarity a distinctive concept – unlike communal feeling, shared sentiment, tribal absorption – is that it points to a distinctive universal of human experience. And that universal is the modal contingency of norms. This explains why solidarity is often associated with, and sometimes mistaken for, egalitarian forms of belonging. Egalitarianism, however, is not necessarily an essential feature of solidarity. Certainly, the projects and commitments humans take up move towards a horizon of understanding where rights and obligations of each towards all and all towards each are palpable. This, though, does not entail solidarity to be necessarily noble, nor are any of its ideals guaranteed. What is important is not the identity of any group *per se* – football teams, political parties, class identity, religious affiliation, ethnicity – rather, the question is *why* groups adopt forms of life to self-maintain in order to tackle imminent priorities, enhancing their chances of survival across a finite span of time and even potentially beyond it intergenerationally. Contingency and risk are in-built into the formation and activity of solidarity. The universal dimension of solidarity stems from groups confronting the vicissitudes of life and the consequent actions and projects adopted to sustain that life.

That solidarity is an activity means it is open to revision, and therefore solidarity is made, remade and not found.¹³ Solidarity depends upon the active selection of roles, norms and commitments. It is a modal disposition towards the formation of a concept of life. These commitments are necessarily neither good nor bad in themselves. Solidarity certainly can take the form of cooperation, collective action and group-participation, but these are not *necessarily* positively inflected. A group of thieves, as the saying goes, can express solidarity for their comrades in crime as much as one set of workers may express solidarity for a different set of insubordinate workers on strike. The point is that none of these specific forms of solidarity are necessarily legitimate, or require idealistic conceptions of value – justice, selflessness, religious ideals, tribal loyalty, humanitarianism – to be intelligible in the first place. Rather, solidarity, although often appearing as such, is not really a value in the sense that it guarantees ways of 'being a better version of myself' or of being a 'good person,' only insofar as it is a manner of actively pursuing the projects and tasks carried out by individuals and groups. Solidarity is the recognition that one has a stake in the outcomes of a relevant group's actions, not that the values of that group necessarily remain intact.

Solidarity actively discloses how mutually recognitive forms of life emerge, however they amalgamate, for better or worse. All the word 'solidarity' names, then, is the recognitive unanimity aimed towards upholding a group's self-constitution in time.

13 Here I subscribe to Richard Rorty's characterisation of solidarity as made rather than found, produced historically rather than ahistorically. Cf. Rorty, Richard: *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Cambridge 1989, 195.

Here, Axel Honneth is valuable. Honneth suggests solidarity is 'symmetrical esteem' or an equality of recognition. For example, being socially esteemed enhances psychological well-being as one's achievements and abilities are recognised as instrumentally valuable by other group members.¹⁴ 'Value,' on Honneth's account, exists insofar as an individual is pragmatically useful to contributing towards maintaining the material interests of the group. Solidarity though, as a type of esteem, requires an exclusive form of group consensus, one originating in a very specific type of social belonging, the social belonging arising from collective resistance to political oppression.¹⁵ The force of the oppression generates in-group consensus, or '[...] the all-dominating agreement on a practical goal that instantly generates an intersubjective value-horizon, in which each participant learns to recognize the significance of the abilities and traits of the others to the same degree.'¹⁶ As I have argued, it is not necessarily the case that solidarity has a positive value, but Honneth's account is valuable to illuminate how spontaneous forms of solidarity emerge.¹⁷ Solidarity is not a 'value' but rather is based on how groups practically orient themselves across the span of different projects and commitments. Solidarity can occur spontaneously, spawning new relations of solidarity and sympathy across social distinctions like class or professional affiliation.

Honneth's example is war, but it really could refer to any adverse set of circumstances, where new forms of solidarity suddenly emerge in the face of societal strain or emergency. Such an eventuality makes explicit accomplishments and abilities previously deemed useless or unnoticed. One might think here of professional classes applauding 'key workers' during the Covid-19 pandemic. The 'how' of solidarity is quite clear: adverse circumstances are conducive to bonding and solidifying groups. Though Honneth explains instances of how solidarity emerges, he does not depict the 'why' of solidarity. Solidarity necessarily exists as an existential disposition because contingent group formation is conducive to human survival. The 'why' acknowledges that solidarity is connected to explicit tasks groups carry out to uphold themselves over time.

At this point it is worth restating the distinguishing features of solidarity. Solidarity is not necessarily founded on tribal fusion or communal belonging; rather, solidarity is the commitments individuals in groups adopt to self-constitute themselves. Solidarity, as a philosophical concept, and despite its etymological roots as a form of solidification – deriving from the Latin for robust, firm or undivided – is contingent and subject to change, and hence is understandable as a form of activity

14 Cf. Honneth, Axel: *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Cambridge, MA 1995, 129–130.

15 *Ibid.*, 128.

16 *Ibid.*, 129.

17 *Ibid.*, 128.

dependent on the projects, norms and commitments we adopt to sustain our practical identity across time. Solidarity certainly can be a horizon of meaning and purpose, but a horizon is not a value, a horizon is only a metaphor for possibility. Solidarity is intrinsically modal, being contingent upon activities that might or might not be adopted, or that might or might not succeed. This formal modal structure demonstrates the necessity of contingency to the formation of solidarity. Solidarity certainly requires identification with a cause, but the content of that cause is not final; that there *is* a cause is necessary, but *why* that cause comes into being is dependent on varying activities and sets of commitments worked out practically over time to maintain the lives of a group.

3. Screening Solidarity

The social milieu in which the Dardennes place their characters is the city of Seraing in the Walloon region of Belgium, within the economic and cultural formations of late capitalism. In feature films and documentaries they are concerned with what Martin O'Shaughnessy calls 'ethics in the ruin of politics.'¹⁸ The 'ruin of politics' O'Shaughnessy refers to is the contemporary economic order, a world of ruthless competitive individualism, precarious labour, economic desperation, breakdown of kinship networks, and the baleful consequences of longstanding efforts to 'globalise' the economies of liberal democracies. Without social safety nets, individuals' commitments are restricted to just that, and individual entrepreneurial impulses are premised on aggressive acquisition, selfishness, and an inability to transcend the atomisation of relentless self-interest.

The Dardenne brothers have made films about those living on the margins of society. Their careers have been dedicated to documenting the bleak realities of the marginalised, filming the lives of immigrants, the precariat, the unemployed or underemployed, substance abusers, those with mental illness, petty criminals and the impoverished. However, it is important to realise that their films do not sentimentalise the vulnerable, and nor do they fetishise the abjection of the poor. Their most vulnerable characters have agency, make realisations, redress personal failings, and ultimately recognise how precarious and significant solidarity is despite the destructive effects of late capitalism. This is important to grasp, since one danger with their filmic accounts of life in late capitalism is that solidarity is limited to ethical sentiment or personal encounters. As Robert Pippin suggests, '[...] in the absence of anything political, the epiphanic moral moments [...] seem inspired by

18 Cf. O'Shaughnessy, Martin: Ethics in the Ruin of Politics. The Dardenne Brothers. In: Ince, Kate (Ed.): Five Directors. Auteursm from Assayas to Ozon, Manchester, 59–83. O'Shaughnessy's chapter also provides useful information on the Dardennes documentarian origins.

the sheer physical presence of some specific particular other person.¹⁹ Pippin is right: personal encounters and reciprocity are crucial for the Dardennes. I do think, though, that this focus can be extended beyond immediate ethical encounters to a reflection on solidarity.

The brothers' works, particularly their films, are situated in zones where democratic politics is absent or subsumed in the transactional relations of market forces. In fact, in their films, transactional relations are so endemic as to be normalised. If the only form of commitments are transactional ones, the possibilities of solidarity or any communal consensus are precluded from the outset. Solidarity is replaced by rabidly self-interested forms of social relations, which in turn diminishes the scope of what can and cannot be considered good. It is important to note the Dardennes are not wide-eyed optimists or romantics.²⁰ While they may very well be optimists masquerading as pessimistic social realists, they always acknowledge the real shapes of the historical realities which inform the modal possibilities of their characters, as well as the obstacles posed to their abilities to become otherwise under the diminished possibilities available in late capitalism.

As such, their characters' realisations tend to hinge on a self-recognition of themselves as abilities-to-be.²¹ Broadly, their aim is to 'battle against the loss of trust in humanity, against this falsely lucid thought in which all man's actions are in vain.'²² Usually the drama is derived from characters struggling with activities they might and might not adopt. This is why the Dardennes' characters are resistant to psychological description. Solidarity as modality is of more importance for characters than revealing any individual motivation or psychic interiority.²³ Hence, the film's protagonists find solidarity not as something accomplished or settled, but actively at stake. Solidarity as possibility is kept *live*.²⁴ We see this, for example, in

19 Cf. Pippin, Robert: *Filmed Thought. Cinema as Reflective Form*, Chicago 2020, 236.

20 One way of defining their work is as 'responsible realism.' Cf. Mosley, Philip: *The Cinema of the Dardenne Brothers. Responsible Realism*, New York 2013, 1–25. Another useful analysis of the Dardennes' efforts to confront late capitalism can be found in Scullion, Rosmarie: *Lessons for the Neoliberal Age. Cinema and Social Solidarity from Jean Renoir to Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne*. In: *SubStance* 43 (2014) 63–81.

21 This term is John Haugeland's. Cf. Haugeland, John: *Dasein Disclosed*, Harvard 2013, 89.

22 Dardenne, Luc: *On the Back of Our Images I: 1991–2005*, Chicago 2019, 29.

23 *Ibid.*, 30–31, 72.

24 There is direct textual evidence the Dardennes pursue a modal form of cinema. In Luc Dardenne's diaries, he says: 'The distinction Gilles Deleuze makes between "virtual" and "possible" is important here: we must not construct the narrative, the film, in such a way that the spectator can only wait for the possible (the resolution) [...] we must be able to create a current of sensations and meanings carried along in the flow of the film, actualising unpredicted virtualities, born in the present of the shot, of their relations.' [All translations mine]. Cf. Dardenne, Luc: *Au Dos de Nos Images II: 2005–2014*, Paris 2015, 142. 'Possibility' is negatively emphasised here, but only if we think of possibility as a phase of necessity, or what

La Fille Inconnue (2016). The central protagonist Jenny (Adèle Haenel), a successful if somewhat overbearing General Practice doctor, refuses after-hours entry to a panicked girl at her medical centre. Jenny occupies a quasi-utopian space, one she is in control of, finding meaning within a closed world of work and success. The visitation of an immigrant girl renders manifest the contingency of her insular existing priorities. Jenny embarks on a detective quest to discover what happened to the girl, who is later found dead. Jenny is forced to recognise that her life is absent of modal solidarity, and consequently she is incapable of counting her own life as a life developing possibilities among others. Critically, she reframes her commitments, taking less well-paid work with more disadvantaged patients.

Either with the stranger who shocks Jenny out of her moral complacency, or a broken family in *Le Fils* (2002), or with *Rosetta* (1999) and the frantic search for normal work, or *L'Enfant* (2005) where a father sells his new-born child, the Dardennes' films are interesting as much for what is absent as for what is immediately present. And a key absence in their cinema is solidarity: it is even necessary to the cinematic form, as something their characters come to recognise. All the different situations depicted disclose how solidarity is misrecognised, absent but emergent despite natural affiliations. We see this explicitly in *Le Fils* where a father forms an impossible bond with the murderer of his child, or in *La Promesse* (1996) where an adolescent attempts to transcend the domineering influence of a father. With *Rosetta* in particular, we find solidarity emerge in the union of two individuals who ought not bond due to Rosetta's (Émilie Dequenne) selfish actions. In all these examples, solidarity happens due to an expansion of the scope of mutual obligation, which requires a recognition of the modal being of character – put more simply, a recognition other folk share the burdens of the possibilities imposed upon me.

If the Dardennes do not glorify the slender freedoms of life on the margins, what are they trying to accomplish? They are looking for something different to moralising. They are trying to make explicit how to be human in late capitalism.²⁵ In *Rosetta*, for example, we find a paradigmatic case of the foreclosure of modal solidarity. Here the Dardennes aimed to create '[...] a portrait of an era.'²⁶ That era is late capitalism, a time of 'survival necessitated by the scarcity of work which results in difficulties with money, housing, food, health, exclusion [...]'. They start the film in the middle, with an ejection.²⁷ The film is marked by motion, conflict, beginning with doors

will come to be; the virtual is that which really exists qua possibility. For a suggestive account of how Deleuze can be put in dialogue with the Dardennes cf. Crano, Ricky: Occupy without Counting. Furtive Urbanism in the Films of Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne. In: *Film-Philosophy* 13 (2019) 1–15.

25 Dardenne: On the Back of Our Images, 78.

26 Ibid, 62.

27 Ibid.

slamming. We are viewing from behind Rosetta as she chases towards we know not what. Rosetta gets into a physical fight with large men whilst being ejected from repetitive menial labour. But she is, as Luc Dardenne says, a 'good little soldier of capitalism,' committed to the now, as yet unable to recognise she exists *qua* possibilities.²⁸ Instead, Rosetta's aspirations to a petit-bourgeois lifestyle are more typified by ousting her friend Riquet (Fabrizio Rongione) from a job at a waffle van.

The frantic energy continues for the duration of the film. Famously, the Dardennes often film with hand-held cameras from the back, the camera adopting partial, often disjunctive, partially obscured, mid-level views. They deliberately suffuse their *mise-en-scènes* with uncertainty, with a sense that things are up for grabs. Indeed, on first viewing, it is difficult to tell what is going on. The action is very immediate, with little if any backstory, as well as an absence of markers of place; they favour a placelessness befitting the homogenised world of late capitalism.²⁹ This uncertainty is compounded by a distinct lack of expository dialogue or any heavy-handed sentimental music dictating how audiences ought to feel. The dearth of stylistic prescriptions matches the dearth of moral prescriptions.

The style alerts us to how the Dardennes' films use the form of cinema to inaugurate a meta-reflection on how cinema itself challenges the historical shape of late capitalist societies and its subjects. *Rosetta's* style reveals four salient features of character within late capitalism: motion, impoverished opportunities for meaningful labour, atomisation, and material strategising. The rushed, frantic, uncertain style reveals the necessity of uncertainty, but uncertainty also implies possibility, and their films are committed revealing the phenomenological experience – the what-it-is-likeness – of being subjects of the vagaries of precarious labour rather than being a subject that moulds, has a claim on, or shares authorship of their historical conditions. And Rosetta is surely that, trapped on the treadmill of capital accumulation, evidenced distinctly by her shabby red sports jacket, her life in a ramshackle trailer park, in a parked caravan, itself a blunt symbol of motion standing still. These four features disclose a diminished mode of solidarity because they are characterised by activities beyond Rosetta's control and which confine Rosetta to the present. Rosetta, on the frantic hamster-wheel of late capitalism, is continually confronted with recycling the precarity of her existing commitments and priorities.

28 Luc Dardenne in interview with Stevens, Isabel: Woman on the verge. In: Sight and Sound, 24 (September 2014) 65–67, 66.

29 Joseph Mai, on *La Promesse*, says, 'Though the film is still set in Seraing, it contains few references to the national context and has moved completely in the realm of globalization, whose forces are postnational, often working through multinational companies, trade organisations, and individual initiatives as much as governments.' Mai, Joseph: Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, Urbana 2022, 44.

That Rosetta wants to keep returning to employment, any employment, denotes an incapacity to think the contingency of any familiar, tribal or social formations. For example, the natural binding to her mother is provisional. Rosetta is constantly arguing with her mother. Ironically, Rosetta adopts a maternal posture, chastising her mother for exchanging sexual favours for alcohol. Rosetta's mother denotes an impoverished form of opportunity. Impoverished opportunity is still opportunity, though, and what Rosetta fears is the reproduction of her mother's form-of-life; sex-work is always a possibility for a poor, unemployed young girl. Throughout, Rosetta struggles to discern any other priorities outside of her commitments to reproducing an entrepreneurial, atomised self. Rosetta has no sense of a purposive life precisely because she is someone for whom nothing is modally at stake, that is, forms of life she can shape with others; as such, there is nothing *towards* which she can succeed or fail other than immediate work. This is demonstrated most poignantly in her botched suicide attempt with gas, the ultimate affirmation she can discern no viable forms of life with others.

Unexpectedly, solidarity is found at the end of the film in Rosetta's recognition that her struggles to survive belong to everyone. This comes when Riquet pursues her on a motorcycle at the film's denouement. The intrusion of Riquet, who circles Rosetta confrontationally, is at once quizzical, comical and accusatory. He wants to know why she betrayed him to get the job but helped him when drowning: "*Tu m'as quand même aidé* (You still helped me)." Because Riquet confronts Rosetta with the unanticipated, an offer of help beyond the cycle of retribution, it is made explicit how Rosetta can be an author of commitments beyond the narrow bonds of enlightened self-interest.³⁰ In their later films, the Dardennes expand the circle of obligation and commitments.

Solidarity is based on incurring a risk beyond communal fusion; indeed, solidarity is actively resistant to such identarian entrenchment, and demands as I have mentioned, the incurring of a cost. According to Luc Dardenne, wholly identifying with a group is hubris.³¹ In *La Promesse* we see more clearly that solidarity is not inevitably tied to context or history-bound. The setting of *La Promesse* follows a simi-

30 Luc Dardenne outlines an explicit debt to the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas' language of exteriority, otherness, face-to-face encounters, for him, undermines the sovereignty of the self-interested autonomous ego. For a good summary of Levinas' influence on the Dardennes, cf. Cooper, Sarah: *Mortal Ethics. Reading Levinas with the Dardenne Brothers*. In *Film-Philosophy* 11 (2007) 56–87.

31 In his philosophical work, *Sur L'Affaire Humaine*, Luc Dardenne suggests 'To be part of the group, belonging to a group which contains me, which holds me with others who are no longer others, to partake in unanimity, to be in the circle or to flee the solitude of my temporal, separate, mortal being, this is how the dream of eternity is still pursued for the human who continues to refuse their birth, their separate being, time.' Cf Dardenne, Luc: *Sur L'Affaire Humaine*, Paris 2012, 127. [All translations mine]

lar pattern to the Dardennes' other films. Characters inhabit a deindustrialised setting, as Lauren Berlant suggests they become '[...] stuck in what we might call survival time, the time of struggling, drowning, holding onto the ledge, treading water – the time of not-stopping.'³² I would add to Berlant's argument that solidarity, at least on the surface, is unthinkable. However, the Dardennes take up this challenge. Solidarity materialises between Igor (Jérémy Renier), an adolescent male, and Assita (Assita Ouedraogo), an immigrant from Burkina-Faso whose husband dies on a shoddily constructed and unregulated building site run by Igor's father. Assita comes from a completely different country, has strange practices, and is content to acknowledge spirits, supernaturalism and prophecy. Igor is a young adult who is strategic, practical, tied to his father's get-rich-quick schemes. Igor is very much of the earth. Assita and Igor meet in the middle, between natural, sensuous life and the spiritual life of ancestors and prophecy.

La Promesse begins in a workshop, with counting, measuring, where we find a son disturbed by his father obnoxiously hooting his car horn to leave work early. Immediately, the world of precarious labour is made manifest. The father-figure of the mechanic-mentor, the purveyor of durable and respectable work, holds no draw for Igor, who at first is comfortable working in the informal black-market economy of people-trafficking and housing illegal immigrants in unsafe conditions.

Igor's father, Roger (Olivier Gourmet), is coercive throughout the film. In an early scene Roger gives Igor an identical ring to his, binding Igor to reproducing his own patterns. When Roger figuratively presides over the wedding of Igor to himself, it demonstrates that his coercion is bodily. Also Roger beats, tickles, and sings cheek-to-cheek with Igor. Their physical relationship is dysfunctional insofar as it binds Igor to a diminished recognition of possibility. In some sense, Roger wants Igor tied to the reproduction of the physical realm. After Amidou (Rasmané Ouédraogo) fatally tumbles from a shoddily-constructed scaffold, Igor finds himself promising the dying man he will care for his wife and baby. The promise gives Igor conflicting obligations between the dead and his living father. As the film progresses, we see Igor stripping himself of this natural affiliation. In terms of solidarity, the Dardennes aim to show an individual's solidarity sustaining forms of life in terms of their environment, their surroundings, their minds, but also, critically, by anchoring solidarity in the ability to expand mutual esteem beyond identarian affiliation, even beyond life itself.

The story of how Igor distances himself from Roger also tells us something interesting about solidarity. It is not so much that Igor has a bad form of solidarity with Roger and his lackeys, for which the ethical encounter with the immigrant Assita is the curative. Rather, solidarity requires something purely contingent, proceeding

32 Berlant, Lauren: *Cruel Optimism*, Durham and London 2011, 16.

with uncertainty as both Igor and Assita must do. As I have argued, solidarity is neither good nor bad, but only describes the conditions for binding any collective form-of-life to uphold itself in a durable way in the face of obstacles, accidents and threats. And the film is about binding in many ways. Igor binds Amidou's leg with a belt in an effort to preserve his life, which Roger rips off. Amidou's death represents the way the vulnerable and the unfortunate impose moral obligations even beyond the grave.³³ Igor becomes bound by something more than just an obligation to the reproduction of existing forms of life. His commitments become reframed to forming a solidarity with a death constituted in life, something neither brutally materialist, but not purely supernatural either, as represented by Assita's folkloric lineage of gods and spirits. Rather, Igor's solidarity is wholly this-worldly, located in the carrying-out of conflicting commitments and loyalties.

Stylistically, we see this solidarity emphasised where Igor calls Roger on a telephone. The ring is blurred in the background. Roger's omniscience is fraying, his disembodied voice fails to exercise physical coercion over Igor and thereby fails to bind him to a life of bare survival. Igor is instead bound to a recognition that solidarity extends outside the natural bonds of family, the joys and get-rich-quick schemes of the informal economy, and the subtle domination of a cheap patriarch. Like the cleaning lady who helps Assita at the risk of no recompense, there is nothing fixed or resolved in the final scene. There is no guarantee that Assita and Igor will reconcile. This reveals the solidarity the brothers' films express, and the type of solidarity I have outlined from the start of this essay. Solidarity is necessarily contingent, a form of possibility that makes explicit how norms and commitments are at stake, something to be for or against, even generated by random acts of senseless kindness. What the Dardennes screen is solidarity as a practical identity that is modally engaged. Igor and Assita together reveal the stakes of solidarity as a modal form of life because both Igor and Assita incur costs to their past forms of life, form an ersatz group, and recognise themselves as beings with possibilities available to them. They also discern that *both* their individual and human identity is stake. Solidarity arises for the Dardennes when individuals see themselves as various realisations of human possibility.

In *Deux Jours, Une Nuit* (2014) the Dardennes extend their reflection on solidarity beyond interpersonal relationships towards political life in a workplace. The express purpose of this film is to show solidarity is still a possibility. In an interview, Luc Dardenne suggests: 'I think that solidarity is still possible today. In any case that's

33 As mentioned, the Dardennes owe an explicit debt to Levinas. I am less interested in this element, but it is important to note, as Levinas' account of unconditionality of ethical encounters precipitates inter-personality and, by extension, solidarity. Solidarity, as I argue throughout, demands an expanded set of commitments. Cf. Luc Dardenne: On the Back of Our Images, 42.

what the film sets out to show.³⁴ Also, Jean-Pierre Dardenne connects the question of solidarity to something transformative. The solidarity the chief protagonist Sandra (Marion Cotillard) experiences changes her life in meaningful ways: 'We've tried to show how the solidarity that Sandra experiences, and how her husband's support change this woman's life so that she can say in the end: "I put up a fight, I'm happy."³⁵

Like Rosetta, Sandra is unable to recognise herself, dramatised through Sandra's inability to face herself in the mirror. Sandra exudes ontological insecurity, stating at one point she does not exist, that she is nothing at all. Sandra's employment mirrors this existential brittleness: she works in a factory manufacturing solar panels, and the work is in jeopardy due to Asian competitors. It is significant this is a small company, as there is no organised labour protection, and workers are inevitably pitted against each other without unionisation. Sandra's boss Dumont (Batiste Sorнин) wants to sack workers, and for existing workers to do more for the same or less pay. Sandra is informed *in absentia* as she is on leave due to her mental health; she has to scramble to convince Dumont to allow a vote on her job from her fellow colleagues. And this forms the basic plot, as Sandra and husband Manu (Fabrizio Rongione) visit twelve co-workers to convince them to act against their own material interests. If she is forced out of the job those remaining get a bonus of 1000 euros, which for workers on their wages is a significant sum.

Sandra's self-understanding is initially constrained to the entrepreneurial self of late capitalism. She is cast into the position of canvassing, cajoling and convincing her workers to vote for her to say. She has to be the politician late-capitalist politics fails to offer. Most strikingly, Sandra's self-recognition emerges through collective acts of self-maintenance. Self-maintaining with an in-group is different to the bare survival of meeting basic needs. With the former, one is subjected *to* an economy, whereas with the latter one enhances one's ability to be subject *of*, and author of, one's economic situation. In other words, her situation illustrates the difference between agency and exploitation. The film is a 'portrait of a woman' who 're-joins the world.'³⁶

Sandra's odyssey takes her out of herself. While many of her encounters with her co-workers are fraught, even humiliating as she pleads for a 'gesture of solidarity,'³⁷ her activities connect her to a life beyond herself. She visits a cross-section of society, boundaries blurring between neighbourhoods, housing estates, pubs and

34 Cf. Dardenne, Luc and Jean-Pierre: Press Conference – Luc Dardenne: I Still Think that Solidarity is Possible Today. In Festival de Cannes, <https://bit.ly/3487sEm>, May 5th, 2014, updated February 13th, 2018.

35 Ibid.

36 Dardenne: *Au Dos de Nos Images II*, 215.

37 Ibid.

sportsgrounds.³⁸ Sandra becomes mindful of the social backdrop that outstrips her own personal choices. Also, she begins to discern that solidarity requires obstacles and impediments to be overcome in order to form.³⁹ Beyond the interpersonal ethical recognition we find in *Rosetta* and *La Promesse*, what is distinct about the form of solidarity that emerges in *Deux Jours, Une Nuit*, is that it is all at once singular and generic. Individual self-interests and self-sacrifices are the common form of life itself. For Sandra, her individual moral choices, her pursuit of material security and prosperity, is recognised as everyone's pursuit of prosperity. This makes explicit the broader social, political and economic world she is of and which she can shape. She begins to act creatively on her situation rather than experiencing it passively. In one of the more light-hearted scenes, Sandra, her husband and a co-worker sing Van Morrison's version of *Gloria* as they drive through the night – here, solidarity is symbolised in aesthetic communion. Music is something in common, created, and when not commodified, a form of ensemble thinking. Solidarity can, when optimised, be a type of joyous, if fraught, world-building.⁴⁰ Sandra's character starts to see her life modally, that is, as one possible version of human life. What is important about the Dardenne's films is that they show solidarity is not about individualism, nor absorption into an indiscernible lump of humanity. Rather, solidarity is an instance of how humans form groups in the face of existential threat. Solidarity is an existential concept, not necessarily a social one.

In the end, Sandra loses the vote. Democratic politics by its very nature is hopeless for guaranteeing the well-being of its citizens.⁴¹ She gathers to movingly say goodbye to those who have formed an ersatz form of life, one that disposed themselves to sustain their labour towards more viable forms of life. This poignant but uplifting scene is upended by Sandra's boss calling her into the office, offering to keep her job at the expense of an uncontracted worker. This is an effective scene precisely because it individualises Sandra's moral obligations and recently-accrued insights. It pits her against a co-worker who helped her, reduces her lived situation to bureaucratic impersonality, and most importantly shows late capitalism reasserting its dominion over Sandra's newfound recognition of solidarity. That she rejects the offer tells us something interesting about the Dardenne's account of solidarity. Like *Rosetta* and like Igor with Assita, there is no resolution or grand triumph. The thing that is different is that she has put up a good fight, as she tells her husband. And

38 Luc Dardenne notes his scepticism of the surveillance society. Cf. *ibid.*, 221.

39 *Ibid.*, 225.

40 For Luc Dardenne 'The human being who cannot succumb to this desire to belong, who can undo or at least loosen his link to eternity, is the social individual of a democracy, capable of living amongst relative affiliations, with relative absolutes, in any case capable of living in the fog of mortality.' Dardenne: *Sur L'Affaire Humaine*, 127–128.

41 This is not to say democracy cannot enhance the well-being of its citizenry – only that it does not ensure it.

this is important. Solidarity is not guaranteed, rather it is created with others and can be adopted to form and maintain freer and more dignified forms of life: as such, solidarity is the creation of possibility itself.

4. Conclusion

Modal solidarity has four salient features. Firstly, solidarity is distinguished by contingency. The solidification of any group is dependent on activities that work towards success or failure. Secondly, activities of solidarity are intelligible as the projects, norms and commitments we adopt to sustain our life. Put succinctly, solidarity is what we *do*. This is not necessarily morally inflected. So consequently, and thirdly, solidarity as a form of egalitarianism is not guaranteed. Solidarity is egalitarian only insofar as it imposes a common fate on humans, that we need to enter group alliances with those unlike us to sustain our lives; this does not, however, imply virtue. Fourthly, solidarity requires enacted commitments in contingently formed groups. That solidarity in-groups are precariously formed entails a dissymmetry involving others unlike me, for whom I incur costs or bear a burden in some way. Overall, then, we have a more detailed picture of solidarity than the view that solidarity is based only on shared consensus. What I have developed in this article is a way of talking about solidarity as a form of life requiring both differentiation *and* unity. The cinema of the Dardenne brothers and their unique form of ethical film-philosophy give a strong filmic rendition of the modal form of solidarity, as I have outlined herein. In *Sur L’Affaire Humaine* Luc Dardenne connects love to fragility, to meaning over cheap gossip, and to a commonality which recognises all humans are singular *and* universal.⁴² What the Dardennes add to the philosophical and sociological picture is a filmic rendition of the modal nature of solidarity. That cinema – the artform of motion – contributes to our philosophical and sociological understanding of solidarity ought to be of no surprise. Solidarity is, as I have shown, an active set of tasks that fit individual lives into a broader human narrative, only when is solidarity is grasped as a modal concept can it thought of as aiming towards developing viable forms of life in the face of adversity. Solidarity is in the end really only a name for the collective unanimity of humanity’s successes and failures. Past efforts to maintain our survival are not formed of a compact of past, present and future. This would only be a cheap desire for a repetition of past forms. In contrast, solidarity as modal reveals how we adopt, risk and practically develop priorities to

42 For Luc Dardenne, ‘Thinking that love can only be given if it has been received in a moment of extreme fragility is a common thought, but it doesn’t belong to idle chatter, it is common in the sense that it expresses a universal recognition of our human specificity, of our singular universally-shared being.’ Cf. Dardenne, Luc, *Sur L’Affaire Humaine*, 171.

transform the past in order to enact freer forms of life for the future. Whether we succeed or fail is always at stake.

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Solidarity in Photography

Reconsidering Images of Protest and Practices of Looking

Nicole Schneider

1. Introduction: Reconsidering Seeing

In his TED-Talk on the hidden patterns that shape racialized perceptions, comedian and author Baratunde Thurston talks about being burdened with other people's fears. His Blackness continuously determines how strangers see him and how he feels he has to behave. In many cases, this fictive and fabricated Blackness labels him as ostensibly suspect, while walking down the street, driving with his family in the car, or shopping in an affluent neighborhood. This burden results in a deep-rooted anxiety of being singled out and thought a criminal; of having to explain why you are where others think you do not belong: "I walk around in fear because I know that someone seeing me as a threat can become a threat to my life, and I am tired. I am tired of carrying this invisible burden of other people's fears, and many of us are, and we shouldn't have to [be]." He continues to describe this process as a system of "collective stories we all buy into".¹ These stories are deeply engrained in culture and society. They frame and determine lives and living conditions.

Entailed in this burden of collective stories is a system of surveillance and profiling that predominantly targets Black people. Constant and drastic policing of Blackness, also known as walking or existing while Black, has become visible in infamous cases where customers were thrown out of coffee bars, graduate students were reported to campus police for falling asleep in common rooms, or hobby ornithologists were threatened with the police for no apparent reason at all.² These seemingly sim-

1 Cf. Thurston, Baratunde: How to Deconstruct Racism, One Headline at a Time. In: TED, 2019, https://www.ted.com/talks/baratunde_thurston_how_to_deconstruct_racism_one_headline_at_a_time?language=en. Accessed March 9, 2021.

2 In an article for The Atlanta Journal Constitution, Ernie Suggs writes about these recent instances of "existing while Black"; the birdwatcher in New York's Central Park was accused of harassing a white woman, who falsely reported him to the police. Cf. Steward, Nikita: The White Dog Walker and #LivingWhileBlack in New York City. In: The New York Times, May 30, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/30/nyregion/central-park-video.html>. Accessed September 15, 2021.

ple events are an essential part of a larger pattern that differentiates between those needing to constantly explain themselves and those who do not. This profiling continuously causes altercations that do not always end as leniently, leading to events such as those connected to the names of Trayvon Martin or Michael Brown, Breonna Taylor or George Floyd.³ These names bespeak the fact that the burden Thurston speaks about is not merely a question of inconvenience and lacking respect, but a racialized structure that underlies social and political life, that discriminates against and threatens minorities in the U.S. It is linked to images and fabulations, depictions and imagined representations. It connects to stories of ostensible Black behavior and imagined tropes of poverty.

In this article I address this idea of stories we all buy into and connect it, metaphorically, to the images we have of others. Quite literally, I am going to discuss images and photographs that engage in and defy assumptions of racialized narratives. For, what Thurston's remark reveals is a pattern of systemic inequality, which is latently engrained in our ways of thinking and seeing. It describes a form of post-intentional racism⁴ that links stories to an understanding of the world and shapes ostensibly rational presumptions, civil and legal institutions, as well as mundane everyday actions. In looking at photographs and the ways they can fix meaning, I am proposing to engage in a practice of solidarity that questions the connections between seeing and making sense, seeing and understanding, and seeing and defining others by what we think we see: Regularly and without noticing, we engage in systems of policing that are based on stories, assumptions, and biases. Seeing, looking, and forming images can therefore be understood as a practice of engaging with others, determining what we see, whom we recognize, and how we treat who we see. In this sense, solidarity becomes a practice of looking that is aware of its own positions and entanglements. It functions as a visual process of seeing through, not with, stereotypes or confining images.

3 On February 26, 2012, Trayvon Martin was shot in Sanford, Florida by a vigilante who mistook the teenager walking home for a burglar. The watchman had been cautioned by the police not to use any force and to stop following his suspect (Taylor 13); on August 9, 2014, Michael Brown was fatally shot by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. Supposedly, he was talking back and refusing to move off the street and onto the sidewalk (Taylor 13); on March 13, 2020, Breonna Taylor was shot when a narcotics division squad raided her home in Louisville, Kentucky. Her house was invaded illegally at night on behalf of a drug violation charge filed against someone else (Willingham); on May 25, 2020, George Floyd choked in Minneapolis, Minnesota, when a police officer knelt on his neck for more than eight minutes. Other officers stood by and did not interfere, despite Floyd's repeated pleas for air. He had been accused of having paid with a counterfeit 20-dollar bill (Cobb).

4 Cf. Perry, Imani: *More Beautiful and More Terrible: The Embrace and Transcendence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. New York 2011, 11.

In the first part of this essay, I am considering the ways in which photographs, as well as narrations and mental images, fix meaning and thereby influence lives and reputations. The second part analyzes photographs of the Black Lives Matter Movement that defy such fixation and unsettle seemingly fixed understandings and assumptions. In different ways, photographs have the capacity to unfix and unsettle definitions, to play with contrasting meanings, and to examine underlying patterns of thought and perception. In looking at images published in relation to the Black Lives Matter Protests in the United States in 2014, this article considers such links and shifted perceptions as a form of practiced visual solidarity. These photographs of protests, I argue, negotiate solidarity as they position their spectators in relation to the scenes depicted. Solidarity is not just the declaration of a common view and profession of ongoing support but a constant effort to renegotiate relations, assumptions, and positions. The visual cultural project of the Black Lives Matter Movement, then, entails a consideration of the image and fabulations determining urban neighborhoods (Shelby), historical narratives (Autry; Stoler), or the criminal justice system (Alexander) which it seeks to change.⁵

2. Fixing Meaning in Images and Narratives

When Thurston describes the burden he feels as a common set of stories, he acknowledges the power of both narratives and images in relation to social constructs and political structures. Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe describes this notion in *Critique of Black Reason* as a fabulation of sociality and identity, here, of Blackness and the meaning it holds in the Western world. The political and social significance of Blackness – the essential difference often ascribed to it – stems from a fictive and fabulated idea of Black life, which is suffused with colonial and white perspectives. It is constantly re/produced in actions, descriptions, and desires.⁶ Persons who happen to be Black or come from Africa, Mbembe explains, were and continuously are described as different, exotic, and other in categories that depreciate their cultures and lives, that deny their status as human being, and that justify “exclusion, brutalization, and degradation”.⁷ This fabulated image of Black identity – invented, told, and repeated in variations of common formulas, texts, and rit-

5 On disadvantaged urban neighborhoods see Shelby, *Dark Ghettos*; on separate strands of history in American memorial culture see Autry, *Desegregating the Past*; on recurring and persistent structures of colonial thought and control in contemporary societies see Stoler Duesse; on the racialized structure of the US-criminal justice system see Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*.

6 Cf. Mbembe, Achille: *Critique of Black Reason*. Translated by Laurent Dubois. Durham 2017, 18.25.

7 *Ibid.*, 6.

uals⁸ – was shaped by white interests.⁹ The rationalization of slave trade, exploitation and extraction, surveillance, discrimination, and continuous policing are just some results of this fabrication. The very basis of thinking about Black lives in Western thought is entangled in fabrications and narrations that are not directly connected to actual Black people: “as soon as the subject of Blacks and Africa is raised, words do not necessarily represent things; the true and the false become inextricable; [...] Word and image have little to say about the objective world”¹⁰. Writing, thinking, and talking about a Black person, unless in a personal relation, usually entails generalizations that create a racial subject that is arguably different and “set up for moral disqualification and practical instrumentalization”¹¹. In this view, those rashly defined as Black become racialized ‘Others.’ Centrally, then, there is no Black person, but only a fabricated image of Blackness based on the essentialization of difference, the pathologization of grievances, and the justification of inequity.

This fabricated idea of Blackness reveals that racism is, in part, a form of blindness, of not being able to see one another behind fictional images. It is connected to the practices, scenes, and narrations told about Black people as well as to a missing connection and lacking interest in truly getting to know the other. Mbembe outlines a form of racism that “consists, most of all, in substituting what *is* with something else, with another reality,” or as I would add, a fictional image of the other’s ostensible lives, behaviors, and values¹². “When the racist sees a Black person, he does not see that the Black person is not there, does not exist, and is just a sign of pathological fixation on the absence of a relationship”¹³. Even without roots in Black lived experiences, this other reality distorts perceptions and fixes affect, shapes conditions and relations, and influences people’s lives. Moving beyond racism would, therefore, entail moving beyond these fixed images, fostering real and open-minded relationships, and questioning the depictions and stories presented, reading them against the racialized narrations and unfixing the meaning ascribed through these definitions.

As Thurston explains, the other realities and presumed identities affect Black people in fundamental ways. They shape not only how they are treated but also their behavior. People attempt to evade confrontations and the dangers implied therein. Being burdened with other people’s fears involves a constant fear of being singled out, thought a criminal, and potentially killed in a confusion of fabricated images

8 Ibid., 28.

9 Cf. Kendi, Ibram X.: *Stamped from the Beginning: the Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*. London 2016.

10 Mbembe: *Critique of Black Reason*, 13.

11 Ibid., 28.

12 Cf. *ibid.*, 32.

13 *Ibid.*

with actual persons. It entails a form of policing one's actions that is both enforced from the outside and self-imposed as protection:

We quiet ourselves, we walk on eggshells, we maybe pull over to the side of the road under the brightest light we can find so that our murder might be caught cleanly on camera, and we do this because we live in a system in which white people can too easily call on deadly force to ensure their comfort.¹⁴

The policing of the Black body, described here with clear hints at recent deaths of Black people at the hands of the police, is inherent in white comfort. It represents a weaponization of white privilege, in which existing hierarchies and racialized fabrications are played out and Black persons are reminded of their inferior positions and the dangers inherent in encounters with the police. Unquestioned assumptions about ostensible dangers, moral objection, or impaired humanity are used as pretexts to exercise force onto others. These structures are so engrained in everyday practices and ways of thought, they do not necessarily involve an awareness of their racist character.

In a rather humorous way, Thurston presents his critique of such fixating patterns in relation to headlines and narratives of newspaper reports. He traces a familiar sequence: "A subject takes an action against a target engaged in some activity." Generally, the subject in these stories is white, the target Black and the action any conceivable mundane activity: "White Woman Calls Police On Eight-Year-Old Black Girl Selling Water"; "White Man Calls Police On Black Woman Using Neighborhood Pool"; "Woman Calls Police On Black Family BBQing At Lake In Oakland."¹⁵ These examples, as comical as they might seem in the comedian's buoyant presentation, all frame the Black persons involved in terms of suspicion. The only possible action, it seems, is to call the police while more ordinary responses somehow seem to be out of the question. Some kind of illegality is assumed, discursively deeming the Black person at fault, while refusing to consider possible reasons for their actions. The assumption forecloses overlooking minute infringements of the law, such as a child selling water bottles without license, and refuses to engage in friendly conversations and compromise, if necessary. "Our existence is being interpreted as crime," Thurston explains. Calling the police, however, is not a predetermined and rationale decision: Helping, supporting, or "Minding one's own damn business," could reduce the threat of police violence, reducing the risk of having to survive something "that should not require survival"¹⁶.

14 Thurston, *How to Deconstruct Racism*.

15 On woman calling police on girl, see Elizabeth; pool incident, see Ortiz/Guiterrez; incident, see Russo.

16 Thurston, *How to Deconstruct Racism*.

Such policing of Blackness is concomitant with an image of black and white spaces. Black spaces, sociologist Elijah Anderson argues, are seen through a lens of ostensible poverty, danger, and misconduct – as reputedly threatening and alien – and so are Black people. The white space is the norm in society; the black space, in turn, is connected to an image of danger, immorality, and poverty.¹⁷ The imaginary of this black space informs an image of the “iconic ghetto” that follows Black people as they navigate white spaces. Disregarding both the systemic origins of disadvantage in poor urban neighborhoods and a growing Black middle class, the putative danger of the “iconic ghetto” – the image of the Black criminal – attaches itself to Blackness: anonymous Black persons are regularly stigmatized and associated “with the putative danger, crime, and poverty of the iconic [and fictional] ghetto, typically leaving [them] with much to prove before being able to establish trusting relations”¹⁸. Within white spaces, central for social and civic life, Black people are made to feel out of place, Anderson argues. They become intruders who need to prove themselves and their belonging, who perform to evade suspicion, and who can earn provisional access to the white workspace, civil institution, or neighborhood.¹⁹ They are under constant scrutiny, which would be unacceptable for their white contemporaries²⁰. Black people have to navigate white spaces, whereas white people commonly avoid areas seen as ostensibly threatening and predominantly black. Essentially, Anderson notes, these underlying assumptions of Black inferiority, lacking morality, and criminality are as dangerous as overt racism, if not more so:

While racism continues to manifest in occasional overtly hateful or violent acts, racism is more commonly manifested in a pervasive attitude that all black people start from the inner-city ghetto, and before experiencing decent treatment or trusting relations with others, they must demonstrate that the ghetto stereotype does not apply to them.²¹

While it is possible to directly call-out and counter overtly hateful racism, the pervasive and latent attitudes and societal presumptions operate in unintentional ways that often do not register as racist and are arguably shaped by seemingly rational ideas. These images are mirrored in institutions and everyday actions as well as in the much praised colorblindness in the nation. Becoming aware of such processes can be a form of visualized solidarity.

17 Anderson, Elijah: *The White Space*. In: *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1 (2015), 1, 10–21, 11. The lower case Black in “black space,” correlates to Anderson’s use of the term.

18 *Ibid.*, 13.

19 Cf. *ibid.*, 14.

20 Cf. *ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*

This solidarity of sight recognizes a form of racism, which is post-intentional. This racism is linked to images and assumptions, as scholar of race, law, and literature Imani Perry argues in *More Beautiful and More Terrible*. As contemporary culture is suffused with racialized narratives and practices of inequality, the question is no longer whether these practices are intentionally racist or unconsciously so, whether persons who are acting in a racist manner believe in their superiority, or whether they believe in essential differences.²² The concept of racism has to be uncoupled from blame and intention and ought to be understood as a mode of acting and thinking, doing and seeing, that is usually not directly recognized as being racist. There can, for instance, be a majority of Americans professedly not being racist and, at the same time, a majority of Americans believing in the “traditional racist stereotype that African Americans are lazy”²³; there can be a celebration of diversity in culture, food, song, and attire, yet a constant perpetuation of inequality.²⁴ Racism is seen as a system of practices of inequality where, for example, the idea of colorblindness as basis for law and fairness can hide the systemic and racialized relations inherent in its implementation²⁵.

Race and racism are lived by virtue of encounters, real or virtual, with ‘raced’ bodies. [...] In moments of these encounters, individuals read, evaluate, and judge others. [T]here are myriad immeasurable ways in which race is experienced or given meaning in the midst of social life.²⁶

Habits, attitudes and behaviors can be part of these practices, as can be entertainment or individual everyday choices.²⁷ Unconscious bias and conscious racial narratives work jointly, creating racialized structures through humor, entertainment, schools, news and government outlets, and workplaces, to name just a few.²⁸ Fighting racism then, for Perry, entails a move away from a culture of blame toward a perspective that understands its accumulation of practices that translate into “large-scale institutional, social, economic, and political inequalities”²⁹. These practices can include, for example, racialized narratives of Black lives used in politics and elections, employed to rationalize discriminatory decisions, or told to rationalize

22 Perry, Imani: *More Beautiful and More Terrible: The Embrace and Transcendence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. New York 2011, 21.

23 *Ibid.*, 6.

24 Cf. *ibid.*, 8.

25 Cf. *ibid.*, 1.

26 *Ibid.*, 4.

27 Cf. *ibid.*, 4.

28 Cf. *ibid.*, 21.

29 *Ibid.*, 42.

behavior. “The stories that are told about members of racial groups in daily conversations, in print, through the broadcast and new media, in literature, and in child rearing are a fundamental piece of how we acquire knowledge about those groups”³⁰. These stories are, for example, related to family constellations³¹, the value arguably ascribed to education and academic prospects in Black communities³², or the ostensible reliance on welfare programs.³³ On the basis of such narratives, resources are denied, possibilities foreclosed, stereotypes fostered, and hasty occlusions drawn:³⁴ “we need to explicitly revisit [these racial narratives] as a part of the project of racial equality, both at the level of government and at the level of community-based activism and family life”³⁵. Schools, for instance, need to move beyond the fixed idea that families are not interested in education and seek possibilities to incorporate people’s lived realities in parent-teacher conferences, in being mindful of working schedules, lacking child care or the like, the fear of losing jobs or the lack of transportation. Here, too, mental images and narratives frame belonging and give perfunctory definitions of who people are.

These narratives and stereotypical depictions are connected to images. If we think, for instance, of common media representations, though slowly changing, we will find an overrepresentation of Black people “as criminals, jokesters, and social deviants”³⁶. People of color are regularly represented as the nannies, nerds, criminals, or sidekicks, goofily supporting a white hero. These representations, too, govern what we see as normal and in their repetition forego the question of whether these structures portrayed might be fictional and fabricated. Black feminist and activist bell hooks and race, class, and gender scholar Patricia Hill Collins both speak of harmful³⁷ or controlling images³⁸ that are repeated in mainstream media, commonplace stereotypes, and diverse racial narratives. Stereotypical images of Black womanhood – the mummies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, or hot mommas – according to Collins, work to objectify, dominate, and defer Black women, as they mask social relations and perpetuate power structures.³⁹ They give ideas

30 Ibid., 44.

31 Ibid., 52.

32 Cf. *ibid.*, 61.

33 Cf. *ibid.*, 49.

34 Cf. *ibid.*, 58.

35 Ibid., 62.

36 Ibid., 36.

37 Cf. hooks, bell: *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, London 1992/2015, IX.

38 Cf. Collins, Patricia Hill: *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Oxon, 1990/2009, 76.

39 Cf. *ibid.*, 77–79.

of Black women's ostensibly typical and idealized behavior, while controlling both outside beliefs and their behaviors, ambitions, and practices.⁴⁰

Presenting the example of the mammy, Collins explains the concept of a controlling image. Mammies are idealized "faithful, obedient domestic servant[s]"⁴¹, devotedly taking care of white families and their children. White middle-class women can define themselves against these Black women, as they take advantage of usually inexpensive labor, which is masked in the romantic mammy image.⁴² In recognizing the Black household help as kin, then, Black children learn what seems to be their assigned position in white power structures, maintaining racial oppression and hierarchies.⁴³ But while mammy figure is idealized as caretaker of the white household, Black families are regularly represented as ostensibly dysfunctional.⁴⁴ "[C]ontrolling images are designed to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life"⁴⁵. They control as they have very real effects on the people described. And while the phrasing Collins chooses indicates an active, determined role on the part of those creating these images, these controlling images have become an essential and unrecognized part of our cultural knowledge and social relations. "The controlling images of Black women are not simply crafted onto existing social institutions but are so pervasive that even though the images themselves change in popular imagination, Black women's portrayal as the Other persists"⁴⁶. They constitute an ideology of domination that plays out on various levels: visual, cultural, institutional and political.⁴⁷

For bell hooks, harmful media images reinscribe white supremacy and internalized racism.⁴⁸ Noting the temporal dimension of these processes, she writes about the ongoing and persistent representation of Black people in media and culture. In the preface to the 2015-edition of *Black Looks* (23 years after its original publication) hooks laments that hardly anything has changed:

I wish with my whole heart [that this book] was no longer relevant, for if it were not relevant now that would mean that a significant revolution of values had

40 Cf. *ibid.*, 80.

41 *Ibid.*, 80.

42 Cf. *ibid.*, 80f.

43 Cf. *ibid.*, 80.

44 Cf. *ibid.*, 83.

45 *Ibid.*, 76f.

46 *Ibid.*, 97.

47 On shifting variations and patterns of domination see Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*.

48 Cf. hooks: *Black Looks*, 1.

taken place in our society so that we are no longer bombarded by profoundly negative images of blackness, images that assault the psyches of everyone.⁴⁹

Television, movies, photographs, magazine covers, books, or music videos, show Black people in ways that bolster white supremacy and racialized hierarchies. The repetition of these images creates an unremarkable and in/visible racist frame entwined in identities, relations, and beliefs, regardless skin colors or origins.⁵⁰ Oddly, hooks notes, a multicultural audience seems to find pleasure in seeing criminal black characters chasing or murdering each other in movies.⁵¹ To “think critically about images” becomes a revolutionary attitude,⁵² a revolution of social values,⁵³ that works toward decolonization and transformation of systems of racial domination. Thus, hooks suggests, her Black peers should “collectively change the way we look at ourselves and the world [to] change how we are seen [...], creating] a world where everyone can look at blackness, and black people, with new eyes”⁵⁴. This revolution of sight critically examines and questions hurtful images of Blackness, creating representations that celebrate Black lives, show the value of being and the beauty of Blackness. For Black people to seize control over their mediated representations requires a constant awareness that “the real world of image-making is political”⁵⁵. These politics of images, here the ascription of negative attributes onto real-life people, remains a constant factor in the policing of Black lives. The revolutionary act of looking can therefore become a practice of solidarity that entails a shift in values and perceptions.

Another example of such meaning-making in images moves the discussion from fabricated identities to controlling narratives, from generalized and mediated images to individual photographs. Images used, for example, by humanitarian organizations and NGOs to represent their work and raise funds can fix identities and stereotypes onto the people they describe. Images of famished children, suffering families, and desperate mothers are often used to invoke compassion and to affect involvement. Doing so, they play into the hierarchies of suffering and devaluation as they define the person portrayed as suffering person. A picture used to evoke empathy and create charity can thus fix misery in the frame and onto the subject

49 Cf. *ibid.*, IX.

50 In *In the Wake*, Christina Sharpe writes of the “in/visible” domination of Black people (20–1). I have chosen to adopt this spelling, as racialized frames and practices operate in plain sight and unrecognized.

51 Cf. hooks: *Black Looks*, 6.

52 *Ibid.*, 7.

53 *Ibid.*, IX.

54 *Ibid.*, 6.

55 *Ibid.*, 5.

presented. They become the faces of hunger, quintessential poverty, or bare suffering. In “Imag(in)ing Human Rights,” americanists and critical media scholars Greta Olson and Jana Wessels call such photographs and comparable images of refugees “Humanitarian and Victimizing Images”⁵⁶. In contrast to images that deny individuality of its subjects by depicting them in “faceless and nameless groups”⁵⁷, these photographs show individuals as proxies for the misery they experience. They “reify the victimhood of the persons depicted [...] and commodify their suffering”⁵⁸. The people used as vehicles for social and political change, as faces for fundraising campaigns, are seen as hardly more than a suffering victim.⁵⁹ They are reduced and commodified, turned into objects in order to create feelings of sympathy and outrage. Political scientist Denis Kennedy calls this conundrum “the humanitarian dilemma.” While humanitarian organizations use imagery of suffering to bridge the distance between victims of humanitarian crises and donor publics, he argues, they do so at the expense of commodifying human misery and suffering:

these images discard that which is most human about the victim: autonomy, dignity, and individual specificity. When images appropriate suffering, victimhood is abstracted to a level of universal anguishes and pure animal emotions and victims reduced to the most basic of rights. The victims become personless – without dignity. They are reduced to bare life.⁶⁰

In the political economy of relief, representations craft a social order that hardens hierarchies and hegemonies. They “reflect both the perceived identity of the victim, and also the heroic and action-oriented self-conceptions of humanitarian organizations,” celebrating the heroic aiding effort and ultimately resulting in a loss of dignity for those reduced to a need for help.⁶¹

56 Olson, Greta/Wessels, Jana: *Imag(in)ing Human Rights: Deindividualizing, Victimizing, and Universalizing Images of Refugees in the United States and Germany*. In: Schmidt, Kerstin (Hg.): *The State of Human Rights: Historical Genealogies, Political Controversies, and Cultural Imaginaries*. Heidelberg 2020, 249–264, 257.

57 *Ibid.*, 255.

58 *Ibid.*, 257.

59 Cf. *ibid.*, 258.

60 Kennedy, Dennis: *Selling the Distant Other: Humanitarianism and Imagery—Ethical Dilemmas of Humanitarian Action*. In: *The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, February 8, 2009, sites.tufts.edu/jha/archives/411. Accessed September 15, 2021.

61 *Ibid.*

3. Defying Fixation

The visual solidarity called for to encounter these negative fabulations enables spectators and images alike to defy fixations. Such practices of looking are connected to a different understanding that reads sight and visibility as political practices. In connection to photography, visual culture scholar Ariella Azoulay, in *Civil Imagination*, defines this political relation as “the event of photography”⁶² and postulates a “civil imagination”⁶³ that sees beyond the scenes presented and considers the ethical entanglements therein. Photography, here, is not defined as the fixing of a momentary image but as a network of actors related to the photograph. Implicated in the event are not only the photographer and the photographed, but the camera itself, the spectator seeing an image, and various people and conditions that determine and are determined by the photograph’s taking.⁶⁴ The “event of photography” understood as a web of negotiations exists in the constant redefinition of relationships in and of the image, a figurative place of discourse and interpretation.⁶⁵ When we see an image we can, in fact, choose to see more than a fixed message, look at the people presented without falling back on the theme fixed in the frame.

Positioned within this political constitution, photographs present political claims and articulate alliances beyond the frame. The distribution and interaction of practices and performances, presentations and readings in the event of photography is political, Azoulay notes.⁶⁶ Thus, she argues in *The Civil Contract of Photography*, looking at images entails a responsibility on the part of the spectator that is directed toward the scenes presented.⁶⁷ We have to see the persons presented as people, examine the conditions they live in (or flee from), and consider our own positions in relation to the image, the seen, and the social as well as political structures encompassed. While the resulting solidarity in seeing is by far not an all-encompassing solution, I believe it can serve as a first step in unfixing perceptions, stereotypes, narratives, and the hierarchies entailed.

In what follows, I will consider three press photographs of Black Lives Matter Protests and read them in relation to their refusal of fixation. Each, I would say, highlights a different practice of unsettling that instructs spectators to take a closer look at the racialized fabulations and types which we encounter daily and to read beyond a first impression, practicing seeing as a form of solidarity. Some images

62 Azoulay, Ariella: *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography*. 2012. Translated by Louise Bethlehem, London/New York 2015, 26.

63 *Ibid.*, 9.

64 Cf. *ibid.*, 219.

65 Cf. *ibid.*, 26.

66 Cf. *ibid.*, 54.

67 Cf. Azoulay, Ariella: *Civil Contract of Photography*. Translated by Real Mazali and Ruvik Danieli, New York 2008, 128–130.

playfully unsettle ostensibly fixed denotations by shifting meaning and engaging with different often contradictory associations of a sign; they cannot be narrowed down to one single understanding and, here, manifest this indecision by offering cues that can be read in multiple ways at once. Other photographs underscore the humanity of the people presented in ways that neither fix them in precarity nor in victimhood. They articulate, for example, the grief and loss in peoples' situations but do so framing emotion and connection, not misery and suffering. Even different images abstractly visualize webs of support and care in recognizing the need for connection and public bedding, proposing renewed structures of abolition in infrastructure and institutions, here, underlaying the demands inherent in the Black Lives Matter Movement.

3.1 Unsettling Definitions

Figure 1: Police Shooting Missouri, Aug. 7, 2014



picture alliance/Charlie Riedel

Charlie Riedel's photograph shows a protester wearing a stylized police cap during the Ferguson protests in 2014 after Michael Brown was shot by a police officer (fig. 1). Defiantly, the man is looking into the camera, his eyes obscured by the shadow of the cap's shield. A slight smirk flickers across his mouth, reflecting contempt or amusement, indignation or self-assertion in reaction to the camera taking a close-up image of his face and his hat. It is as if, through the camera, this man seeks eye contact with the spectators, demanding their attention and reflection. The

green background is blocked out in a blur, as are parts of his face's contours and the headband of the stylized cap. Clearly discernible, however, is the word written in white paint on the shield: "MURDERER." In the context of Michael Brown's death this exclamation presents both a designation of the event and a commentary on the narratives, images, and practices that continuously lead to similar altercations and lethal misunderstandings.

The photograph plays with the controlling images and the purported criminality of the "iconic ghetto." While it labels the officer who has shot the teenager eight days previously in the streets as a murderer, it visualizes the ascription so easily placed upon the Black man himself. It references both a mediated mainstream image and a narrative of pathologized Black criminality. The word, used by the protester to seemingly satirically label himself in protest, addresses the criminalization of Black lives and the fabulated Blackness seen as danger and difference. Tommie Shelby writes in this context of a fictional "culture of poverty"⁶⁸, which I see reflected in the image. The purported culture of poverty in disadvantaged and urban Black communities reads behavior and representations as essentially Black and urban, without considering continuous structural disadvantages or fictive portrayals of Blackness.⁶⁹

As if visually summarizing Thurston's call to attend to racialized patterns and the feeling of constantly having to police oneself, Riedel's image places the word murderer over the Black man's face, anticipating that he is seen as a criminal despite having done nothing illegal. The sign and the image are anticipating both possible future encounters with the police and the continuous and disproportionate incarceration rates of Black people in the United States. It simultaneously comments on the hardship and discrimination linked to the status of felon or convict even after being released.⁷⁰ There are, thus, three possible readings of the word "MURDERER" in this photograph: This fictive and fabulated ascription of criminality written onto the Black body, the officer responsible for the death of a 18 year-old man (including the systems and practices of police violence that seem to back him), and – in recourse to the controlling image and the iconic ghetto – the criminal justice system and the processes of policing, the walking or existing while Black that affects Black everyday lives. These forms of institutionalized and quotidian surveillance place the Black man presented in the position of ostensible criminal, compelled to police his own actions and steps to perchance avoid the threat of being mistaken for a culprit, the threat of his mundane actions being interpreted as suspicious and encounters turning violent.

The culture of inequality inherent in such stigmatization, the ongoing and often unintentional racialized reactions, while not always openly discriminatory, argues

68 Shelby, Tommie: *Dark Ghettos: Injustice, Dissent, and Reform*. Cambridge 2016, 80.

69 Cf. *ibid.*

70 On repercussions for felons see Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*.

Imani Perry, are as persistent and inequitable as the legal Jim Crow signage of the past was: “The stigmas associated with ‘colored places’ are carried onto colored bodies and are recounted every time someone calls another ‘ghetto,’ gives a sideways glance that is motivated by racial suspicion, follows another at the mall or museum, or gives poor service at a restaurant”⁷¹. While these individual acts seem to be relatively minute, they add up to a system that formalizes racialized boundaries and thresholds. This treatment “is a symbol of a broader culture of inequality that does debilitate in many profound ways and is no less dramatic when it occurs than the ‘colored’ sign above a water fountain that was a symbol of a de jure structure of inequality”⁷². Like a segregating sign, the man’s MURDERER-hat in the image reflects upon these organizations, visualizing the mundane discrimination that dominates many contemporary Black lives.

The image defies any such definition. With his smirking smile, his tipped hat, and direct, confident stare into the camera, this man refuses to be defined. The inscription adds to this refusal, as the visual connection between the cap and the word asks its spectators to change perspectives and consider the daily practices of inequality and the larger structures which these actions and assumptions form. Spectators are not asked to emphasize with this man smirking into the camera, whose hat confuses, and who seems to accuse people and systems of control as lethal. They are required to accept him as a human being whose life and perspectives matter, who offers valid political criticisms, and who cannot be reduced to either stereotypical definitions and racialized narratives or fundamental refusal and ostensible hostility. In this way, the photograph visualizes perspectives and (often biased) thought processes used to structure the world. In a similar vein, Perry asks to

[t]hink about how we describe different racial groups, their histories, their present. Almost immediately, we are thrown into either stereotype or invisibility, or both, for many groups. The stories we tell and integrate into our knowledge impacts how we see ourselves, how we see others around us, how we treat them, what opportunities we provide, what expectations we have.⁷³

In addressing the very notion of such controlling images the photograph asks its viewers to reconsider assumptions and positions, to become aware of and change the racialized narratives that define what seems to be general knowledge about unfamiliar people, cultures, and communities. The photograph, thus, asks for critical consideration of the mindset underlying contemporary societies. Labeling both police and Black man potential criminals, it refuses clarity and unsettles existing pre-

71 Perry, *More Beautiful and More Terrible*, 196.

72 *Ibid.*

73 *Ibid.*, 187.

sumptions and definitions. The image troubles the frames according to which we believe to see and understand the world. Thus, this specific photograph refuses to become a controlling image, neither reducing the person presented to an object of empathy nor presenting him according to stereotypes and ostensible definitions of Black lives. By shifting contexts, perspectives, and playing with positions Riedel's photograph addresses so much more than Brown's death and yet directly refers to this event and the structures operating in the background.

The profound simplicity with which the photograph does so can be related to the visual language of popular culture and its simplified positions. Trying to make sense of practices of aestheticizing and narrativizing used in press photographs, Nigerian American author Teju Cole has described such images as "The Superhero Photographs of the Black Lives Matter Movement." People seeing these images, he argues, read them according to the stories they know of popular comic book figures; hero adventures distinguish between clear (moral) positions and use such representations as guideposts in making sense of what is seen. For their audiences, these comics "fill a psychological need in a world of drift and inchoate war,"⁷⁴ representing easily recognizable cultural staples. The images – portraying calm protesters and lines of militarized police officers, people throwing tear gas canisters or screaming at anonymous almost caricatured figures – provide a sense of orientation as the discriminatory practices addressed are not easily identified. The structures that Black Lives Matter fights against are hidden in plain sight, intricately intertwined in society and culture and practiced across all classes, ethnicities, and affiliations. For those looking for orientation who are familiar with superhero narratives, such images of clear heroes and overpowering systems engage in intertextual dialogues with familiar visual narratives of violence, heroism, hope, and desperation; the fictional eternal fight between good and evil.

Riedel's photograph, however, complicates this notion of good and evil. While visually and aesthetically fitting into the category of superhero images – with the extreme close-up of the face – the conflation of the word, the symbolic hat, and the man's face articulate a depth within the image and concurrently the protests. There is no absolutely good and no absolutely evil at stake in these protests but the attempt at dismantling hierarchies, bias, and practices. Protesters seek to foster a livable life for everybody. A life that is not bound by in/visible racialized systems, that does not deny livelihood on the base of skin color or origin, or question ostensible uprightness. In fact, the image seems to argue, not a reducing of complexity is needed in the movement, but the ongoing and critical disentanglement of racialized narratives

74 Cole, Teju: *The Superhero Photographs of the Black Lives Matter Movement*. In: *The New York Times Magazine*, July 26, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/31/magazine/the-superhero-photographs-of-the-black-lives-matter-movement.html>. Accessed March 9, 2021.

and stereotypes, their enactment in social and political conditions, and the routines, perspectives and procedures that Perry calls “practice of racial inequality”⁷⁵.

3.2 Refusing to Fix Misery

Figure 2: Screaming Man Protesting. November 25, 2014, Ferguson, MO



Getty Images/Justin Sullivan

Similarly, the man's gesture in Justin Sullivan's photograph from November 25, 2014 demands attention and asks for a shift in perspective (fig. 2). It presents a man screaming in pain, yet refuses to define him as personified pain and misery, as suffering in person or bare life. The picture, showing a group of protesters in a nighttime scene, was taken in Ferguson, MO, after the grand jury decided not to indict the officer who shot Michael Brown. It was taken when demonstrations protested the decision and called for accountability. A group of men is shown protesting as they hold their hands up in the clenched fist as a symbol for resistance and Black emancipation. The four people stand in a group, almost as if surrounding the camera. The person on the right of the image, holding a fist up and lifting the head, is seen as a backlit silhouette, whose face is barely discernible. The man on the left, while also seemingly holding up his fist, looks to the ground as if refusing to be further involved in the scene. The protester in the background, wearing a grey hooded sweatshirt, is in part illuminated by the headlights. The face is obscured by what seems to be an old green full-face respirator. The rest of the head is covered in the hood of the sweat-

75 Perry, *More Beautiful and More Terrible*, 31.

shirt. Dreadlocks emerge beneath the face. The third man, who is in the focus of the photograph, looks away and screams in anger, pain, or grief.

In this portrayal, the image affirms these persons' humanity without falling prey to the humanitarian dilemma. The man in the center, averting his gaze, is a human being who cries in anger and pain, yet is not reduced to the same. The gathering of several Black people, all standing-in and protesting for the same objective, and the powerful gestures and visualized yelling keep each person from being reduced to a symbol. In *Precarious Lives*, philosopher Judith Butler indirectly points to the theoretical frames of being human that are inherent in contemporary cultures. She poses the question of ostensibly normative humanness in inquiring what makes life livable and death grievable;⁷⁶ or, more to the point, whose lives are livable and whose deaths are grievable: "certain lives will be highly protected, and the abrogation of their claims to sanctity will be sufficient to mobilize the forces of war. Other lives will not find such fast and furious support and will not even qualify as grievable"⁷⁷. The ostensible status of being human can, thus, be determined by asking whose deaths would truly matter, whose lives are protected to which extent, and for whom we grieve and for how long. While continuously proclaimed, the value of human life in questions of vulnerability and practices of protection is differentially allocated. Certain groups of people are not fully registered as human, their vulnerability and injurability is unseen, and their injuries and deaths are not discursively noted⁷⁸. These processes seemingly entail acquiescing other people's suffering or not seeing their precarious conditions. It entails an inability to see, that is not merely a refusal or ignorance but a fundamental inability to recognize the lives of some as human lives. Grieving, and being grieved for, becomes a sign of humanness.

To focus on the common state of vulnerability and inherent connection of lives, Butler notes, can change the structures and meanings of vulnerability itself.⁷⁹ Such an ethical and solidary focus changes not only what we see as legitimate suffering but also who we see as vulnerable and in need of protection; whose life fully matters as human life.

A [shared] vulnerability must be perceived and recognized in order to come into play in an ethical encounter [...]. [W]hen a vulnerability is recognized, that recognition has the power to change the meaning and structure of the vulnerability itself. In this sense, if vulnerability is one precondition for humanization, and humanization takes place differently through variable norms of recognition, then

76 Butler, Judith: *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence*, London/New York, 2004/2006, XV.

77 Ibid., 32.

78 Ibid., 33.

79 Cf. *ibid.*, 43.

it follows that vulnerability is fundamentally dependent on existing norms of recognition.⁸⁰

In linking vulnerability, humanization, and recognition, Butler articulates a sense of solidarity based, among other areas, in perception and acceptance that demands to see differently, to consider the ways of seeing and of politically and socially organizing what we see.

The screaming man in the image, surrounded by others, is vulnerable yet embedded in a community that supports and affirms him. Thus screaming into the night, he reflects the sense of vulnerability back onto the spectator, who does not see him as the vulnerable person but as a human being who, in the very constitution of his human life, is connected to others and fundamentally dependent on affiliations, as all humans are. The ability to grieve then, in turn, becomes a sign for solidarity and humanity, for if we grieve we are seized by loss and pain, we reveal our vulnerability as we become aware of the fundamental social and political ties that bind us to others.⁸¹ Each of us is entangled in a web of social relations, some of which we do not even know exist, and constituted within social vulnerability.⁸² Inherent with these realizations is a “fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility”⁸³ asking to pay attention to others, to their struggles and demands. Butler explains this connection by theorizing the affective reaction of losing a close connection. Such loss renders a person vulnerable. It reveals the intricate pattern of fundamental sociality in life. Losing persons entails a loss of connections to them and is therefore not only the loss of loved ones but involves losing a part of oneself.⁸⁴ Attending to this vulnerability, the human is, then, understood as social being who is fundamentally connected to others, vulnerable to outside address, and affected by intimate entanglements.⁸⁵

The scream depicted in Sullivans photograph reveals such entanglements and vulnerabilities in the life of the man presented. His “passion and grief and rage” show, as he screams, visualizing a loss of the self and of the binds that undo and implicate “us in lives that are not are [sic] own, irreversibly, if not fatally”⁸⁶. The outcry allows us to recognize him as fully human: feeling, grieving, and being in rage just like any of us would be. The scream in this image, whether seen as reflection of outrage or grief, is affective and contagious. We feel with the person who has lost a connection and in many ways a central part of himself.

80 Ibid.

81 Cf. *ibid.*, 20.

82 Cf. *ibid.*

83 *Ibid.*, 23.

84 Cf. *ibid.*, 22.

85 Cf. *ibid.*, 29.

86 *Ibid.*, 25.

The scream, community of protesters, and entanglements in the image, keeps it from closing in on a fictive and all-defining object of suffering. The photograph discloses adversity as merely one part in the complexity of the person's life. It evades the "humanitarian dilemma" that Kennedy describes and, instead, links the painful scream to a complex understanding of the man's humanity which is entangled in manifold webs and relations. He is embedded in connections to other people – known and unknown to him –, (infra-)structural conditions, institutional networks, political arrangements, as well as fabricated narrations and images that determine lived realities. Becoming aware of these connections and refusing to reduce the sight to a single meaning, becomes a form of solidarity entrenched in seeing, in imagining differently and, following Azoulay's description, a solidarity that engages in "civil imagination," seeing beyond what is seen. Here, too, the photograph looks deeper at the structures of meaning making and knowledge and asks for a solidarity of looking.

3.3 Webs of Connection

Figure 3: A female protester, demanding justice for Eric Garner, sports a face mask in Brooklyn, New York, Dec. 5, 2014



picture alliance/Elisabeth Shafiroff/Reuters

The connections and entanglements inherent in human lives are similarly envisioned in Elisabeth Shafiroff's photograph of a woman wearing a breathing mask in protests in New York City on December 5, 2014 (fig. 3). The image was taken during a protest rally in response to the acquittal of the officer who strangled Eric Garner in July 2014. Garner died in a banned police chokehold after he was stopped for selling

loose cigarettes on the street.⁸⁷ Before the COVID-pandemic made wearing face-masks mandatory, the photograph shows a single protester sporting a breathing mask in front of a blurry background, a large building with its windows illuminated in neon light. This woman is confronting the camera and seems aware of being photographed. She looks attentively and shows her mask on which the question “CAN U BREATHE[E?]” is written in felt marker script. The phrase references Eric Garner’s repeated plea for breath, voiced before he died: “I Can’t breathe.” This expression was taken up by Black Lives Matter Protests to call attention to the surveillance and criminalization of Black lives and living conditions and disparities in disadvantaged (Black) communities.

By turning the exclamation into a question – paired with the urgent address of the woman’s stare – the photograph demands spectators to take a position, to place themselves within the structures and practices of inequality and to reconsider their involvement. With its reference to breathing, the lack of air, and the plea to recognize the humanity of the person, the photograph places the viewer within a network of engagement and solidarity. The protest action and the image place me within the political arena of protests and the web of relations that connects back to the events happening in New York. They ask me to engage critically with what I see and to critically consider my position within these conflicts and how I, as spectator, can become involved in changing what I see. Like the scream in Sullivan’s photograph, the symbolized mask and the woman’s calm presence emphasize the complexity of life and the entanglements within which lives take place. By wearing the mask and highlighting the demand for ‘air,’ as leeway, respect, and acknowledgement, the woman visualizes the need to be held within relationships (known and unknown), structures, and infrastructures inherent in human life.⁸⁸ Being able to breathe then translates into being supported in all means, especially those that end differential treatment and discrimination. It entails being respected as a person, desisting racialized profiling and fighting biased suspicions.

This image, too, does not present a fixation on suffering and symbolic suffocating, but a portrayal of strength and a bid to consider connections beyond camera and photographed, image and spectator, police and Black communities. The webs and connections seen in the photograph are not only those addressed by Butler in relation to a primary sociability and “fundamental dependency”⁸⁹. They are connected

87 Eric Garner was strangled to death in July 2014 during his arrest in Staten Island, New York. He was arrested for selling loose cigarettes. Southall, Ashley: Police Investigators Determined Officer Choked Eric Garner. In: The New York Times, May 13, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/13/nyregion/eric-garner-death-daniel-pantaleo-trial-chokehold.html>. Accessed March 9, 2021.

88 See also Honig, *Public Things*.

89 Butler, *Precarious Life*, 22.

to various networks of support and societal contracts that are not yet equitable and function under the assumption that colorblindness before the law brings about a socially and economically just society. A system of justice, however, that does not see the relevance of skin color in contemporary lives cannot account for the discriminations and impediments caused by assumptions of ethnicity and categories of ostensible poverty or criminality that stand in as purported substitutes for Blackness. Metaphorically not being able to breathe, then, points toward these very assumptions that impede on Black lives in mundane and seemingly ordinary ways, while referencing the ostensible excuses for discrimination seeing the responsibility for situations with the individual and not systems of control, uneven playing fields, or assumed irresponsibility.

When the movement calls for abolition, as similarly represented in the demand for air in Shafiroff's photograph, it calls for a society in which the police does not play as important a role as it does today, in which the room to breathe is provided in lifting the "invisible burden of other people's fears"⁹⁰ from Black people's shoulders. It abolishes the assumptions of respectability and rampant individuality – the idea that whatever happens to you is essentially based on your own doing –, and enacts a network of support and care that, at least to some extent, levels the playing field, creating equal opportunities for all. The woman's question, "CAN YOU BREATHE," metaphorically connects to the "abolitionist society" which Patrisse Khan-Cullors, one of the movement's founders, envisions: It is a society "rooted in the needs of the community first. It's rooted in providing for and supporting the self-determination of communities [...] a society based on interdependence and the connection of all living beings"⁹¹. That is, a society in which everyone would be able to breathe freely, without being defined by the fabulated images and narrations of Blackness or poverty, elusive responsibility or the purported "iconic ghetto." Such abolition is based on the concept by Angela Davis who writes in *Abolition Democracy* about dismantling the structures "in which racism continues to be embedded"⁹². While dismantling structures and the police does sound like a radical step, this process starts in less drastic measures. It entails creating the infrastructure and network of support necessary to "render prisons obsolete"⁹³. A first step would be to consciously and institutionally unlink ostensible criminality from appearance, skin color, origins, or economic solvency. Then "an array of social institutions [...] would begin to solve the

90 Thurston, How to Deconstruct Racism.

91 Heatherton, Christina: #BlackLivesMatter and Global Visions of Abolition: An Interview with Patrisse Cullors. In: Camp, Jordan T./Heatherton, Christina (Hg.): Policing the Planet: Why the Policing Crisis Led to Black Lives Matter. London/New York 2016, 35–40, 40.

92 Davis, Angela: *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Empire, Prison, and Torture*. New York 2005/2015, 26.

93 *Ibid.*, 71.

social problems that set people on the track to prison"⁹⁴. It would unhinge the connection between Blackness and ostensible criminality and create just ways of care and control that do not support the prison-industrial-complex.

Abolition democracy works with the recognition that directly addressing the circumstances and conditions that lead to crime would prove more efficient than the detention of so many people for minor and minute infractions. It would create opportunity structures for disadvantaged communities and schools, supply healthy and affordable food in urban food deserts, establish community centers that provide for assistance, room, and self-determination, and end the criminalization, surveillance, and sanctioning of poverty and homelessness. This network of support, would, for example, create chains of assistance that call for professionalized mental health care experts as first responders if someone suffers from a mental breakdown, without requiring armed police.⁹⁵ Thus, it would ideally restore the trust of Black communities into institutions and emergency responses. It would establish a system of social workers to provide support and care for homeless people or those disadvantaged, without the direct and immediate involvement of the police. It would attempt to change the systems of the criminal justice apparatus to avoid profit oriented penalty and prison structures, precincts making money with the sheer numbers of people arrested or traffic violation tickets written, or prisons becoming sources of revenue and profit. The question of being able to breathe, thus, reflects a larger system that weighs down Black communities, talks down their achievements and efforts, and diminishes life chances. The direct question on the mask visualizes this baggage in Black lives, making its addressees aware of the racialized structures and unconscious connections entangled in images and assumptions.

4. Conclusion: The Solidarity in/of Photographs

The photographs of protests call for a different kind of looking, a critical consideration of what is seen, and a general unsettling of seemingly fixed meanings. In a sense, this practice of looking and questioning can be understood as a solidarity of sight that is based in photography, or rather, that can be learned by attending to images and the structures laying underneath. This visual solidarity, the learning to look beyond the scenes portrayed or definitions given, is neither solidarity itself nor activism or protest. Yet, it can function as a supporting solidarity that begins to envision anti-racist structures and to discard biased and reductive assumptions. To question the images and narratives that govern people's lives is a first step toward

94 Ibid., 92.

95 See Andrew.

the social change envisioned in the Black Lives Matter Movement. It operates within the Movement's visual cultural project, unsettling the visual dimensions of political structures in society.

This 'visual solidarity' should not be confused with full blown activism. It can support action and shift perspectives but cannot create change on its own. In the first episode of the *Activists NYC* podcast by photographer and activist Cindy Trinh the founders of "Across Frontlines" – an organization specialized in supporting activists with trainings and resources – talk about umbrellas and water bottles as symbols of their shared efforts to support Civil Rights Protests. The first time they have met, Kalaya'an Mendoza explains, was in 2015 during the march commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Civil Rights Marches in Selma, AL. Seeing that his future founding partner Adam Cross carried umbrellas to shield protesters from the blazing sunshine, Mendoza realized their shared understanding of allyship, as Mendoza himself was carrying a backpack filled with water bottles. For Mendoza, their

role as allies, as accomplices, as folks who care and work in solidarity with communities is not to centralize ourselves in the work but to do that necessary work to make sure those communities are safe and able to [...] find their agency and their ability to change [...] their world⁹⁶.

Giving water to those too caught up in protest to drink and shade to those who place their struggle over their need to cover from exposure is a form of supportive solidarity akin to the critical examination of positions, perceptions, and rationales; akin to the unsettling of images and fabulations. These actions understand that it is a Black struggle to fight, supported from the sidelines. This entails attending to the images and their discursive contexts and becoming aware of the assumptions origins as well as the forces hidden in photography. The images of Black Lives Matter Protests ask their spectators to be aware of the political forces underway in the image, even if their implications cannot fully be understood. While they are not directly part of the protests and activism, they can become tools of solidarity – like the water bottle and the umbrella – working to support without drawing attention away from the essential struggles for social, cultural, and political change.

Lifting the burden of other people's fears, then, considers where these fears come from and how they are perpetuated. It entails breaking through the fabulations of difference and ostensible inferiority, to recognize the persons behind biased images and racialized narratives. A solidarity of looking, like water bottle and umbrella, shields from exhaustion and thirst, creating room to breathe and exist without being burdened by other people's assumptions, fixations, and fears.

96 Trinh, Cindy: *Across Frontlines*. In: *Activist NYC Podcast*, 13 Nov 2018, transcript mine.

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Grüne Oasen der Solidarität?

Zum Zusammenhang von transformiertem Stadtraum und Community Building mit Migrant*innen

Christian Preidel

Der folgende Artikel untersucht, ob sich mittels raumtheoretischer Konzepte eine Antwort auf die Frage finden lässt, inwiefern sich städtische Gesellschaften mit Migrant*innen solidarisieren. Dazu wird zunächst die nachbarschaftliche Gemeinschaftsbildung im Raum der (Vor-)Stadt thematisiert. Der Begriff der Community spielt dabei eine wichtige Rolle. Anhand eines konkreten Ortes wird dann erprobt, wie auf kleinem Raum Solidarität entstehen kann. Dabei dient der Garten sowohl als gegenwärtiges Beispiel einer sich zum Grünen transformierenden Stadt als auch als Metaphernfeld für neue Formen von Solidarität und Identitätsbildung.

1. Raumbezogene Solidarität in der Stadt

Dass Städte Menschen in Migrationssituationen anziehen lässt sich sowohl weltweit, als auch für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland konstatieren. Dies gilt zunächst für Personen mit unmittelbarer eigener Migrationserfahrung, von denen im Jahr 2019 knapp 60 % in städtischen Regionen in Deutschland lebten und deren Anteil an der Stadtbevölkerung 30,6 % betrug.¹ Aber auch die Nachkommen von Migrant*innen bevorzugen mehrheitlich die Stadt als Wohnort.² Demgegenüber konstatieren Judith Urselmann und Marianne Heimbach-Steins (2016) auf Basis des World Migration Reports:

1 Vgl. *Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis): Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit. Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund. Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2019. Fachserie 1 Reihe 2.2, Wiesbaden 2020, 42–43.*

2 Vgl. ebd.

Das Bundesamt unterscheidet in seinem Mikrozensus zwischen einem weiten und einem engen Migrationsbegriff, weist aber zugleich darauf hin, dass erst ab 2017 jährliche Daten zum Migrationshintergrund der Eltern vorliegen (vgl. ebd., 4–6.). Zudem ist eine Unterscheidung in Zugewanderte zweiter und dritter Generation nicht möglich, »weil Eltern verschiedenen Zuwanderergenerationen angehören können« (ebd., 7.).

In moderner Stadtplanung und *urban governance* spielt der Faktor Migration bisher auch nur selten eine tragende Rolle [...]. Die Vernachlässigung dieses Zusammenhangs geht zu Lasten der Migrantinnen und Migranten und zu Lasten der aufnehmenden (Stadt-)Gesellschaften.³

Sie fordern, die Zusammenhänge von Stadtpolitik und Migration zu studieren und stellen dabei die räumliche Perspektive ins Zentrum:

Dazu gehört, die Stadt als lebendigen sozialen Raum zu entschlüsseln. Es gibt verschiedene Zugänge zur Stadt als Raum. Mit dem sogenannten *spatial turn* geschieht eine Hinwendung zum Raum als relationalem Gebilde.⁴

1.1 Raum und Solidarität

Die Forderung nach einer Hinwendung zu einem relationalen Raumbegriff ist verbunden mit der Forderung, mittels dieses analytischen Instruments die komplexe und bisweilen konfliktreiche Lebensrealität von Migrant*innen in der Stadt nicht nur zu beschreiben, sondern zugleich auch zu fragen, inwiefern sich im Raum eine »Kultur der Solidarität«⁵ entwickelt.

Das setzt freilich einen Sprung auf ein anderes Diskursfeld voraus.⁶ In diesem Zusammenhang untersucht Matthias Wüthrich (2013), inwiefern sich eine sozialwissenschaftliche Perspektive auf den Raum, als durch bewusste und unbewusste Prozesse hergestellt, auch für gerechtigkeits-theoretische Erwägungen brauchbar ist. Dabei unterscheidet er mit Hilfe der Raumsoziologie Martina Löws zwischen »Akten des konkreten Platzierens, Verortens und Bauens«⁷, die Ungleichheit im Raum erzeugen, und den subtileren gesellschaftlichen Syntheseleistungen, mit denen räumliche Ausschlüsse stabilisiert und auch verschleiert werden. Für die Gerechtigkeits-theorie trägt die Raumtheorie viel ein, denn sie

macht [...] deutlich, dass Aspekte sozialer Ungleichheit nicht erst in unser äusseres [sic!] Anordnen, Platzieren und Bauen, [...] einfließen [sic!], sondern schon unser Wahrnehmen, Vorstellen und Erinnern von Raum durchziehen. Wir spitzen diesen Gedanken noch zu, um ihn in seiner ganzen Tragweite zu erfassen. Er legt nämlich

3 Urselmann, Judith/Heimbach-Steins, Marianne: Migration und Stadt. Eine sozialetische Skizze. Sozialetische Arbeitspapiere des Instituts für Christliche Sozialwissenschaften (ICS AP) Nr. 4, Münster 2016, 1 (Hervorhebungen im Original).

4 Ebd. (Hervorhebungen im Original).

5 Ebd., 16.

6 Vgl. Wüthrich, Matthias D.: Raum und soziale Gerechtigkeit. Eine raumtheoretische Skizze der Voraussetzungen ihrer Relationierung. In: Ethik und Gesellschaft 1/2013. Online: https://www.ethik-und-gesellschaft.de/mm/EuG-1-2013_Wüthrich.pdf (abgerufen am 15.6.2021), 4.

7 Ebd., 24.

den Schluss nahe, dass Aspekte sozialer Ungleichheit nicht nur unser Handeln im engeren Sinne, sondern auch die *Praxis unseres expliziten Denkens und Konzeptualisierens von Raum* mitbeeinflussen können.⁸

Wenn sich also die Theorie vom Raum als relationales Geschehen zur Analyse der oft unscharf bleibenden subtilen *Ausschlüsse* eignet, bis hin zu Residuen des postkolonialen und imperialen Zugriffs auf den Raum⁹, dann erscheint es sinnvoll, sie auch für Prozesse des *Einschließens* und der Solidarität fruchtbar zu machen. Die Gefahr von der beschreibenden Sozialgeografie (Wie wird Raum konstruiert?) allzu schnell zur Ethik (Was sind solidarische Räume?) zu wechseln, verlangt allerdings, nicht nur offenzulegen, welche Aspekte des Raumes wir beschreiben, wenn wir von Solidarität sprechen (1.2), sondern auch wen wir adressieren, wenn wir Solidarität für Migrant*innen im Stadtraum einfordern (1.3).

1.2 Der verdichtete Raum

Der Stadtraum, um den es hier gehen soll und innerhalb dessen Fragen der Solidarität verhandelt werden, soll im Folgenden als *verdichteter* Raum beschrieben werden. Matthias Lemke spricht von Dichte als »das die Stadt konstituierende Merkmal schlechthin [...] – und das sowohl in sozialer und politischer wie auch in architektonischer Hinsicht«¹⁰. Dabei versteht Lemke Dichte vor allem im Hinblick auf ihre sozialen Konsequenzen: Die enge Bebauung innerhalb der Stadt erhöht die Wahrscheinlichkeit, dass sich Menschen begegnen und miteinander interagieren müssen:

Dichte als Austausch meint eine gesteigerte Wahrscheinlichkeit für eine wie auch immer geartete Überschneidung menschlicher, also kommunikativer Praxis.¹¹

Dichte kann aber nicht nur Austausch forcieren, zu große Dichte bewirkt das Gegenteil: Angst, Rückzug und letztlich Isolation.¹² Das verlangt von den städtischen politischen Institutionen wiederum, die Dichte zu managen. Bewohner*innen von Städten haben demzufolge hohe Anforderungen an eine verträgliche Regulierung ihrer Umwelt¹³ oder sie entziehen sich dem Zusammentreffen, etwa indem sich die

8 Ebd., 26 (Hervorhebungen im Original).

9 Vgl., ebd., 26.

10 *Lemke, Matthias*: Die gerechte Stadt. Politische Gestaltbarkeit verdichteter Räume. In: *Ders.* (Hg.): Die gerechte Stadt. Politische Gestaltbarkeit verdichteter Räume. Stuttgart 2012, 14.

11 Ebd., 14 (Hervorhebungen im Original).

12 Vgl., ebd., 15.

13 Vgl., ebd., 17.

Finanzstarken innerhalb von *Gated Communities* den Raum nach ihren Vorstellungen gestalten¹⁴.

Für unser Thema Solidarität bedeutet diese Diagnose, dass wir uns zunächst auf die staatliche Regelungspraxis als Rahmen für das individuelle Handeln der Stadtbewohner*innen fokussieren. Damit verbunden ist erstens die Unterstellung, dass staatliche Akteure den *dichten Raum* nicht nur in seiner baulichen Gestaltung (Container-Modell des Raumes), sondern auch in seiner interrelationalen Struktur (relationaler Raumbegriff) entscheidend beeinflussen können, dass sich Raum also managen lässt. Und zweitens legt dieser Ansatz nahe, dass sich durch das behördliche Management grundlegende Fragen des Zusammenlebens – die, folgt man vertragstheoretischen oder diskursethisch beeinflussten Gerechtigkeitstheorien, erst einmal in der Begegnung öffentlich ausgehandelt werden müssen¹⁵ – lösen lassen. Ein solcher Anspruch scheint beispielsweise einer empirischen Studie zur sozialen Ungleichheit zwischen unterschiedlichen Stadtvierteln Isfahans (Iran) zugrundezuliegen: »Lack of spatial balance in the cities is due to inefficiencies in municipal management and the prevailing ideology.«¹⁶

1.3 Die Stadt als Adressat

Dem Fokus auf die staatlichen Akteure bei der Suche nach den »Macher*innen« raumbezogener Solidarität mit Migrant*innen geht grundlegend davon aus, dass wir überhaupt über eine solidarische Stadt sprechen können, dass sich also »die Stadt« als solidarisch bzw. unsolidarisch beurteilen lässt, was dann im zweiten Schritt in einem Appell mündet. Matthias Möhring-Hesse weist darauf hin, dass der Versuch einer Diagnose von Gerechtigkeit in der Stadt nicht nur durch die Vorstellung eines idealtypischen europäischen Typs von Stadt geprägt ist. In dieser Vorstellung stecken auch weitere

normative Überzeugungen – etwa hinsichtlich der Freiheit der Stadtbewohner und ihrer Toleranz gegenüber ihnen unvertrauten Einstellungen, Überzeugungen und Lebensformen, hinsichtlich der sozialen Inklusion der Städte und des sozialen Ausgleichs innerhalb der Städte sowie der sozialen, politischen und kulturellen Partizipation der Stadtbewohner.¹⁷

14 Vgl., ebd., 18.

15 Verlaufen die Aushandlungsprozesse von Gerechtigkeitsvorstellungen möglicherweise synchron zur diskursiven Konstruktion des Raumes?

16 *Ghaedrahmati, Safar/Khademalhoosini, Ahmed/Tahmasebi Farsahd*: Spatial analysis of social justice in city of Isfahan, Iran. In: *Annals of GIS* 24.1 (2018), 59.

17 *Möhring-Hesse, Matthias*: Ungerechtigkeiten der Stadt. In: Lemke, Matthias: *Die gerechte Stadt. Politische Gestaltbarkeit verdichteter Räume*. Stuttgart 2012, 32.

Für unser Thema, nämlich die Solidarität mit Migrant*innen, birgt das nicht nur die Herausforderung, in unserer Analyse die in der (Stadt-)Kultur eingeschriebenen Idealvorstellungen räumlicher Ordnungen wahrzunehmen. Es muss zugleich berücksichtigt werden, dass mit den Migrant*innen auch deren Idealvorstellungen vom Raum reisen – und diese können sich fundamental von der europäischen Perspektive unterscheiden. Dies zeigt sich deutlich bei Auseinandersetzungen um die Nutzung öffentlicher Anlagen, also etwa wer in welcher Weise und zu welcher Zeit einen Park oder Garten nutzt (siehe dazu das Beispiel aus Leipzig unter 4.2).

Der darauf folgende Schritt, die Zurechenbarkeit und Adressierbarkeit von Akteuren in der Stadt fällt hingegen zunächst leichter, lässt sich doch eine Struktur politischer Forderungen aus den Überlegungen Möhring-Hesses gewinnen: *Erstens* lässt sich die Stadtverwaltung dort effektiv adressieren, wo sie Einfluss nimmt, etwa direkt beim städtischen Wohnungsmarkt oder indirekt über die Stadtplanung.¹⁸ *Zweitens* ist die Verantwortung nicht auf eine konkrete Verwaltungseinheit beschränkt, sondern sie fällt, auch aufgrund der Dichte der Stadt, die Begegnung mit der/dem Anderen und auch mit der/dem Anderen in Not forciert,

auf die gesamte Stadtbevölkerung zurück, die in einer Solidarität mit entsprechenden Verpflichtungen untereinander gesehen wird. Die Stadtbevölkerung erscheint – trotz der ihr zgedachten »unvollständigen Integration« – dann als eine *Solidargemeinschaft*, in der sich die einzelnen trotz [sic!] aller Differenzen und trotz wechselseitiger Ignoranz ab einem gewissen Punkt nicht mehr gleichgültig sind, sondern wechselseitig für einander in Verantwortung stehen¹⁹

Drittens bedarf es öffentlicher Räume, um die Forderung nach Verantwortungsübernahme überhaupt zu artikulieren. Auch in digitalen Zeiten spiele der öffentliche Platz als Treffpunkt und Versammlungsort eine wichtige Rolle, so Möhring-Hesse. Gleichzeitig sei er »auf dem Wege der Stadtplanung aufgeteilt, gestaltet und reguliert«²⁰. Gegenüber dieser zentralen Steuerung bringt der Autor die Inanspruchnahme durch Gruppen, »die an Planungsprozessen selbst nicht beteiligt und deren Interessen dort nicht vertreten wurden«²¹ als widerständige Praxis in Anschlag. Man wird ergänzen müssen, dass solche Praktiken freilich stets umstritten sind, dass man den öffentlichen Raum also auch als umkämpften Raum, an dem sich Körper zum Widerstand formieren,²² denken muss.

18 Vgl., ebd., 35.

19 Ebd., 36 (eigene Hervorhebung).

20 Ebd., 39.

21 Ebd.

22 Vgl. *Butler, Judith*: Anmerkungen zu einer performativen Theorie der Versammlung, Berlin 2016.

2. Solidarität in Nachbarschaften

2.1 Solidarität

Nach der Definition des Stadtraums und seiner Akteure braucht es auch eine Definition von Solidarität, die eng an mit einer räumlich vermittelten Beziehung zu anderen Menschen verbunden ist. Darauf verweist bereits Émile Durkheims Definitionen, die Heinz Bude als »das rätselhafte soziale Band«, dass trotz aller Gegensätze Menschen zusammenbindet und so eine arbeitsteilige Gesellschaft erst ermöglicht, charakterisiert: Solidarität ist

zunächst nichts anderes als die Art und Weise der Einbezogenheit in ein soziales Geschehen: [...] wie man gemeinsam Feste feiert, miteinander zum Familiensessen am Tisch sitzt und wie man seine Toten begräbt, wie man sich bei der Betätigung einer Handsäge aufeinander abstimmt²³.

Auch die Beispiele, die Durkheim für seine unterschiedlichen Formen der Solidarität anführt, sind geografischer Natur: Im Dorf als »ortsumschriebene[m] Kreis«²⁴ entsteht *mechanische* Solidarität durch gegenseitige soziale Kontrolle. Demgegenüber ist die Definition von *organischer* Solidarität, wie sie in der Stadt dadurch entsteht, dass sich der Einzelne in seinen vielen Begegnungen trotz oder gerade in seiner Individualität »als Teil eines Ganzen«²⁵ erfährt, defizitärer: »[S]o richtig scheint Durkheim seinem eigenen Enthusiasmus für eine moderne Form der Solidarität nicht getraut zu haben«²⁶, schreibt Bude. Damit aus der Tatsache, dass wir zusammen leben auch eine Verpflichtung entsteht, brauche es eine »Gemeinschaft, die darüber wacht und den Einzelnen zu verstehen gibt, dass sie nur so [d.h. auf dem Wege gegenseitiger Solidarität, C.H.] für sich Dauer, Gewicht und Sinn finden können«²⁷. Diese Forderung Budes erscheint im Hinblick auf die Stadt zunächst

Hier kann eine Verbindung zu Martina Löws körperbetonter Raumkonzeption gezogen werden, die »den *Körperbezug* bei der Raumkonstitution [betont]. Er ergibt sich sachlich notwendig aus ihrem Ansatz: »Jeder handlungstheoretische Bezug auf Raum setzt zwangsläufig an der Körperlichkeit der Menschen an«

Wüthrich: Raum und soziale Gerechtigkeit, 21 (Hervorhebungen im Original, Zitat aus: Löw, Martina: Raumsoziologie, Frankfurt a.M. 2001, 128.).

23 Bude, Heinz: Solidarität. Die Zukunft einer großen Idee. Sonderausgabe für die Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Bonn 2019.

24 Ebd., 37.

25 Ebd., 39.

26 Ebd.

27 Ebd., 40f.

kontraintuitiv – Stadtluft macht schließlich frei – zugleich erscheint sie naheliegender, wenn man Stadt als Konglomerat von Nachbarschaften versteht. Der Kiez wäre demnach die Fortsetzung des Dorfes unter anderen räumlichen Bedingungen.

2.2 Nachbarschaften

Nachbarschaften zeichnen sich also durch räumliche Nähe aus, die eben jene »Sozialintegration«²⁸ des Individuums übernehmen kann, die Bude mit Durkheim als unabdingbar sieht. Dies setzt allerdings erstens voraus, dass Nachbarschaften überhaupt Gemeinschaften bilden, dass sie also über ein Mindestmaß an sozialer Kohäsion²⁹ verfügen. Ein solcher Zusammenhalt wird einerseits von Bewohner*innen wahrgenommen, die dann davon sprechen, dass man im Viertel aufeinander achte. Andererseits drückt er sich im *Handeln* aus, gerade in krisenhaften Situationen. Christopher Browning, Seth Feinberg und Robert Dietz (2004) fragten Bewohner*innen, ob die Nachbarschaft einschreite, wenn Kinder die Schule schwänzten, wenn jemand auf der Straße bedroht würde oder wenn die Feuerwache im Viertel geschlossen werden sollte³⁰ und machten am Auftreten nachbarschaftlicher Interventionen die Stärke des Zusammenhalts fest – wer handelt, achtet also tatsächlich aufeinander. Wie Kohäsion aber überhaupt entsteht ist damit nicht beantwortet. Geschieht dies beispielsweise durch gemeinsame

(Krisen-)Erfahrungen, durch verbindende Symbole oder geteilte Orte? Und ist diese Kohäsion nur innerhalb einzelner Gruppen in der Nachbarschaft zu finden oder ist sie gruppenübergreifend, was Robert Bellah als »bridging social capital« bezeichnet?

Zweitens ist auch nicht beantwortet, welche Formen des Verhaltens die Nachbarschaft reguliert. Gerade die Überwachung sozial devianten Verhaltens ist hochgradig ambivalent. So zeigen Browning, Feinberg und Dietz, dass auch in Nachbarschaften mit hoher sozialer Vernetzung Kriminalität entsteht, dass sogar Verhalten, dass einzelnen Bewohner*innen schadet, durch die Nachbarschaft gedeckt wird:

28 Ebd., 41.

29 Vgl., *Portes, Alejandro/Sensenbrenner, Julia*: Embeddedness and Immigration. Notes on the Social Determination of Economic Action. In: *American Journal of Sociology* 98.6 (1993), 1340: Hinter der Schwierigkeit, Kohäsion festzustellen steht ein »age-old dilemma between community solidarity and individual freedom in the modern metropolis« (ebd.).

30 *Browning, Christopher R./Feinberg, Seth L./Dietz, Robert D.*: The Paradox of Social Organization. Networks, Collective Efficacy, and Violent Crime in Urban Neighborhoods. In: *Social Forces* 83.2 (2004), 514.

As one [...] resident stated after having witnessed criminal activity by a local adolescent: »I didn't wanna give this young man's name [to the police] because his mama is such a sweet lady«³¹

Und es lassen sich hinter einem solchen Verhalten Motivationen finden, die von einem geteilten Verständnis sozialer Normen bis hin zu persönlichen Verpflichtungen zur Verschwiegenheit reichen. Die Nachbarschaft und ihre Bindungen einfach als Ressource für die Durchsetzung erwünschten Verhaltens, gewissermaßen als verlängerter Arm von Polizei und Verwaltung, zu sehen, ist ebenso vereinnahmend wie die Projektion altruistischer Vorstellungen:

the tendency to view social capital as unproblematically positive should be tempered in favor of a more realistic assessment of the multiple objectives toward which social resources may be directed³².

3. Communities

Ein hilfreiches Vorgehen, um das weite Feld der Nachbarschaft einzugrenzen und die komplexen Motivationen, die das Handeln der Bewohner*innen bestimmen, zu fassen, ist es die Nachbarschaft in unterschiedliche Communities aufzugliedern. Man könnte beispielsweise von Solidarität zwischen türkischstämmigen Einwohner*innen, zwischen neu zugezogenen Geflüchteten oder zwischen den Mitgliedern einer Glaubensgemeinschaft sprechen und erst in einem zweiten Schritt prüfen, ob diese Gruppensolidarität auch *gruppenübergreifenden* Charakter hat. Allerdings ist der Begriff Community als solcher nur schwer eindeutig zu fassen. Man darf sie weder als statisches Gebilde verstehen, noch sie als (kulturell) homogen romantisieren. Stattdessen sind Communities »heterogen und multi-dimensional [...]. Zudem können Individuen in der Regel mehreren Communities gleichzeitig angehören und innerhalb jeder Community existieren unterschiedliche Stimmen, Interessen und Positionen«³³. Gleichzeitig braucht eine Community Gemeinsamkeiten: »soziale Bezüge, ähnliche Sichtweisen und das Engagement für eine gemeinsame Sache an bestimmten Orten oder in speziellen Settings«³⁴.

31 Vgl., ebd., 510.;

Pattillo, Mary E.: Sweet Mothers and Gangbangers: Managing Crime in a Black Middle-Class Neighborhood. In: *Social Forces* 76.7 (1998), 765.

32 *Browning/Feinberg/Dietz*: The Paradox of Social Organization, 527.

33 *Gangarova, Tanja/Von Unger, Hella*: Community Mapping als Methode. Erfahrungen aus der partizipativen Zusammenarbeit mit Migrant*innen. In: *Hartung, Susanne* u.a. (Hg.): *Partizipative Forschung*, Wiesbaden 2020, 150.

34 Ebd.

Bevor wir uns einem solchen Setting zuwenden, sollen aber zunächst Modelle von Community und die dahinterstehenden Solidaritätskonzepte vorgestellt werden. Dabei kommen zuerst zwei räumlich konkret fassbare Formen von Community und anschließend zwei Modelle des Community Buildings – also der auf Zukunft hin imaginierten Gemeinschaft – in den Blick.

3.1 Weiße Vorstädte

Eine Community, die das Wort bereits in ihrer Bezeichnung trägt, ist die »Gated Community«, das abgeschlossene Vorstadtviertel. Was zunächst ein Phänomen amerikanischer Städte sowie einiger Gemeinden in den Sunbelt-Staaten war – ein bekanntes Beispiel ist die (vornehmlich weiße) »retirement-community« »The Villages« in Florida –, existiert heute in vielen Städten rund um den Globus: Ein physisch abgeschlossenes Gelände mit Zugangskontrolle, das für die Bedürfnisse einer meist wohlhabenden Klientel entwickelt wurde. Was das Management städtischer Dichte, das zu Beginn angesprochen wurde, angeht, so haben die Bewohner*innen von Gated Communities diese Aufgabe auf einen privaten Anbieter übertragen. Dessen Versprechen ist es, einen geschützten Raum zur Verfügung zu stellen.

Der amerikanische Autor T.C. Boyle beschreibt in seinem Buch »The Tortilla Curtain« (1995) anschaulich, wie sich eine solche Community von ihrer Umgebung nicht nur sozial abschottet, sondern wie auch die sie umgebende »wilde« Natur durch Zäune und Mauern auf Abstand gehalten wird. An der Parabel eines Kojoten, der die Abspernung durchbricht und für Panik bei den Einwohner*innen sorgt, zeigt Boyle die Brüchigkeit dieses Modells: Weder die Natur, noch die soziale Ungleichheit – die der Autor am Schicksal zweier undokumentierter Migrant*innen an der US-mexikanischen Grenze verdichtet – lässt sich dauerhaft aus der heilen Welt der oberen Mittelklasse ausschließen. Das weltweite Wachstum von Gated Communities macht deutlich, dass der Traum vom abgeschlossenen Paradies nach wie vor verhängt. Zugleich sind solche Gemeinschaften nur die sichtbare Oberfläche subkutan in den Städten überall stattfindender Segregationsprozesse.

3.2 Ethnische Enklaven in den Innenstädten

Dass solche Prozesse der freiwilligen Segregation nicht allein auf freiwilligen Ausschlüssen basieren, zeigt der Blick auf migrantische Communities. Bei ihrer Entstehung ist nicht der Wunsch nach Abschottung, sondern die fehlende Chance auf Integration ein wichtiger Motor: Das Ankommen in einer unbekanntlichen Nachbarschaft ohne Bindungen, ohne Sprachkenntnisse und ohne Anerkennung beruflicher Qualifikationen zeichnet viele Einwanderungsgeschichten aus. Um in einer solchen Umgebung Fuß zu fassen, ist soziale Vernetzung entscheidend. Alejandro Portes und Julia Sensenbrenner (1993) weisen im Anschluss an Durkheims Begriff des sozia-

len Kapitals auf zwei für migrantische Communities wichtige Formen der Solidarität hin: »bounded solidarity« entsteht durch die gemeinsame Erfahrung herkunfts-basierter Diskriminierung und erzeugt Zusammenhalt unter Menschen ähnlicher Herkunft:

The confrontation with the receiving society is capable not only of activating dormant feelings of nationality among immigrants but of creating such feelings where none existed before. In a well-known passage, Glazer refers to the case of Sicilian peasants coming to New York in the early 1900s whose original loyalties did not extend much beyond their local villages. These immigrants learned to think of themselves as Italian and to band together on that basis after the native population began to treat them in the same manner and to apply to them the same derogatory labels.³⁵

Wie weit diese Solidarität reicht bleibt allerdings offen. Die Beispiele, die Portes und Sensenbrenner anführen suggerieren, dass Gruppen auf eine ähnliche Herkunft oder verwandtschaftliche Beziehungen gemeinsam Bezug nehmen, die sich nicht auf die gesamte Nachbarschaft erstrecken dürften.

Die Zugehörigkeit zu einer Gruppe hat für Migrant*innen konkrete wirtschaftliche Vorteile. Die ethnischen Communities bieten einen stabilen Absatzmarkt für Kleinunternehmer*innen und Arbeitsplätze für Neuangekommene.³⁶ Die geschäftlichen Transaktionen basieren dabei wesentlich auf einer zweiten Form sozialen Kapitals, das Portes und Sensenbrenner »enforceable trust« nennen, also die Fähigkeit Fehlverhalten *innerhalb* einer Community zu sanktionieren. Wer mangels anderer Möglichkeiten auf die Gemeinschaft zurückgreift, etwa um einen Kredit aufzunehmen, muss mit einem Ausschluss bei fehlender Zahlungsmoral rechnen. Wenn die ethnische Community allerdings für Migrant*innen der einzige Anker in der neuen Nachbarschaft ist, entsteht damit ein hohes Maß an sozialer Kontrolle. Hinzu kommt, dass die Gemeinschaft ein eigenes Informationsnetzwerk aufbaut: in den 90er Jahren waren dies Zeitungen, Radio- und Fernsehstationen in der gemeinsamen Sprache,³⁷ heute wird man stärker soziale Medien in Betracht ziehen müssen.

Der Rückhalt innerhalb einer ethnischen Community kann für Migrant*innen allerdings auch negative Folgen zeitigen. Zum einen besteht eine sozial kontrollierte Verpflichtung zu gegenseitiger Unterstützung, was zu hohen Belastungen und zum Entstehen von Trittbrettfahrer*inneneffekten führen kann, wenn von den wenigen Erfolgreichen die soziale Unterstützung der gesamten Community erwartet wird.³⁸

35 Portes/Sensenbrenner: *Embeddedness and Immigration*, 1328.

36 Vgl., ebd., 1329.

37 Vgl. ebd., 1337.

38 Vgl., ebd., 1339.

Zum anderen macht es die Community Aufsteiger*innen schwer, wenn dort sozialer Aufstieg mit dem Verrat an der Gemeinschaft gleichgesetzt wird:

The neologism »wannabe« [...] captures succinctly the process at hand. Calling someone by this name is a way of ridiculing his or her aspiration to move above his or her present station and of exercising social pressure on the person to remain in it.³⁹

Die europäische Stadt unterscheidet sich allerdings von den hier vorgestellten amerikanischen (Vor-)städten insofern, als dass es hier keine geschlossenen ethnischen Enklaven, kein weitgehend von der Stadt entkoppeltes China Town oder Little Italy, gibt.⁴⁰ Trotz der größeren Durchmischung existiert aber auch in der europäischen Stadt die Rede von abgeschotteten Communities, allerdings eher als Außenperspektive: Damit ist nicht allein das Wort »Parallelgesellschaften« gemeint, mit dem vornehmlich die unbearbeiteten Identitätsängste der Mehrheitsgesellschaft ventiliert werden⁴¹, sondern auch die Folklorisierung – oder um mit Edward Said zu sprechen, Orientalisierung – migrantisch geprägter Stadtviertel. Wenn wohlhabende Mitglieder der Mehrheitsgesellschaft in solche Viertel ziehen und angeben, die dortige Diversität zu schätzen, dann dient dies häufig »primär eigenen Interessen, die weniger mit der Überschreitung ethnischer als vielmehr mit der Verfestigung klassenspezifischer Grenzen zu tun haben«⁴². Die Gemeinschaften bleiben also auch in der europäischen Stadt tendenziell unter sich.

3.3 Communities of Care

Das Wort Community wird allerdings nicht allein zur Beschreibung existierender Gemeinschaften verwandt, es taucht auch als präskriptiver Begriff auf, nämlich als Forderung *nach* Gemeinschaft. Damit wird der Communitybegriff als Gegenentwurf zur Anonymität in der städtischen Nachbarschaft ins Spiel gebracht: Wie in der (idealisierten) Dorfgemeinschaft, solle man wieder aufeinander achten und sich gegenseitig unterstützen. Wie Eric Klinenberg (2002) zeigen konnte, trägt nachbarschaftliche Gemeinschaft wesentlich zur Gesundheit, insbesondere vulnerabler Gruppen, bei. Sein Beispiel ist die Chicagoer Hitzewelle 1995, in deren Verlauf besonders ältere und alleinlebende Menschen gefährdet waren. Dort wo die

39 Ebd., 1342.

40 Vgl. Parzer, Michael: Jenseits von Parallelgesellschaft und Aufstiegsmythos. Soziologische Betrachtungen zum Integrationspotenzial migrantischer Ökonomien. In: Emunds, Bernhard/Wolff, Michael/Czington, Claudia (Hg.): Stadtluft macht reich/arm. Stadtentwicklung, soziale Ungleichheit und Raumgerechtigkeit, Frankfurt a.M. 2018, 86.

41 Vgl., ebd., 88.

42 Ebd., 93.

Nachbarschaft aufeinander achtete, hatten die meist mobilitätseingeschränkten und oft ohne Klimaanlage in ihren Wohnungen Ausharrenden eine wesentliche größere Überlebenschance.

Längst ist die Stärkung solcher nachbarschaftlichen Communities, das Community Building, Teil der Stadtpolitik. Die Verwendung des Wortes Community in staatlichen Programmen weckt allein nicht nur positive Assoziationen. David Hawkins (1999) verwendet den Begriff »Communities of Care« für ein Interventionsprojekt zur Prävention von Jugendkriminalität. Er entwirft ein fünfschrittiges Programm, das auf Basis eines individuellen Risikoprofils (Welche Faktoren innerhalb der Nachbarschaft begünstigen deviantes Verhalten?) eine gemeinsame Vision einer kriminalitätsfreien Nachbarschaft entwickeln und darauf aufbauend Maßnahmen der Jugendarbeit implementieren soll, die abschließend evaluiert werden.⁴³ Was aufhorchen lässt ist der technokratische Duktus, in dem Hawkins sein Programm »Communities that Care« (CTC) beschreibt:

CTC guides communities in organising and operating the promotion of positive social development for young people and prevention of youth crime. CTC allows those who use it to select prevention policies, actions and programmes that best address the unique profile of risk and protection of their community. In this way, CTC functions like an operating system on a computer, allowing the user to select the programme needed to achieve the user's goals.⁴⁴

Wenngleich Hawkins sein Programm als klassen- und ethnienübergreifend darstellt – »to ensure that all children, regardless of race, culture, or class are bonded to family, school, and community and are committed to the highest standards and healthy values«⁴⁵ – und empirisch sowie mit seiner eigenen Erfahrung als Bewährungshelfer unterlegt, bleiben im Hinblick auf das Community Building doch zwei Fragen offen: Erstens ist nicht klar, wie die »highest standards and healthy values« zu benennen wären. Im Zusammenhang mit konkreten Problemen der Jugendkriminalitätsprävention kann der Autor zwar messbare Indikatoren angeben – die Verfügbarkeit und Einstellung zu Drogen und Waffen sowie die ökonomische Stärke der Nachbarschaft –, darüber hinaus wird der Autor allerdings nicht spezifisch⁴⁶, sodass die Frage gestellt werden muss, ob sich »Care« und letztlich auch Solidarität innerhalb eines solchen Modells, dass auf die kurzfristige Veränderung messbarer Indikatoren abhebt, beschreiben lassen. Zweitens bleibt offen, ob in einem solchen Modell grundsätzlich die Beteiligung Aller vorgesehen ist, oder ob

43 Vgl. *Hawkins, J. David*: Prevention Crime and Violence through Communities that Care: In: European Journal on Criminal Policy and Resarch 7 (1999), 451f.

44 Ebd., 450f.

45 Ebd., 457.

46 Vgl., ebd., 446.

vor allem »community leader«⁴⁷ und Expert*innen von außen festlegen, was als »healthy values« gelten kann.

3.4 Communities that Care to Listen

Bei Gesundheitsförderung und Kriminalitätsprävention steht dem Begriff *Communities* vor allem unter dem Vorzeichen der Sorge um eine vulnerable Gruppe. Dies ist für Menschen mit Migrationserfahrung nicht immer eine zutreffende Beschreibung. Der Autor dieses Artikels schlägt daher vor, den Begriff im Folgenden von der public health-Basis zu lösen und ihn stärker emanzipatorisch zu begreifen. Dazu soll statt dem Community Building durch Intervention *von außen* das Community Organizing als Zusammenschluss *von innen* näher betrachtet werden. Community Organizing zielt darauf, Nachbarschaften zu ermächtigen, ihren Anliegen politisch Gehör zu verschaffen und geht deshalb meist von konkreten Problemen am Ort aus. So wird beispielsweise der Abbau sozialer Services, der Rückzug von Feuerwehr und Polizei oder der schlechte Zustand der Infrastruktur zum Anlass für Bürger*innen, sich zu organisieren. Die Krise wird zum Ausgangspunkt für eine positive Vision für die Nachbarschaft.⁴⁸

Timothy Stacey (2018) befasst sich in seiner ethnografischen und theoretischen Arbeit mit der Frage, wie *alle* Mitglieder eines Gemeinwesens eine solche Zukunftsvision entwickeln können, auch wenn sie Herkunft, Religion und Kultur trennen. Er bewegt sich zwischen dem liberalen Mythos, dass nur eine Elite einen solch voraussetzungsreichen Diskurs über Kulturgrenzen hinweg führen kann, und der postliberalen Versuchung, Verständigung allein über den Wertekanon eines imaginierten christlichen Abendlandes erreichen zu wollen. Vertrauend in die Fähigkeit der »common people« zum Dialog, entwickelt er aus seiner ethnografischen Arbeit mit Community Organisationen das Konzept, dass Gemeinschaften einen gemeinsamen Gegenmythos zu den sie umgebenden (kapitalistischen) Logiken entwickeln können.⁴⁹ Auf der praktischen Ebene möchte Stacey Orte etablieren, an denen die Community ihre Mythen bearbeiten kann: »Solidarity centres will develop a shared

47 Vgl., ebd., 451.

48 Die Rolle professioneller Community Organizer, die die Nachbarschaft dabei unterstützen soll hier erwähnt werden. Ihre Rolle als von außen kommend ist dann kritisch zu hinterfragen, wenn es ihnen nicht gelingt, sich rechtzeitig zurückzuziehen um das Agenda-setting durch die Community selbst nicht manipulativ zu beeinflussen. Ansonsten wäre man wieder bei denselben technischen sozialen Planungsphantasien angelangt, die das Beispiel unter 3.3 kennzeichnen.

49 Vgl. Stacey, *Timothy: Myth and Solidarity in the Modern World. Beyond Religious and Political Division*: Oxon/New York 2018, 19.

sense of transcendence in local communities by providing safe and inclusive spaces for the sharing of myths.«⁵⁰

Obleich auch bei Stacey der Anlass der Untersuchung nachbarschaftlichen Zusammenhalts ein konkreter krisenhafter ist – die London Riots von 2011 –, so greifen seine Vorschläge doch über die Problemlösung hinaus auf die Frage, mittels welcher Institutionen Zusammenhalt generell befördert werden kann. Sein Konzept des gegenseitigen Erzählens von Mythen soll daher hier als ein wichtiger Bestandteil eines Konzepts von Community begriffen werden. Insofern wäre ein passender Begriff dafür »Communities that Care to Listen«.

4. Garten-Communities

Nach diesen Überlegungen zu Raum und Gemeinschaft, soll im Folgenden der Versuch unternommen werden, das theoretisch Benannte anhand eines Fallbeispiels zu konkretisieren. Dabei liegt der Fokus auf dem Stadtraum als Bezugspunkt und auf der Solidarität mit Migrant*innen als inhaltlicher Schwerpunkt. Hier seien zu Beginn nochmals die Faktoren genannt, auf die besondere Aufmerksamkeit gelegt wird:

- Idealvorstellungen des Raumes: Wie soll ein solidarischer Stadtraum aussehen?
- Prozesse der offenen und verdeckten Aus- und Einschlüsse und ihrer Regulation in der Nachbarschaft: Wer darf wo was in der Stadt tun?
- Schaffung einer Community, die gemeinsame Mythen bearbeitet: Was für eine Gemeinschaft wollen wir sein und wie beschreiben wir uns?

Da raumbezogene Solidarität hier im Bereich des Community Building bzw. Community Organizing als gestalteter Prozess durch unterschiedliche Akteure in der Stadt beschrieben wurde, soll der Fokus dementsprechend auf Veränderungsprozesse in Nachbarschaften gelegt werden. Als Beispiel dient die grüne Transformation, also die Begrünung von öffentlichen und privaten Räumen im Zuge eines veränderten Umweltbewusstseins. Da die »grüne Stadt« Teil einer umfassenden und langfristigen sozial-ökologischen Nachhaltigkeitstransformation ist, die spätestens mit dem Bericht des Club of Rome zu den »Grenzen des Wachstums« 1972 ins öffentliche Bewusstsein trat, eignet sie sich gut, um das Thema Solidarität mit Migrant*innen in größere gesellschaftliche Zusammenhänge einzubinden.

50 Ebd., 20.

4.1 Ein transplantiertes Paradies

Der Zusammenhang zwischen grüner Transformation und Solidarität mit Migrant*innen scheint zunächst künstlich hergestellt, er lässt sich allerdings weit zurückverfolgen. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (2014) zeichnet in »Paradise Transplanted« nach, wie Südkalifornien zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts von einer Halbwüste in ein Gartenparadies transformiert wurde. Die meist privaten Gärten der Region sind das Ergebnis migrantischer Arbeit, zuerst von japanischen und später mexikanischen, vorwiegend männlichen Arbeitern – Frauen arbeiten vorwiegend innerhäuslich als »domesticas« in Haushalt und Kinderbetreuung⁵¹ –, die als günstige Arbeitskräfte in den Siedlungen der amerikanischen Mittelklasse Rasenflächen mähen, Hecken schneiden und Sträucher bewässern. Ein Umzug an die Westküste bedeutete für viele wohlhabende Amerikaner*innen auch die Anlage paradiesischer Gärten, die wiederum migrantische Arbeiter und Unternehmer anzogen.⁵²

Die Gartengeschichte Kaliforniens ist allerdings komplexer, berücksichtigt man, dass umgekehrt auch für Migrant*innen Gärten eine wichtige Rolle bei der Findung bzw. Behauptung der eigenen Identität spielen:

Even when migrants have occupied subordinate social positions and have found themselves excluded from legal citizenship, subjected to racism, and relegated to bad low-wage jobs, they have actively cultivated plants and gardens. In this regard, gardens can serve as minizones of autonomy, as sites and practices of transcendence and restoration. Gardens offer compensation for lost worlds, bringing moments of pleasure, tranquility, and beauty, and they articulate future possibilities.⁵³

Für die vorwiegend weiße Mittelklasse ebenso wie für Migrant*innen aus Asien und Lateinamerika sind die Gärten eine Form des »storytelling«⁵⁴, die eine reiche Metaphernwelt bereithalten – bspw. »uprooted« oder »transplanted«⁵⁵ – und zugleich eine globale Geschichte von sich gegenseitig beeinflussenden, kopierten und angeeigneten Kulturen erzählen.⁵⁶ Gärten sind ein sichtbares und begehbares ästhetisches Manifest und zugleich Ausdruck sozialer Ungleichheit (Wer hat Zugang? Wer

51 Vgl. *Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette*: *Paradise Transplanted: Migration and the Making of California Gardens*, Berkeley 2014, 74.

52 Vgl., ebd., 3.

53 Ebd., 4.

54 Ebd.

55 Vgl., ebd., 5.

56 Vgl., ebd., 6.

pflegt zu welchen Bedingungen das Grün?). Dies gilt umso mehr für die Gartenlandschaften in städtischen Regionen: Sie sind, wie Sharon Zukin (1993) herausstellt, auch Ausdruck von Machtverhältnissen.⁵⁷ Ob diese »Landscapes of Power« zugleich auch Landschaften der Solidarität werden können, soll der Fokus im folgenden Fallbeispiel sein. Wenn die These Hondagneu-Sotelos stimmt, dass Gärten die Kultur einer Region widerspiegeln und dass sich der Kalifornische Traum dort materialisiert,⁵⁸ dann sei in den folgenden Abschnitten die These gewagt, dass mit der Gestaltung städtischen Grüns auch Ideen von Solidarität mit Migrant*innen gestaltet werden können.

4.2 Gärten der Solidarität

Bei der gemeinsamen Gartenarbeit kommt man sich einfach und unkompliziert näher. Ob als Familie oder Einzelperson: Hier ist Platz für alle und Zeit zum kulturellen Austausch und offenen Dialog. [...] In jedem Fall wünschen wir uns alle ein Miteinander auf Augenhöhe, wir wollen uns kennenlernen und so den gegenseitigen Respekt fördern. Weil Menschen einfach Menschen sind.⁵⁹

Als ein Beispiel kleinräumiger solidarischer Kultur in der grünen Stadt sollen die »Bunten Gärten« Leipzig herangezogen werden. Sie sind ein Integrationsprojekt zur Förderung von Asylbewerbern und anerkannten Flüchtlingen auf dem Gelände einer Kleingartenanlage im östlichen Stadtteil Anger-Crottendorf. Das Projekt soll hier im Hinblick auf die Frage betrachtet werden, inwieweit Solidarität zwischen Menschen, die als Flüchtlinge und Asylsuchende neu in einer Stadt ankommen, und den Stadtbewohner*innen mittels einer räumlichen Intervention hergestellt werden kann. Der Garten ist zugleich eine Auseinandersetzung mit der Stadtentwicklung, fungiert er doch als Gegenbild zum hochverdichteten Stadtraum.

Als Basis dienen zum einen schriftliche Berichte über die Anfangsjahre des Vereins 2001–2005 und zum anderen ein Gespräch über die aktuelle Situation nach der Neugründung und -ausrichtung der »Bunten Gärten« 2015 mit einer Vertreterin des aktuellen (2021) Vorstands.

Idealvorstellungen des Raumes

Eine erste Antwort auf die Frage, was die Anlage eines Gartens in der Stadt bewirkt, ist die Etablierung von Orten, die denen eines verdichteten Raums widersprechen.

57 Vgl., ebd., 13.

58 Vgl., ebd., 102.

59 *Bunte Gärten Leipzig*: Über uns. Online: <https://bunte-gaerten.org/ueber-uns> (abgerufen am 8.7.2021).

Als solches sind Kleingärten bereits seit langem in Ost- (Datschen) wie West- (Schrebergärten) und im vereinigten Deutschland des 21. Jahrhunderts (Urban Gardening) etabliert. Mit diesen Freiräumen innerhalb der Stadt verknüpfen sich unterschiedliche Vorstellungen von der Raumnutzung: Dienen sie dem Gärtnern als Hobby, der Selbstversorgung oder der Flucht aus der Tristesse enger Mietwohnungen in die Natur? All diese Aspekte spielen auch bei dem hier vorgestellten Projekt eine wichtige Rolle, sie finden sich in verdichteter Form in der Gründungserzählungen der »Bunten Gärten« wieder.

Ausgangspunkt des integrativen Gartenprojekts 2001 war, so die Retrospektive 2005, der wahrgenommene Gegensatz zwischen der Unterkunft von Geflüchteten – »ein abweisend wirkender Quader, in dem es im Sommer unerträglich heiß wurde, einigen tristen Wohnböcken gegenüber auf einem Feld am Ortsrand platziert«⁶⁰ – und den Erfahrungen der Gründer*innen, die aus Kalifornien nach Leipzig zogen:

Wie selbstverständlich ein multiethnisches Straßenbild für uns spätestens seit unserem zweijährigen USA-Aufenthalt geworden war, wurde uns erst nach der Rückkehr nach Deutschland bewusst.⁶¹

Der Ausweg aus der Tristesse für Bewohner*innen der Unterkunft wie Gründer*innen war ein Garten als Ort, an dem die eigene (Garten-)Kultur gepflegt werden konnte und wo die ohne behördliche Arbeitserlaubnis zur Untätigkeit verurteilten Migrant*innen einer sinnstiftenden Tätigkeit nachgehen konnten. Ähnliches hatten die Gründer*innen in einem Projekt der lutherischen Gemeinde von San Diego für sudanesischen Einwanderer*innen erlebt:

Die Idee war, den Migranten durch die Möglichkeit, ein eigenes Gartenstück zu bebauen und zu pflegen eine sinnvolle Tätigkeit zu vermitteln, die sie aus ihrem eigenen Land her kennen, und diesen Ansatz mit einem gezielten Bildungsprogramm zu kombinieren [...].⁶²

Nicht nur die Gruppe der in den Gärten aktiven Bewohner*innen der Flüchtlingsunterkunft, sondern der Ort »Bunte Gärten« also solcher konzentrierte in seiner ursprünglichen Konzeption wie in einem Brennglas, die Herausforderungen der gesamten (postindustriellen) Stadtgesellschaft, nämlich das »Recht auf Grün« – bzw.

60 Horn, Friedemann: »Papa warum ist alles so grau hier?«. Die Bunten Gärten Leipzig und ihre Geschichte. In: *Krumbiegel Sebastian*: Hoffnung säen. Lebensgeschichten von Flüchtlingen, Hamburg 2005, 212.

61 Ebd., 211.

62 Ebd., 217f.

die unbedingte ökologische und soziale Notwendigkeit moderner Städte, Grünflächen zu schaffen⁶³ – und das Recht auf eine sinnstiftende Tätigkeit.

Prozesse des Ein- und Ausschließens

An den »Bunten Gärten« zeigen sich aber genauso auch die Konflikte der Stadtgesellschaft um die (Deutungs-)hoheit über den Raum. Die Anfänge des Projekts liegen in einer Kleingartenparzelle, die die Initiatorin mit drei Familien aus Afghanistan, Iran und Türkei bewirtschaftete.

Doch statt Idylle gab es einen Kampf der Kulturen. Selbst ernannte deutsche Ordnungshüter traten an, um die Kleingärten vor ausländischem Wildwuchs zu beschützen. Die Deutschen beschwerten sich über zu laute Kinder und die Unordnung. Misstrauische Blicke observierten die muslimischen Frauen mit ihren Kopftüchern und langen Kleidern. [...] Immer schriller kämpften die deutschen Gartenfreunde für ethnische Reinheit in der Datsche [...].⁶⁴

Gerade die Zusammenkünfte, die den gemeinschaftlichen Zusammenhalt stärken sollten, wurden hier von den deutschen Nachbar*innen als Problem aufgefasst. Letztlich verließen die »Bunten Gärten« ihren ersten Standort und siedelten auf das Gelände einer ehemaligen Gärtnerei um. Die »Bunten Gärten« als »Oase«⁶⁵ konnten erst dort entstehen, wo sie von Anfeindungen von außen besser geschützt waren. Die Rede der Kritiker*innen vom »Wildwuchs« macht darauf aufmerksam, dass eine Gruppe mit einer Homogenitätsvorstellung soziale Kontrolle über eine andere Gruppe auszuüben versucht. Die Kleingartenkolonie ist gewissermaßen nicht nur das Gegenbild zur verdichteten Stadt, sondern ein Spiegel ihrer Konflikte und der damit verbundenen Frage, wie Raum so gemanaged werden kann, dass alle Beteiligten dort zusammenleben können.

Ein positives Gegenbeispiel bieten die »Bunden Gärten« nach ihrer Neugründung 2015. Von der Gärtnerei sind sie wiederum auf das Gelände eines anderen Kleingartenvereins umgezogen. Doch statt Anfeindungen wird von einem positiven Verhältnis berichtet. Man war in der Kleingartenkolonie froh, dass das integrative Gartenprojekt leerstehende Parzellen übernahm und Teil der Gemeinschaft werden wollte. In den letzten Jahren ist der Kleingartenverein Anger-Crottendorf II ebenso wie das Stadtviertel, das junge Familien und Student*innen anzieht, kontinuierlich

63 Vgl., *Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, Bau und Reaktorsicherheit (BMUB)* (Hg.): *Grün in der Stadt – Für eine lebenswerte Zukunft*. Grünbuch Stadtgrün, Bonn 2015, 12–16.

64 *Arnold, Ronny*: Der Garten Ethnien. Ein Tag in einem außergewöhnlichen Integrationsprojekt. In: *Krumbiegel Sebastian*: *Hoffnung säen. Lebensgeschichten von Flüchtlingen*, Hamburg 2005, 206.

65 Ebd., 207.

gewachsen. Auch in dieser Hinsicht ist die Kleingartenkolonie Spiegel der Stadtgesellschaft; in diesem Falle allerdings der Veränderung hin zu mehr Offenheit – auch die Auslegung der Gartenordnung wird weniger streng gehandhabt – und Vielfalt, die – jedenfalls für die hier betrachtete Gruppe der Migrant*innen – die Integrationsmöglichkeiten erhöht.

Community Building durch Bearbeitung gemeinsamer Mythen

Es fällt auf den ersten Blick leicht, die »Bunten Gärten« in ihrer aktuellen Form als kleine Community zu beschreiben, möglicherweise sogar den Kleingartenverein als größere Community, wenn man etwa hört, dass Pflanzensetzlinge über den Gartenzaun hinweg getauscht werden, dass dem Verein Gartenmöbel geschenkt wurden und dieser wiederum den Alteingesessenen beim Bau von Hochbeeten mit Rat und Tat zur Seite stand.

Hier soll allerdings nicht darüber nachgedacht werden, mit welchen Aktivitäten aus einem solchen Projekt ein Community Organizing erwachsen kann. Stattdessen soll der Blick auf die Potentiale der »Bunten Gärten«, ein Ort zur Bearbeitung gemeinsamer Mythen zu werden, gelegt werden. Damit soll gezeigt werden, dass in den vielen kleinen Transformationsprojekten in den Städten – sei es ein Urban Gardening Projekt oder ein Nachbarschaftscafé – das Potential steckt, eine neue und solidarische Erzählung von Gemeinschaft in der Stadt zu prägen und dass Migrant*innen wesentlich an dieser Erzählung beteiligt werden können.

Ein Anknüpfungspunkt könnte die Arbeit im Garten als sinnstiftende und schöpferische Tätigkeit sein. Was Hondagneu-Sotelo als das Schaffen eines Paradieses beschreibt verbindet Kleingärtner*innen und Geflüchtete:

When a fire destroyed the chaparral on a hillside in LA's Griffith Park in 1971, Amir Dialameh, an Iranian immigrant who worked as a wine shop clerk, got the idea to build a garden there. [...] This garden was his act of creation on the earth, and it became his home and his connection to humanity and the universe at large. »I created this place,« he said. »It is like my family.«⁶⁶

Ähnlich, wenn auch in kleinerem Maßstab und weniger pathosgeladen, lässt sich auch die Geschichte der Urbarmachung lange brachliegender Parzellen durch die »Bunten Gärten« erzählen. Die eigene Arbeit als schöpferisch und sinnstiftend wahrzunehmen bedeutet festzustellen, dass die eigene Präsenz einen sichtbaren Unterschied macht und dass dadurch auf dem Brachland Essbares wächst. Mit der Nahrungsmittelproduktion wird zugleich auch der Austausch ermöglicht, es werden Pflanzen an Nachbarparzellen verschenkt und die eigene Expertise beim Anbau wird gefragt. Damit entsteht etwas, dass Christa Müller als wichtige Voraussetzung

66 Hondagneu-Sotelo: Paradise Transplanted, 1.

für den Dialog auf Augenhöhe zwischen Migrant*innen und Mehrheitsgesellschaft im Gartenprojekt der »Internationalen Gärten« in Göttingen analog beschreibt:

Das Erkennen des Fremden im Eigenen und des Eigenen im Fremden als zentrale Voraussetzung für interkulturelle Begegnung setzt Souveränität voraus: Die Eigenversorgungspraxis in den Internationalen Gärten verleiht ihren Akteuren die Souveränität, die sie benötigen, um anderen als Gleiche begegnen zu können. Sie haben etwas in der Hand: selbst Geerntetes oder selbst Hergestelltes, das sie verschenken können, zu dem sie einladen können.⁶⁷

Die beiden Gartenprojekte zeigen, dass das Diskursfeld der Urbarmachung, des Schaffens neuer Möglichkeiten und des produktiven Hervorbringens ein wichtiger Mythos sein kann, der Solidarität in einer Nachbarschaft erzeugt. Wer gemeinsam gärt, hilft und vertraut einander. Zudem werden die von Stacey beschriebenen Gegenerzählungen zur kapitalistischen Logik der Städte hier im Kleinen am Beispiel der Selbstversorgung und gärtnerischen Selbstermächtigung verdeutlicht.

Ein zweiter Anknüpfungspunkt ist die Vielfalt der »Bunten Gärten«. Diese ist zwar nicht schon per se Ausgangspunkt für die Solidarität in einer Community, sie kann aber helfen, zu besprechen, was Klaus Bade die »Gretchenfrage« der Migrations- und Integrationspolitik postindustrieller Gesellschaften wie der deutschen nennt:

Was hält unsere kulturell vielfältiger werdenden Gesellschaften eigentlich ideell zusammen – die deutsche als Teil der europäischen Gesellschaft, die europäische als Teil der atlantischen, die atlantische als Teil einer Weltgesellschaft, so es eine solche in der bislang erdachten Form überhaupt schon oder noch gibt?⁶⁸

Zur Beantwortung dieser Frage verweist Bade nicht allein auf Diskurse, sondern auch auf künstlerische Visionen von Gesellschaft. In einem weiten Sinne lassen sich hier auch die »Bunten Gärten« einordnen, wird doch sowohl in kultureller – der Verein zeichnet sich nach seiner Neugründung durch ein vielfältiges Kulturprogramm aus – wie in biologischer Hinsicht der Begriff Hybridität bearbeitet. Es kommen nicht nur Menschen mit vielfältigen Erfahrungen zusammen, es ergeben sich im Austausch auch Identitätsfragen:

Ein Begriff wie »kulturelle Hybridisierung« kann heute auch als Metapher dafür stehen, dass MigrantInnen mit den Brüchen in ihren fragmentierten Biographien

67 Müller, Christa: Wurzeln schlagen in der Fremde. Die Internationalen Gärten und ihre Bedeutung für Integrationsprozesse, München 2002, 9.

68 Bade, Klaus J.: Migration, Flucht, Integration. Kritische Politikbegleitung von der »Gastarbeiterfrage« bis zur »Flüchtlingskrise«. Erinnerungen und Beiträge, Osnabrück 2017, 103.

integrierender umzugehen versuchen als dies rückkehrorientierte »Gastarbeiter« früherer Generationen taten.⁶⁹

All dies bleibt in den »Bunten Gärten« nicht abstrakt, sondern vermittelt sich in der gärtnerischen Alltagspraxis. So ist eine erste Frage oft, welche Erfahrungen im Gemüseanbau und der -zubereitung ein*e Interessierte*r aus ihrem/seinem Herkunftsland mitbringt. Dabei werden die Alltagspraxen der Migrant*innen nicht einfach weitertradiert, sondern in einen neuen Zusammenhang gestellt, sie müssen sich dem Boden des Leipziger Kleingartens anpassen und schreiben sich gleichzeitig in diesen Boden ein.

5. Kirche(n) als (grüne) Communities

Wie kann nun über das kleinräumige Beispiel der »Bunten Gärten« hinaus die Zukunft der Stadt so gestaltet werden, dass sie nicht nur zu einem grünen, sondern auch zu einem solidarischen Raum wird – oder dass wenigstens Oasen grüner Solidarität innerhalb der Stadt entstehen. Einen Hinweis darauf kann die Begleitung konkreter städtebaulicher Projekte aus der Perspektive der Praxen, die in solchen Räumen geschehen und die sich dort einschreiben, liefern. Urban Gardening Projekte sind in diesem Zusammenhang besonders spannend, denn hier können an einem gemeinsamen Ort Menschen Landschaft verändern und so ihre Vision von Stadt sichtbar formen. Es sei allerdings kritisch angemerkt, dass Gärtnern nicht automatisch Solidarität mit Migrant*innen erzeugt und »grüne Oasen« schafft. Landschaftsveränderung kann auch Grenzen erzeugen: kulturelle Reinheitsvorstellungen können sich in Beeten ausdrücken und Gartenzäune kulturelle oder Landesgrenzen simulieren. Es muss deshalb zunächst erforscht werden, wie unterschiedliche Communities Gartenprojekte nutzen, bevor in einem zweiten Schritt eine gemeinsame Metaphernwelt herausgearbeitet werden kann. Ein praxisnahes Verfahren wäre es, neu entstehende Gartenprojekte mit Hilfe des Community Mappings⁷⁰ von unterschiedlichen Gruppen kartieren zu lassen und so anhand eines konkreten

69 Müller: Wurzeln schlagen in der Fremde, 40.

70 Vgl. Gangarova/Von Unger: Community Mapping als Methode, 152. Community Mapping ist ein partizipatives Verfahren, mit dem Erfahrungen, Merkmale, Ressourcen, Probleme, Verhältnisse und Beziehungen von Communities in einem Gruppenprozess bildlich umgesetzt und analysiert werden. Gezeichnet wird im weitesten Sinne eine »Karte« (*map*) einer Community im Hinblick auf eine Fragestellung [...]. Community Mapping eignet sich für partizipative Situationsanalysen, Bedarfserhebungen, Planungs- und Evaluationsprozesse sowie für Forschungsfragen, die herauszufinden sollen, wie Menschen ihre Lebenswelt und die darin verorteten gemeinschaftlichen Bezüge, Ressourcen und den Handlungsbedarf wahrnehmen [...].

Vorhabens ins Gespräch darüber zu kommen, welche Visionen der »grünen Stadt« existieren und wie aus dem gemeinsamen Arbeiten in der »grünen Oase« Solidarität und eine »Kultur der Solidarität«, wie sie Urselmann und Heimbach-Steins einfordern, erwachsen kann.

Eine wichtige Rolle in solchen Community Building und Organizing Prozessen können Kirchen und Religionsgemeinschaften spielen. Sie können, auch dank ihrer räumlichen und zeitlichen Stabilität, zu einem Nukleus im Viertel werden, an dem sich Projekte einer gemeinsamen Nachbarschaft anlagern. Zugleich bieten Kirchen und Religionsgemeinschaften als organisierte Gemeinschaften ein über Jahrzehnte, wenn nicht Jahrhunderte gewachsenes Feld reichhaltiger Konzepte von Community – hier seien exemplarisch die Begriffe (christliche) Gemeinde und (islamische) Umma genannt –, an das das Community Building anknüpfen kann. Zudem können beispielsweise die christlichen Kirchen auf ihr Engagement im Community Organizing, beispielsweise durch Leo Penta in den USA, verweisen. Und schließlich existiert eine lange Tradition praktizierter Solidarität und Gastfreundschaft mit migrantischen Neuangekommenen in der Stadt.

Abbildung 1: Pop-Up Garten in der Nürnberger Südstadt



Am Ende dieser Überlegungen zur grünen Solidarität soll allerdings keine eingehende Analyse religiöser Akteure in der Nachbarschaft stehen, sondern ein Bild, das auf das Potential verweist, das in solchen Ansätzen steckt. Es sind Pflanzbeete, die auf dem Vorhof der Evangelische Kirche in der Nürnberger Südstadt aufgestellt wurden und in denen gemeinsam mit der umgebenden Nachbarschaft gegärtnert werden kann. Das Projekt ist sowohl Teil der Stadtbegrünung und Stadtentwicklung, als auch ein Beitrag zu praktischer Gemeinschaftsbildung in einem von hoher Diversität geprägten Stadtteil, die kulturelle und ethnische Grenzen überschreitet.

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Wie solidarisch ist der Markt?

Jörg Althammer

1. Einleitung

»Wie solidarisch ist der Markt?« Folgt man der gängigen Auffassung, so lässt sich die in der Überschrift gestellte Frage relativ schnell beantworten: überhaupt nicht. Denn das charakteristische Merkmal marktwirtschaftlich organisierter Gesellschaften besteht ja gerade darin, dass über die Institution des Markts das Verhalten selbstorientierter Akteure auf entpersonalisierte und weitgehend anonyme Weise koordiniert wird. Marktwirtschaft und Gemeinwohlorientierung, Konkurrenz und Solidarität gelten als unüberwindbare Antagonismen, die nur ein Entweder-Oder zulassen. Der auf anonymen Konkurrenzbeziehungen beruhende Markt scheint jede Form prosozialer Interaktion unmöglich zu machen. Ganz in diesem Sinn schrieb der Soziologe Max Weber bereits zu Beginn des 20. Jhs.: »Die Marktgemeinschaft als solche ist die unpersönlichste praktische Lebensbeziehung, in welche Menschen miteinander treten können. [...] Wo der Markt seiner Eigengesetzlichkeit überlassen ist, kennt er nur Ansehen der Sache, kein Ansehen der Person, keine Brüderlichkeits- und Pietätspflichten, keine der urwüchsigen, von den persönlichen Gemeinschaften getragenen Beziehungen.«¹

Aus diesem – an sich unstrittigen – Befund werden jedoch wirtschaftsethisch völlig unterschiedliche Schlussfolgerungen gezogen. Üblicherweise gilt der Markt als unsolidarisch und blind gegenüber normativen Zielsetzungen. Um Gerechtigkeits- oder Nachhaltigkeitsziele zu erreichen, muss im Rahmen dieses dualistischen Ansatzes die Funktionslogik des Marktes durchbrochen werden, entweder durch staatliche Eingriffe in den Markt, durch moralische Appelle oder durch Selbstverpflichtungen seitens der einzelwirtschaftlichen Akteure.

Eine völlig gegensätzliche Position vertritt das wirtschaftsethische Programm der »ökonomischen Ethik«. Hier sind Wettbewerb und Solidarität keine Antago-

1 Weber, Max: *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriß der verstehenden Soziologie*, Tübingen 1922.

nismen; marktwirtschaftlicher Wettbewerb wird vielmehr als die für moderne Großgesellschaften adäquate Form der Vergesellschaftung konzeptualisiert. Die Funktionslogik des Marktes gilt als »kosmopolitische Fortsetzung der Helfermoral« kleiner, geschlossener Gesellschaften. Nach diesem monistischen Verständnis von Markt und Ethik ist Wettbewerb »solidarischer als Teilen«², und der Markt garantiert »Solidarität unter Fremden«³.

In diesem Spannungsfeld zwischen skeptischer und affirmativer Haltung zum Markt verläuft ein Großteil der wirtschaftsethischen Diskussion. Im Folgenden soll demgegenüber ein Ansatz vorgestellt werden, der sich zwischen diesen beiden wirtschaftsethischen Extremen verortet. Ökonomische Effizienz und das Ziel sozialer Gerechtigkeit werden dabei weder dualistisch noch monistisch aufgefasst; ökonomische Effizienz ist vielmehr eine notwendige, aber nicht hinreichende Bedingung für gesellschaftlich erwünschte soziale Zustände. Dem liegt die Auffassung zugrunde, dass die Allokation von Gütern und Dienstleistungen über Märkte nicht per se zu sozial erwünschten Ergebnissen führt; das gilt selbst dann nicht, wenn Märkte »vollständig« sind, d. h. wenn kein Marktversagen i. e. S. vorliegt. Daraus folgt jedoch nicht, dass Markt und Wettbewerb »durchbrochen« oder ökonomische Interaktionen der »Marktlogik entzogen« werden müssen, um gesellschaftliche Ziele zu erreichen. Der Markt braucht vielmehr einen geeigneten Rahmen, damit die Ergebnisse des Marktprozesses allgemein akzeptierten Wertvorstellungen entsprechen. In diesem Beitrag sollen die Bedingungen herausgearbeitet werden, unter denen der Markt sein prosoziales und solidarisches Potential entfalten kann. Dazu muss in einem ersten Schritt geklärt werden, was unter Solidarität zu verstehen ist.

2. Was ist Solidarität?

Unter Solidarität⁴ wird im Folgenden das gegenseitige Aufeinander-Angewiesensein von Menschen verstanden. Damit ist Solidarität eine der wesentlichen Grundbedingungen des Menschen, eine anthropologische Konstante und zentrales

2 Homann, Karl/Blome-Drees, Franz: Wirtschafts- und Unternehmensethik, Göttingen 1992, 111.

3 Pies, Ingo: Solidarität unter Fremden. Zur moralischen Leistungsfähigkeit des Marktes, Diskussionspapier 2015–5, Halle.

4 Etymologisch entstammt der Begriff »Solidarität« dem römischen Privatrecht. Die *obligatio in solidum* bezeichnete die gesamtschuldnerische Haftung mehrerer Schuldner gegenüber einem Gläubiger. Daraus leitet sich auch das Verständnis von Solidarität als »Gemeinverstrickung des Menschen« (von Nell-Breuning, Oswald: Baugesetze der Gesellschaft. Solidarität und Subsidiarität, Freiburg 1968/1990) ab. Von diesem kooperativen Solidaritätsverständnis ist das der »altruistischen Solidarität« zu unterscheiden. Altruistische Solidarität bezeichnet einseitige Hilfsakte ohne entsprechende Gegenleistung.

Element der *conditio humana*. Denn ohne Kooperation ist menschliche Entwicklung gar nicht denkbar. Dies trifft bereits auf kleine und überschaubare Gemeinschaften wie z.B. die archaischen Jäger- und Sammlergesellschaften zu. Bereits diese frühen Gesellschaften beruhten auf Arbeitsteilung und Tausch, also auf der Kooperationsbereitschaft zwischen den Mitgliedern dieser Gemeinschaft. Das gilt aber in weitaus größerem Maß in anonymisierten Großgesellschaften. Komplexe Gesellschaften, deren Wertschöpfung auf anonymisierten Transaktionen beruht, sind ohne vertrauensvolle Kooperationsbeziehungen überhaupt nicht existenzfähig. Wie wichtig gegenseitiges Vertrauen und Kooperationsbereitschaft in der Wirtschaft sind, wurde zuletzt in der Finanzmarktkrise überdeutlich. Durch die Ungewissheit, ob Kredite wieder zurückgezahlt werden können, kollabierte zunächst der Interbankenhandel und infolgedessen das gesamte globale Finanzsystem. Gegenseitiges Vertrauen und Kooperationsbereitschaft sind damit die Grundlage jeder arbeitsteiligen Gesellschaft. Und je stärker eine Gesellschaft auf Arbeitsteilung und Tausch beruht, umso stärker ist sie auf dieses gegenseitige Vertrauen angewiesen. Bereits Emile Durkheim hat in seiner einschlägigen Arbeit zur sozialen Arbeitsteilung gezeigt, dass auch moderne Gesellschaften auf Solidarität angewiesen sind.⁵ Die zunehmende soziale und funktionale Ausdifferenzierung moderner Gesellschaften bedeutet zwar einen Verlust an persönlichen Nahbeziehungen, Gemeinschaftsgefühl und kollektiver Identitätsbildung. Damit ist auch ein Verlust an »traditioneller« Solidarität verbunden, die sich aus bestimmten Gemeinsamkeiten wie einer gemeinsamen Abstammung, einem gemeinsamen historischen oder kulturellen Hintergrund, geteilten religiösen Überzeugungen oder gemeinsamen Normen und Werten speist. Diese »Werte-« oder »Gesinnungssolidarität« traditioneller Gemeinschaften unterstützt benevolentes und altruistisches Verhalten innerhalb der Gruppe und gilt deshalb vielfach als moralisch wünschenswert. Allerdings erweist sich Gesinnungssolidarität als moralisch ambivalent. Denn neben ihren unbestreitbaren prosozialen Effekten hat diese Form der Solidarität auch ihre Kehrseite: Gruppensolidarität bezieht sich immer nur auf die Mitglieder der jeweiligen Gruppe, sie schließt Angehörige anderer Gruppen vom Solidaritätsgedanken aus. Gruppensolidarität ist zwar (gruppenspezifisch) inkludierend, damit aber notwendigerweise partikularistisch und gegenüber Außenseitern exkludierend.⁶ Die gesellschaftliche Ambivalenz der Gruppensolidarität wird besonders deutlich,

5 Vgl. Durkheim, Émile: *The Division of Labor in Society*, New York 1893/1964.

6 Der Spieltheoretiker Herbert Gintis bezeichnet diesen Aspekt der Wertesolidarität als »The dark side of altruistic cooperation«. Gruppenspezifische Solidarität, von ihm als »altruistische Kooperation« bezeichnet, induziert neben gruppeninterner Loyalität auch eine Ablehnung von Personen, die nicht der eigenen Gruppe angehören. Gruppenspezifische Gesinnungssolidarität ist somit moralisch zumindest ambivalent; vgl. Gintis, Herbert: *The bounds of reason*, New Jersey 2009, 79.

wenn es sich bei den solidaritätsstiftenden Idealen um konfligierende Normen handelt. In diesen Fällen ist es die politische Aufgabe der Gesellschaft, institutionelle Vorkehrungen zu treffen, die diesen Gruppenkonflikt ohne größere gesellschaftliche Schäden austragen. Das einschlägige ökonomische Beispiel hierfür ist der Tarifkonflikt. Hier stehen sich zwei Parteien mit konfligierenden Stakeholderinteressen gegenüber, die es gegenseitig auszutarieren gilt. Dieser Interessenkonflikt wird durch das Tarif- und Arbeitskampfrecht institutionell normiert, um eine für beide Seiten akzeptable Einigung zu finden.

Die aus dem sozialen Nahbereich resultierende Wertesolidarität lässt sich nicht unmittelbar auf komplexe Großgesellschaften übertragen, und zwar aus zwei Gründen. So sind Großgesellschaften in hohem Maße funktional ausdifferenziert. Die gesellschaftlichen Teilbereiche wie Recht, Wirtschaft, Politik etc. weisen jeweils eigenständige Funktionslogiken auf, die ihren Niederschlag in jeweils systemspezifischen Regulierungen finden. Aber auch innerhalb der jeweiligen gesellschaftlichen Teilbereiche setzt sich diese funktionale Differenzierung fort. Im wirtschaftlichen Bereich hat sie zur Herausbildung äußerst spezialisierter Tätigkeiten in globalen Wertschöpfungsketten geführt. Dieses hohe Maß an Arbeitsteilung begründet zum einen ein deutlich gestiegenes Maß an gegenseitiger Abhängigkeit bzw. eines Aufeinander-Angewiesen-Seins; sie stärkt also die Grundlage für Solidarität. Sie macht es zum anderen aber unmöglich, Ergebnisse des Gesamtsystems auf die Handlungen und die Handlungsmotive Einzelner zurückzuführen. Die Isomorphie von Handlungsmotivation und Systemergebnis, die in überschaubaren Kleingruppen noch existiert, ist in modernen Großgesellschaften nicht mehr gegeben. Für die ethische Qualität des jeweiligen Funktionssystems sind die Motive der handelnden Akteure weitgehend irrelevant, was bereits von Adam Smith in seinem vielzitierten Bäcker-Beispiel sehr anschaulich beschrieben wurde.⁷ Für eine Ethik moderner Gesellschaften ergeben sich daraus zwei Konsequenzen: Zum einen lassen sich Systemergebnisse nicht mehr durch die moralischen Motive einzelner Akteure erklären. Ein derartiges Erklärungsmodell beruht auf einem Kategorienfehler, der die wesentlichen strukturellen Bedingungen komplexer gesellschaftlicher Interaktionen außer Acht lässt. Zum anderen ist es unmöglich, gesellschaftliche Ergebnisse durch moralische Appelle (*moral persuasion*) zu steuern. Moralische Appelle sind geeignet, das Verhalten von Einzelpersonen oder bestimmten Teilen der Gesellschaft zu verändern; eine nachhaltige Veränderung der Systemergebnisse ist aber nur

7 »Nicht vom Wohlwollen des Metzgers, Brauers oder Bäckers erwarten wir das, was wir zum Essen brauchen, sondern davon, dass sie ihre eigenen Interessen wahrnehmen. Wir wenden uns nicht an ihre Menschen-, sondern an ihre Eigenliebe, und wir erwähnen nicht die eigenen Bedürfnisse, sondern sprechen von ihrem Vorteil.« Smith (1776/1974, S. 17).

durch eine Veränderung der Strukturbedingungen gesellschaftlichen Handelns möglich.⁸

Neben der funktionalen Differenzierung sind offene Gesellschaften durch eine Pluralität wertebegründender und wertevermittelnder Institutionen gekennzeichnet. Diese moralische Pluralisierung, die historisch gesehen noch vor der globalen Arbeitsteilung stattgefunden hat,⁹ macht eine Moralsteuerung der Wirtschaft jenseits ökonomisch relevanter Pflicht- und Akzeptanzwerte unmöglich. Unternehmensethik ist in moralisch heterogenen Gesellschaften allenfalls als *business case*, also als moralische Voraussetzung für die Erzielung langfristiger Unternehmensgewinne, allgemein implementierbar. Ein Solidaritätsverständnis, das auf der vor-modernen Idee einer ethnisch oder kulturell homogenen Gesellschaft aufbaut, wäre als übergreifende Norm offener Gesellschaften schlicht dysfunktional. Dennoch lässt sich der Prozess der Modernisierung nicht mit einem Verlust an Solidarität gleichsetzen. So findet auch in modernen Gesellschaften Solidarität innerhalb bestimmter partikularer Gemeinschaften wie der Familie, Interessengemeinschaften und Verbänden bis hin zu Lobby-Gruppen statt. Diese wert- und interessen gebundenen Gemeinschaften treffen in der modernen Großgesellschaft aufeinander und konstituieren diese erst als Gesellschaft. Die Aufgabe der Gesellschaft ist es, diese kommunitären und partikularistischen Solidaritätspotenziale in einer Weise zu kanalisieren, dass sie sich systematisch in das universalistische Solidaritätsverständnis der Gesellschaft einfügen. Zum anderen verschiebt sich in modernen Gesellschaften das Motiv für Solidarität. Kooperatives Verhalten und vertrauensvolle Zusammenarbeit finden ihre Grundlage nicht mehr in den gemeinsamen Werten und geteilten moralischen Auffassungen, sondern in einem gemeinsamen Interesse. Kooperation ergibt sich aus der Tatsache, dass die jeweils individuellen Interessen nur im Rahmen einer Zusammenarbeit mit anderen durchsetzbar sind. Sofern diese Interessen zwischen den Kooperationspartnern gleichgerichtet sind, spricht man von synergetischer Kooperation; Beispiele hierfür sind der Bau eines Bewässerungssystems oder die Organisation zur kollektiven Bewirtschaftung von Fischereigewässern (sog. *common pool resources*). In diesen Fällen stellen sich die Gruppenmitglieder durch Kooperation nicht nur besser, sie partizipieren auch in gleicher Weise von den Ergebnissen der Kooperation. Das Kooperationsergebnis stellt somit ein (gruppen-

8 Der Ingolstädter Wirtschaftsethiker Karl Homann hat dies plastisch in der Formulierung »der systematische Ort der Moral ist die Rahmenordnung« zum Ausdruck gebracht. Auch Klimaaktivist:innen beschränken sich nicht auf moralische Appelle zu einem klimabewussten Verhalten, sondern fordern – zurecht – umfassende ökologische Strukturveränderungen ein.

9 Die gesellschaftspolitisch relevante moralische Pluralisierung setzt in Europa spätestens mit der Reformation ein und wurde durch die Säkularisierung nur noch verstärkt.

spezifisches) öffentliches Gut dar, dessen Erträge allen Gruppenmitgliedern egalitär zugutekommt; Lindenberg (1998) spricht in diesem Fall von »starker Solidarität«¹⁰.

Im Gegensatz hierzu ist die kooperative Produktion privater Güter von einer inhärenten Ambivalenz charakterisiert, die als »antagonistische Kooperation« bezeichnet werden kann.¹¹ Unter antagonistischer Kooperation ist eine Situation zu verstehen, in der die Akteure einerseits ein Interesse an gegenseitiger Kooperation haben. Gleichzeitig haben alle Akteure einen Anreiz, einen möglichst hohen Anteil des gemeinsam erwirtschafteten Kooperationsertrags für sich zu vereinnahmen. Inwiefern die Ergebnisse einer solchen antagonistischen Kooperation als »solidarisch« zu klassifizieren sind, wird im Folgenden besprochen.

3. Kann antagonistische Kooperation solidarisch sein? Der Beitrag der »solidarischen Wirtschaftsethik«

Auf kompetitiven Märkten tritt der Interessenantagonismus zwischen den Beteiligten offen zutage. Im Wettbewerb setzt sich langfristig das bessere Angebot durch, und Innovationen verdrängen bestehende Produkte sowie überkommene Produktionsverfahren. Gewinner und Verlierer sind in diesem Prozess für jeden klar ersichtlich. Aus diesem Grund wird der Markt vielfach als »Nullsummenspiel« interpretiert und auch entsprechend kritisiert: die Gewinne des einen gelten dann als die Verluste des anderen. Weit weniger offensichtlich ist, dass jeder Markttransaktion eine Kooperationsbeziehung zugrunde liegt, und diese Kooperationen für alle Beteiligten Positivsummenspiele sind. Durch Arbeitsteilung, Spezialisierung und Tausch entstehen Kooperationsgewinne, die alle an der Kooperation Beteiligten wirtschaftlich besserstellen als in der nichtkooperativen Lösung. Gerade diese Erwartung einer Besserstellung ist letztlich die Motivation für eine dauerhafte Kooperation.

Dieser generelle Befund einer allgemeinen Besserstellung durch Kooperation sagt allerdings noch nichts über die Verteilung der Kooperationsgewinne aus. Um das an einem extremen Beispiel zu verdeutlichen: Im Vergleich zur Autarkielösung werden auch in einer Kooperationsbeziehung unter Ausbeutungsbedingungen¹²

10 Vgl. Lindenberg, Siegwart: The microfoundations of solidarity: A framing approach, In: Doreian, Patrick/Fararo, Thomas J. (Hg.): The problem of solidarity. Theories and models, Amsterdam 1998, 61–112.

11 Zur antagonistischen Kooperation in ökonomischen Verhaltensmodellen vgl. ausführlich Kliemt, Hartmut: Antagonistische Kooperation. Elementare spieltheoretische Modelle spontaner Ordnungsentstehung, Freiburg/München 1986.

12 In der ökonomischen Terminologie wird unter »Ausbeutung« generell die Kompensation eines Faktors unterhalb seines Beitrags zur ökonomischen Wertschöpfung verstanden. Technisch formuliert liegt Ausbeutung im ökonomischen Sinn vor, sofern der Lohnsatz das Grenzwertprodukts des Faktors unterschreitet.

alle Beteiligten – also Ausbeuter und Ausgebeutete – wirtschaftlich bessergestellt, wengleich in höchst unterschiedlicher Weise. Die bloße Tatsache, *dass* eine Kooperation zustande kommt, besagt für sich genommen noch nichts über die Fairness des Kooperationsergebnisses. Für eine normative Analyse bestehender Vertragsbeziehungen wird eine Interaktionstheorie benötigt, die analytisch über die bloße Lösung von Koordinationsmängeln in der Form eines Gefangenendilemmas hinausgeht. Hierfür bietet sich die kooperative Spieltheorie an.¹³ In der elaboriertesten Variante dieser Theorie, dem verallgemeinerten Nash-Modell, wird das Ergebnis eines Verhandlungsprozesses durch drei Parameter determiniert: den Präferenzen der beteiligten Akteure, ihren jeweiligen Alternativen zu einer bestehenden Kooperation und der relativen Verhandlungsmacht der Kooperationspartner. Anhand dieser drei Faktoren lassen sich die Ergebnisse kooperativen Handelns normativ bewerten. Ungleichheiten, die ausschließlich aus einer unterschiedlichen individuellen Wertschätzung gegenüber alternativen sozialen Zuständen resultieren, sind gemäß der politisch-liberalen Ethikkonzeption als sozialetisch irrelevant zu betrachten. Sofern Ungleichheiten der Endzustandsverteilung ausschließlich unterschiedliche individuelle Präferenzen widerspiegeln, sind diese Ausdruck der personalen Autonomie und als solche von der Gesellschaft nicht zu kritisieren. Zu denken sind hier an Einkommensunterschiede, die sich ausschließlich aufgrund unterschiedlicher Einkommens-Freizeitpräferenzen oder einer unterschiedlichen Risikoaversion ergeben. Allokationen, die unter symmetrischen Strukturbedingungen zustande kommen, sind neidfrei, d.h. kein Akteur würde die Ressourcenallokation seines Verhandlungspartners seiner eigenen Ressourcenallokation vorziehen. In diesem – aber nur in diesem (!) – Sinn sind Märkte eine »moralfreie Zone«.¹⁴

Die solidarische Wirtschaftsethik setzt bei der ethischen Bewertung von Endzustandsverteilungen nicht an den individuellen Präferenzen an, sondern an den strukturellen Bedingungen, unter denen eine Verhandlung erfolgt. Damit ist die »solidarische Wirtschaftsethik« ebenso wie die »ökonomische Ethik« und – mit

13 An dieser Stelle ist eine theoretische Anmerkung notwendig. Die kooperative Spieltheorie unterscheidet sich von der nicht-kooperativen Variante nicht hinsichtlich der unterstellten Präferenzen der Individuen. In beiden Fällen wird davon ausgegangen, dass alle beteiligten Akteure versuchen, ihren individuellen Nutzen zu maximieren. Der wesentliche konzeptionelle Unterschied besteht darin, dass die kooperative Spieltheorie von der Möglichkeit bindender Absprachen zwischen den Kooperationspartnern ausgeht, während die nicht-kooperative Spieltheorie derart bindende Verträge nicht vorsieht.

14 Zum Konzept der Neidfreiheit (*envy freeness*) vgl. Varian, Hal: Equity, envy, and efficiency, *Journal of Economic Theory*, 9 (1974), 1, 63–91; vgl. Piketty, Thomas: Existence of fair allocations in economies with production, *Journal of Public Economics*, 55 (1994), 3, 391–405. Zur Konzeptualisierung des Marktes als »moralfreie Zone« vgl. Gauthier, David: *Morals by Agreement*, Oxford 1986.

Einschränkungen – die »integrative Wirtschaftsethik«¹⁵ der Strukturethik zuzurechnen. Dabei stehen zwei Struktur determinanten im Vordergrund. Die erste ist die *Verhandlungsmacht* der Akteure.¹⁶ Innerhalb einer bestehenden Kooperation setzt eine faire Aufteilung des Kooperationsgewinns voraus, dass beide Verhandlungspartner über eine annähernd gleiche Verhandlungsmacht verfügen. In diesem Fall werden die Tauschgewinne zu gleichen Teilen zwischen den Verhandlungspartnern aufgeteilt. Damit erfüllt die antagonistische Kooperation das Kriterium der schwachen Solidarität, denn unter schwacher Solidarität ist die Aufteilungsregel »equity rather than equality«¹⁷. Mit zunehmender Dominanz eines Verhandlungspartners steigt hingegen der Anteil an der Kooperationsrendite, den der dominante Akteur für sich vereinnahmen kann. Anders formuliert: mit steigender Verhandlungsmacht steigt der Ausbeutungsgewinn des dominanten Partners. In einer bestehenden Kooperationsbeziehung kann der Kooperationsgewinn zwar weitgehend, aber nie vollständig von der dominanten Partei vereinnahmt werden, da sich auch der ausgebeutete Partner im Vergleich zur Autarkielösung besserstellen muss. Die Herstellung (annähernd) gleicher Machtstrukturen innerhalb kooperativer Vertragsbeziehungen ist eine der zentralen Aufgaben der praktischen Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik. So werden Arbeitnehmervereinigungen nur dann als Tarifvertragspartei zugelassen, wenn sie ein gewisses Maß an »Mächtigkeit« vorweisen können, d.h. sofern davon auszugehen ist, dass sie ihre Interessen durch Streiks effektiv durchsetzen können. Im Rahmen der internationalen Wirtschaftsbeziehungen versucht der Multilateralismus, gleiche Regeln für alle Beteiligten herzustellen und Machtunterschiede zwischen den Akteuren zu egalisieren. Ein Rückfall in den Bilateralismus kommt hingegen jenen marktmächtigen Akteuren entgegen, die bereit sind, ihre Marktmacht im bilateralen Handel auszunutzen.

Der zweite Strukturparameter kooperativer Verhandlungen ist der Reservationsnutzen der potentiellen Kooperationspartner im Fall einer Nichteinigung. Diese Nutzenverteilung unter Autarkie, in der Literatur auch als »Drohpunkt« bezeichnet,

15 Zur »intergartiven Wirtschaftsethik vgl. Ulrich, Peter: Integrative Wirtschaftsethik. Grundlinien einer lebensdienlichen Ökonomie, Bern ⁵2016.

16 Der Machtaspekt von Verhandlungen wird in der klassischen Sozialvertragstheorie systematisch vernachlässigt. Thomas Hobbes (1651/1996) unterstellt in seinem Leviathan die Gleichheit der Menschen als empirisches Faktum. In der Rawls'schen Sozialvertragstheorie wird von Machtunterschieden durch den »Schleier des Nichtwissens« im hypothetischen Urzustand bewusst abstrahiert. Lediglich die Sozialvertragstheorie Buchanan'scher Prägung berücksichtigt den Aspekt der Machtasymmetrie explizit, leitet daraus aber keine normativen Implikationen ab.

17 Lindenberg, Siegwart: Social rationality and weak solidarity: A co-evolutionary approach to social order. In: Lawler, Edward/Thye, Shane R./Yoon, Jeongkoo (Hg.): Order on the Edge of Chaos: Social Psychology and the Problem of Social Order, Cambridge 2015, 43–62, 51.

stellt die Ausgangssituation für jede Kooperation dar. Sie repräsentiert auch gleichzeitig die Grenze der Ausbeutbarkeit durch einen dominanten Vertragspartner, da für alle Beteiligten eine gewisse Besserstellung gegenüber dem status quo erforderlich ist, um eine Kooperation einzugehen. Der Drohpunkt hat auch einen maßgeblichen Einfluss auf die Endverteilung, denn der Gesamtnutzen einer Kooperation ergibt sich aus dem jeweiligen Autarkienutzen zuzüglich des individuellen Kooperationsgewinns. Unter idealen Strukturbedingungen, sofern also sowohl die Verhandlungsmacht als auch der Reservationsnutzen symmetrisch verteilt sind, wird die Endallokation der Ressourcen ausschließlich durch die Präferenzen der beteiligten Akteure bestimmt. In diesem Fall erfüllt die Marktallokation das Kriterium der starken Solidarität. Diese Idealbedingungen sind in der Realität natürlich nicht gegeben. Es ist vielmehr die primäre Aufgabe der Politik, die strukturellen Voraussetzungen für eine (annähernd) faire Kooperationsbeziehung zu schaffen. Die Herstellung von Startchancengerechtigkeit und gleichen Entwicklungsbedingungen, d.h. die Gewährleistung eines *level playing fields*, ist insofern eine gesellschaftspolitische Aufgabe, die der Allokation über Märkte vorgelagert ist.

4. Fazit

Märkte sind Orte individueller Kooperation. Ihre primäre Aufgabe ist es, die Pläne der Wirtschaftssubjekte aufeinander abzustimmen, Arbeitsteilung und Tausch zu ermöglichen und knappe Ressourcen an die Stelle ihrer produktivsten Verwendung zu lenken. Allerdings ist jede wirtschaftliche Kooperation durch eine spezifische Ambivalenz gekennzeichnet, die sich adäquat durch den Begriff der »antagonistischen Kooperation« fassen und mit den Instrumenten der kooperativen Spieltheorie analysieren lässt. Wie die kooperative Spieltheorie zeigt, lässt sich die Allokation über Märkte als durchaus »solidarisch« bezeichnet, sofern die Marktverfassung bestimmten Anforderungen genügt. »Schwache Solidarität« setzt voraus, dass die Kooperationspartner eine annähernd gleiche Verhandlungsmacht besitzen, so dass die Kooperationsrendite weitgehend egalitär zwischen den Beteiligten aufgeteilt wird. »Starke Solidarität« erfordert darüber hinaus annähernd gleiche Ausgangsbedingungen des Verhandlungsprozesses. Beide Bedingungen stellen sich auf Märkten nicht von selbst ein; sie sind vielmehr das Ergebnis politischer Rahmenbedingungen, innerhalb derer sich der ökonomische Prozess vollzieht. Der Markt ist nicht generisch solidarisch, die Markt Kooperation ist insofern auch kein funktionales Äquivalent zu prosozialem Verhalten. Diese funktionale Äquivalenz erfordert vielmehr politische Rahmenbedingungen, durch die private Interaktionen auf das Gemeinwohl ausgerichtet werden. Oder anders formuliert: Der Markt ist solidarisch, wenn es die Gesellschaft ist.

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Zusammenhalt der Generationen?

Ethische Perspektiven auf intergenerationelle Solidarität und Verantwortung im öffentlichen Corona-Diskurs¹

Niklas Ellerich-Groppe, Larissa Pfaller & Mark Schweda

1. Einleitung

»Wir müssen, auch wenn wir so etwas noch nie erlebt haben, zeigen, dass wir herzlich und vernünftig handeln und so Leben retten. Es kommt ohne Ausnahme auf jeden Einzelnen und damit auf uns alle an.«.² So schloss die schon zum Zeitpunkt der Ausstrahlung als historisch bezeichnete Fernsehansprache der damaligen Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel an die deutsche Bevölkerung anlässlich der COVID-19-Pandemie vom 18. März 2020. Ganz ähnlich formulierte es der Generalsekretär der Vereinten Nationen, António Guterres, bei der Vorstellung des Strategiepapiers *The Impact of COVID-19 on Older Persons* im Mai 2020: »Um gemeinsam durch diese Pandemie zu kommen, brauchen wir eine Welle internationaler und nationaler Solidarität und den Beitrag aller Mitglieder der Gesellschaft, einschließlich der älteren Menschen.«.³ Und auch Rosa Kornfeld-Matte, die erste vom UN-Menschenrechtsrat ernannte unabhängige Expertin zur Wahrung der Rechte älterer Menschen, erklär-

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- 1 Dieser Beitrag ist im Rahmen des von der VolkswagenStiftung geförderten Projektes *The Public (Re-)Negotiation of Intergenerational Solidarity and Responsibility in the Corona-Pandemic – Media Discourse Analysis and Ethical Evaluation (PRISMAE)* entstanden (Az.: 99 340). Er beruht auf der überarbeiteten Übersetzung des Artikels: Ellerich-Groppe N., Pfaller L., Schweda M.: Young for old—old for young? Ethical perspectives on intergenerational solidarity and responsibility in public discourses on COVID-19. *European Journal of Ageing* 18(2021). Open Access: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-021-00623-9>
 - 2 Merkel A.: Rede von Angela Merkel am 18.03.2020. <https://www.bundesregierung.de/resou/rce/blob/975232/1732182/d4af29ba76f62f61f1320c32d39a7383/fernsehansprache-von-bundeskanzlerin-angela-merkel-data.pdf>, aufgerufen am 16. März 2022.
 - 3 Guterres A.: Video, 1.05.2020 <https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/news/2020/05/covid-19-older-persons/>, aufgerufen am 23. September 2020 [eigene Übersetzung].

te: »Gemeinschaften und Generationen müssen zusammenhalten, um in Solidarität durch diese Krise zu kommen.«⁴

Diese Beispiele machen deutlich: Der Ausbruch der Corona-Pandemie Anfang 2020 ging nicht nur mit erheblichen praktischen Herausforderungen einher, die konkret mit der Eindämmung der Infektionen und der Pandemie selbst zusammenhängen. Die ganze Welt fand sich in einem umfassenden Ausnahmezustand wieder, der auch bisherige moralische Gewissheiten in Frage stellte. In vielen Ländern rückten grundsätzliche Fragen wechselseitiger Verpflichtung und sozialen Zusammenhalts zwischen verschiedenen Altersgruppen in den Vordergrund; Vorstellungen von intergenerationeller Solidarität und Verantwortung wurden zu zentralen normativen Bezugspunkten politischer Reden, Pressekonferenzen und öffentlicher Mediendiskurse. Gerade weitreichende gesundheitspolitische Infektionsschutzmaßnahmen wie Abstandsgebote und Lockdowns wurden immer wieder mit der Notwendigkeit begründet, die besonders gefährdete Gruppe der Älteren zu schützen. Angehörige der jüngeren Generationen wurden aufgefordert, aus Solidarität mit und Verantwortung für ihre älteren Mitbürgerinnen und Mitbürger Einschränkungen der eigenen individuellen Freiheiten sowie des wirtschaftlichen Wohlstands in Kauf zu nehmen.⁵

Doch je länger der politische Ausnahmezustand andauerte, desto nachdrücklicher wurden auch die psychosozialen und sozioökonomischen Folgekosten dieser Solidarität mit und Verantwortung für die Älteren zur Sprache gebracht.⁶ In Debatten über die Priorisierung knapper intensivmedizinischer Ressourcen wurde etwa nicht selten gefordert, dass sich ältere Menschen zurücknehmen und ihre Bedürfnisse und Interessen zugunsten der Zukunft der jüngeren Generationen hintanstellen sollten.⁷ Es hieß, auch gesamtgesellschaftlich sei es doch effektiver, gezielt besonders gefährdete Gruppe wie ältere Menschen zu isolieren, anstatt die gesamte

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- 4 Kornfeld-Matte R.: Statement: »Unacceptable«—UN expert urges better protection of older persons facing the highest risk of the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25748&LangID=EUN>, 2020, aufgerufen am 23. September 2020.
 - 5 Kluge H.H.P.: Statement: older people are at highest risk from COVID-19, but all must act to prevent community spread. <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/statements/statement-older-people-are-at-highest-risk-from-covid-19,-but-all-must-act-to-prevent-communityspread>, 2020, aufgerufen am 23. September 2020.
 - 6 Barry C., Lazar S.: Justifying the lockdown. 20.05.2020, <https://www.ethicsandinternationalaffairs.org/2020/justifying-lockdown/>, aufgerufen am 23. September 2020.
 - 7 Gandhi R., Patel A.: What if two COVID-19 victims need ventilators and just one is available? Health care providers need a well-organized response grounded in science and ethics as the U.S. responds to the pandemic. *Scientific American*. <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/what-if-two-covid-19-victims-need-ventilators-and-just-one-is-available/>, 16.03.2020, aufgerufen am 16. März 2020.

Bevölkerung einzuschränken und die Volkswirtschaft herunterzufahren.⁸ Tatsächlich setzten einige Regierungen zunächst auf eine Strategie der Herdenimmunität, die der jüngeren Bevölkerung die Fortsetzung ihres gewohnten Alltagslebens ermöglichen und ältere Menschen durch Isolation gezielt vor Infektionen schützen sollte.⁹ Dabei kamen in den öffentlichen Debatten mitunter auch alte und fast überwunden geglaubte altersfeindliche Stereotype wieder zum Vorschein, die das Alter vor allem mit Gebrechlichkeit, Hilflosigkeit und Hilfsbedürftigkeit in Verbindung bringen und so als einen beklagenswerten und letztlich belastenden Zustand kennzeichnen, den es unbedingt zu vermeiden gilt.¹⁰

Eines wurde im Verlauf des Diskurses deutlich: Offenkundig besteht keineswegs Einigkeit darüber, was solidarische und verantwortungsvolles Handeln in Zeiten von Corona konkret bedeuten soll. Vielmehr scheinen auch die normativen Implikationen intergenerationaler Solidarität und Verantwortung ausgesprochen unklar und vieldeutig. So werden beide Konzepte zur Begründung ganz unterschiedlicher, zuweilen geradezu gegensätzlicher moralischer und politischer Forderungen herangezogen. Ziel des vorliegenden Beitrages ist es deswegen, diese heterogenen Verwendungsweisen der Begriffe zu analysieren, um auf diese Weise eine offene Diskussion über die Berechtigung der mit ihrer Hilfe erhobenen normativen Geltungsansprüche zu ermöglichen. Dazu vergegenwärtigen wir zunächst die herausgehobene Rolle von Solidarität und Verantwortung als zentrale Bezugspunkte in Debatten über Generationenverhältnisse in der Corona-Pandemie. Im nächsten Schritt werden beide Konzepte und ihre normativen Prämissen moralphilosophisch näher bestimmt, um einen konzeptionellen Rahmen für die Untersuchung intergenerationaler Solidarität und Verantwortung zu gewinnen. Im Anschluss zeigen wir das analytische Potenzial dieses Instruments exemplarisch an drei kontrastierenden Fällen aus politischen, zivilgesellschaftlichen und medialen Diskursen während der ersten Welle der Pandemie im Frühjahr 2020 auf. Dabei wird deutlich, dass Bezugnahmen auf intergenerationale Solidarität und Verantwortung nicht nur ganz unterschiedlich ausfallen. Vielmehr kommen dabei auch kulturell tief verwurzelte Vorstellungen von Alter und Generationenbeziehungen zum Tragen,

8 Kulldorff M., Gupta S., Bhattacharya S.: The Great Barrington Declaration. <https://gbdeclaration.org/>, 2020, aufgerufen am 27. Februar 2021.

9 Kayı İ., Sakarya S.: Policy analysis of suppression and mitigation strategies in the management of an outbreak through the example of COVID-19 pandemic. *Infect Dis Clin Microbiol* 2(2020) H. 1, 30–41.

10 Ayalon L.: There is nothing new under the sun: ageism and intergenerational tension in the age of the COVID-19 outbreak. *IntPsychogeriatr* 32 (2020) H. 10, 1–4; Ayalon L., Chasteen A., Diehl M., Levy B., Neupert S. D., Rothermund K., Tesch-Römer C., Wahl H.-W.: Aging in times of the COVID-19 pandemic: avoiding ageism and fostering intergenerational solidarity. *J Gerontol Ser B Psychol Sci Soc Sci* 76(2021), H. 2, e49–e52, <https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbaa051>.

die einer weiteren Klärung und Diskussion bedürfen. Eine systematische Analyse intergenerationeller Solidarität und Verantwortung in Zeiten von Corona kann so letztlich ein erster wesentlicher Schritt hin zu einer transparenteren und fundierteren Diskussion des grundlegenden moralischen Geflechts wechselseitiger Verpflichtungen und Erwartungen zwischen den Generationen in den alternden Gesellschaften der Gegenwart sein.

2. Intergenerationelle Solidarität und Verantwortung als zentrale Bezugspunkte im Corona-Diskurs

Die überwältigende Welle der Aufrufe zu Solidarität und Zusammenhalt wie auch Verantwortung zwischen den Generationen zu Beginn der COVID-19-Pandemie mochte zunächst überraschen. Beinahe erschien sie wie eine radikale Umkehrung der zuvor vielfach eher auf Konfrontation angelegten diskursiven Verhandlungen von Generationenbeziehungen. In den vorangehenden Wochen und Monaten etwa waren die Medien voll von Berichten über junge *Fridays for Future*-Aktivistinnen und Aktivistinnen gewesen, die die ältere Generation für die ökologischen Folgen eines angeblich egoistischen und unverantwortlichen Lebensstils verantwortlich machten und damit einen grundlegenden Konflikt zwischen den Generationen beschworen.¹¹

Einmal mehr traten in dieser Debatte stereotype Altersbilder und die polemische Rhetorik eines ›Kampfes der Generationen‹ zu Tage, die seit Längerem öffentliche Thematisierungen von Generationenbeziehungen durchziehen.¹² Schon der bis in die 1970er Jahre zurückreichende Diskurs über die Tragfähigkeit der sozialen Sicherungssysteme in alternden Gesellschaften war nicht selten begleitet von apokalyptischen Warnungen vor einer ›Überalterung‹ der Bevölkerung und damit einhergehenden Schuldzuweisungen an die ältere Generation.¹³ Ein weiteres Beispiel ist

11 Z. B. Stromberg S.: Why baby boomers' grandchildren will hate them. The Washington Post, 17.09.2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/09/17/why-baby-boomers-grandchildren-will-hate-them/>, aufgerufen am 15. Dezember 2020.

12 Williamson J., Watts-Roy D.M., Kingson E.R. (Hg.): The generational equity debate, New York 1999; Phillipson C.: Reconstructing old age: new agendas in social theory and practice, London 1998.

13 Walker A.: The new ageism. Political Q 83(2012) H. 4, 812–819. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.2012.02360.x>; Fealy G., McNamara M., Treacy M.P., Lyons I.: Constructing ageing and age identities: a case study of newspaper discourses. Ageing Soc 32(2012) 85–102; Martin R., Williams C., O'Neill D.: Retrospective analysis of attitudes to ageing in the Economist: apocalyptic demography for opinion formers. BMJ 339 (2009) b4914. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.b4914>; Gee E., Gutman G. (Hg.): The overselling of population ageing: Apocalyptic demography, intergenerational challenges and social policy, Oxford 2000; Wachter S.K.: Social security and private pensions: providing for retirement in the 21st century, Lexington 1988.

die Diskussion um eine gerechte und vertretbare Verteilung knapper Gesundheitsressourcen in den 1980er Jahren, in der kontroverse Vorschläge zur altersbezogenen Rationierung wie der Ansatz der »natürlichen Lebensspanne«¹⁴ oder der »Fair Innings«¹⁵ formuliert wurden, die in Debatten über Gesundheitsreformen seither immer wieder aufgegriffen werden.¹⁶ Schließlich haben die Kontroversen um Umweltfragen und insbesondere die globale Erwärmung eine polarisierende Rhetorik an den Tag gelegt, die mit gegenseitigen Anfeindungen und konfrontativen Verantwortungszuschreibungen mit Blick auf die Zukunft des Planeten einherging.¹⁷

Mit Beginn der COVID-Pandemie Anfang 2020 schien sich das Blatt allerdings schlagartig zu wenden. Statt Interessenkonflikten und gegenseitigen Verantwortungszuschreibungen wurden nun mit einem Mal Einigkeit und Zusammenhalt zwischen den Generationen betont. Regierungschefs und internationale Organisationen sprachen jetzt vielfach von Solidarität mit und Verantwortung für ältere Menschen. So appellierte etwa der französische Präsident Emmanuel Macron im März 2020 an die Bürgerinnen und Bürger Frankreichs, sich »solidarisch und verantwortungsbereit« zu zeigen, und sprach davon, dass »neue Formen der Solidarität zwischen den Generationen« entwickelt werden müssten.¹⁸ Nur wenige Wochen später veröffentlichten 36 Mitglieder des Europäischen Parlaments einen offenen Brief an die Vorsitzenden der Europäischen Kommission und des Europäischen Rates, in dem sie als Antwort der EU auf COVID-19 eine Solidarität der Generationen forderten, die den Weg aus der Krise weisen müsse.¹⁹ Auch die WHO

14 Callahan D.: *Setting limits: medical goals in an aging society*, New York 1987.

15 Harris J.: *The value of life*, London 1985.

16 Callahan D., ter Meulen R., Topinková E. (Hg.): *A world growing old: the coming health care challenges*, Washington 1996; Hackler C. (Hg.): *Health care for an aging population*, Albany 1994; Winslow G.R., Walters J.W. (Hg.): *Facing limits: ethics and health care for the elderly*, Boulder 1993; Holmer P., Holstein M. (Hg.): *A Good Old Age? The paradox of setting limits*, New York 1990; für einen Überblick über Altersdiskriminierung und Gesundheitswesen siehe: Wyman M.F., Shovitz-Ezra S., Bengel J.: *Ageism in the health care system: providers, patients, and systems*. In: Ayalon L, Tesch- Römer C (Hg.) *Contemporary perspectives on ageism*, Cham 2018, 193–212.

17 Morrison L., Wilsker M.: *Is the environmental movement ageist?* *The Guardian*, 20.01.2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jan/20/is-the-environmental-movement-ageist>, aufgerufen am 26. Februar 2021; Karpf A.: *Don't let prejudice against older people contaminate the climate movement*. *The Guardian*, 18.01.2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jan/18/ageism-climate-movement-generation-stereotypes>, aufgerufen am 26. Februar 2021; Diprose K., Valentine G., Vanderbeck R., Liu C., McQuaid K.: *Climate change, consumption and intergenerational justice: lived experiences in China*, Bristol 2019; Skilington T.: *Climate change and intergenerational justice*, Abingdon 2019.

18 Macron E.: *Rede von Emmanuel Macron* am 16.03.2020. https://www.achgut.com/artikel/corona_text_der_rede_von_emanuel_macron_auf_deutsch, aufgerufen am 16. März 2022.

19 Brglez M., Duda J., Ijabs I. et al.: *Solidarity between generations must guide the EU response to and recovery from COVID-19*. <https://towardsanagefriendlyp.files.wordpress.com/2020>

bediente sich des Vokabulars der Solidarität, um zu Hilfe und Schutz für ältere Menschen aufzufordern. So rief etwa der WHO-Regionaldirektor für Europa die Öffentlichkeit explizit zu einer generationenübergreifenden Solidarität auf: »Wir alle, in jedem Lebensalter, müssen in Solidarität handeln.«²⁰ Nicht zuletzt waren es zu dieser Zeit auch die Medien und zivilgesellschaftliche Akteure, die an Solidarität und Verantwortung zwischen den Generationen appellierten. Eine Vielzahl von Kommentaren bezog sich dabei auf die Solidarität der jüngeren Generation mit älteren Menschen.²¹ Jugendliche wurden ermahnt, zu Hause zu bleiben, und jungen Familien wurden geraten, weder die Großeltern zu besuchen noch deren Dienste als Babysitter in Anspruch zu nehmen. In vielen Stadtvierteln wurden die Bewohnerinnen und Bewohner zu wechselseitiger Hilfe aufgefordert, beispielsweise durch Einkäufe oder andere Unterstützungsleistungen für ältere Menschen.²² »Lebe so, dass die Alten überleben« schien zum kategorischen Imperativ der Stunde zu werden.²³ Einige Kommentare sahen in der Krise sogar ein Potential für die Verbesserung künftiger Generationenbeziehungen und des gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalts im Allgemeinen.

Im Verlauf der Pandemie wurden jedoch auch Stimmen laut, die Solidarität und Verantwortung zwischen den Generationen ganz anders verstanden. Statt für die Bedürfnisse und Interessen älterer Menschen einzutreten, rief man sie hier gerade zur Verantwortung. So wurden die Älteren aufgefordert, ihre eigenen Bedürfnisse zurückzustellen und sich zu isolieren, damit die Jungen weiterhin ihre Freiheit wahrnehmen können. Auch gab es zahlreiche Appelle zu mehr Solidarität mit den

o/05/letter-to-ec-and-council_solidarity-between-generations.pdf, 28.05.2020, aufgerufen am 30. September 2020.

- 20 Kluge H.H.P.: Statement: older people are at highest risk from COVID-19, but all must act to prevent community spread. <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/statements/statement-older-people-are-at-highest-risk-from-covid-19,-but-all-must-act-to-prevent-communityspread>, 2020, aufgerufen am 23. September 2020.
- 21 Haan Y.: Solidarität der Generationen ist notwendig. Deutschlandfunk Kultur. https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/millennials-und-die-coronakrise-solidaritaet-der.1005.de.html?dram:article_id=475123, 22.04.2020, aufgerufen am 23. September 2020; Seyffarth M.: Nun muss meine Generation Verzicht lernen und Größe beweisen. Die Welt, 14.03.2020, <https://www.welt.de/wirtschaft/article206538483/Corona-Krise-Die-junge-Generation-muss-Groesse-beweisen.html>, aufgerufen am 23. September 2020.
- 22 BAGSO (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Seniorenorganisationen): Protecting human life – strengthening cohesion. BAGSO recommendations in times of the spread of the coronavirus, https://www.bagso.de/fileadmin/user_upload/bagso/06_Veroeffentlichungen/2020/Statement_Protecting_human_life.pdf, aufgerufen am 31. Juli 2023.
- 23 El Ouassil S.: Lebe so, dass die Alten überleben. Eine Kolumne von Samira El Ouassil. Spiegel Online, 12.03.2020, <https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/coronavirus-lebe-so-dass-die-alten-uberleben-a-8f668c8-4f36-4a24-afd5-5e2d7ac12d48>, aufgerufen am 23. September 2020.

jüngeren Generationen, die auf mehreren Ebenen von der Pandemie betroffen waren, nicht zuletzt in wirtschaftlicher Hinsicht.²⁴ »Der teure Schutz der Alten« wurde kontrovers diskutiert²⁵ und gleichzeitig vorgeschlagen, die Corona-Maßnahmen für die verschiedenen Generationen unterschiedlich umzusetzen.²⁶ Auch von Seniorinnen und Senioren selbst wurde mitunter der Wunsch geäußert, die jüngeren Generationen nicht zu belasten und stattdessen lieber eine freiwillige Selbstisolation in Kauf zu nehmen.²⁷ Es gab sogar den Vorschlag, dass sich die Älteren um ihrer Nachkommen und des zukünftigen wirtschaftlichen Wohlergehens willen gleichsam »opfern« sollten.²⁸ In dieser Art von Diskussion wurden ältere Menschen nicht in erster Linie als eine schutzbedürftige Gruppe dargestellt, sondern eher als eine unnötige Last für die Gesellschaft.²⁹ Tatsächlich fanden sich in der öffentlichen Berichterstattung auch erschreckende Bilder, etwa aus französischen und spanischen Pflegeheimen, in denen die Bewohnenden einfach zurückgelassen und ihrem Schicksal überantwortet worden waren.³⁰ In den kritischen Phasen der Pandemie stand im klinischen Kontext eine Priorisierung der Intensivversorgung zur Diskussion, wobei auch Vorschläge zu einer altersbezogenen Rationierung von Beatmungsgeräten formuliert wurden.³¹ Auch wenn solche Überlegungen von wissenschaftlicher und politischer Seite vielfach entschieden zurückgewiesen wurden, tauchte das chronologische Lebensalter in einer Reihe einschlägiger Leitlinien me-

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- 24 Z.B. Ahrens L.: Corona Krise. Wir brauchen jetzt Solidarität mit der jungen Generation. Hamburger Morgenpost, 26.05.2020, <https://www.mopo.de/hamburg/meinung/corona-kris-e-wir-brauchen-jetzt-solidaritaet-mit-der-jungen-generation--36748854>, aufgerufen am 23. September 2020.
- 25 John G., Schnauder A., Thaler S.: Der teure Schutz der Alten. Der Standard, <https://www.derstandard.de/story/2000117640844/derteure-schutz-der-alten>, aufgerufen am 23. September 2020.
- 26 Petter J.: Generationenkonflikt in der Pandemie: Jüngere wollen in Zukunft andere Corona-Maßnahmen als Alte. Bento, <https://www.bento.de/politik/wissenschaftler-zu-corona-kris-e-juengere-menschen-machen-sich-sorgen-um-ihre-zukunft-a-b5e6289bbd88-4d6e-b786-807c6fb20b15#refspn>, aufgerufen am 23. September 2020.
- 27 Haarhoff H.: Sperrt uns ein! taz. die tageszeitung, 10.04.2020, <https://taz.de/Isolation-in-de-r-Coronakrise/!5675306/>, aufgerufen am 23. September 2020.
- 28 Beckett L.: Older people would rather die than let Covid-19 Harm US economy: Texas Official. The Guardian, sec. World news, 24.03.2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/24/older-peoplewould-rather-die-than-let-covid-19lockdown-harm-us-economytexas-official-dan-patrick>, aufgerufen am 24. März 2020.
- 29 Ayalon et al. 2021.
- 30 Bachega H.: Inside story of Spain's care home tragedy. BBC News, 30.4.2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-52188820>, aufgerufen am 2. Juli 2020.
- 31 Vergano M., Bertolini G., Giannini A., Cristina G.R., Livigni S., Mistraretti G., Riccioni L., Petrini F.: SIAARTI recommendations for the allocation of intensive care treatments in exceptional, resourcelimited circumstances. *Minerva Anestesiol* 86(2020) H. 5, 469–472.

dizinischer Fachgesellschaften und Ethikgremien durchaus als Kriterium zur Verteilung knapper intensivmedizinischer Ressourcen auf.³²

Vor diesem Hintergrund wurden bald auch reflexive Stellungnahmen zu dem anhebenden Diskurs über intergenerationelle Solidarität und Verantwortung in der Corona-Krise formuliert. Ein gutes Beispiel dafür ist die Erklärung von Sant'Egidio, ein offener Brief einer Gruppe bedeutender Intellektueller wie Jürgen Habermas und Romano Prodi, der im März 2020 in großen Tageszeitungen weltweit veröffentlicht wurde. In ihrem Appell brachten die Unterzeichnenden ihre Besorgnis über die prekäre moralische Stellung älterer Menschen angesichts der COVID-19-Pandemie zum Ausdruck und forderten einen Richtungswechsel und eine »moralische Revolte«. Denn sollte die Missachtung älterer Menschen anhalten und ihr Tod sowie die unhaltbaren Zustände in Pflegeheimen hingenommen werden, »zerreißt das soziale Netz der Solidarität zwischen den Generationen und spaltet die gesamte Gesellschaft.«³³

Schon dieser kurze Überblick macht deutlich: Die diskursiven Bezugnahmen auf intergenerationelle Solidarität und Verantwortung in der Pandemie fallen durchaus heterogen aus. Dabei wird der Diskurs von verschiedenen Akteuren auf mindestens drei Ebenen – der Politik, der Zivilgesellschaft und der Medien – geführt. Zugleich nimmt er auf unterschiedliche Einheiten wie etwa Individuen und Familien, Institutionen wie Krankenhäuser und Pflegeheime oder ganz allgemein die Gemeinschaft bzw. Gesellschaft Bezug. Auch werden verschiedene Handlungsebenen adressiert, z. B. individuelle Möglichkeiten des Schutzes und der Unterstützung gefährdeter Gruppen, die Grundsätze und Verfahren der klinischen Entscheidungsfindung oder die allgemeinen politischen Maßnahmen des Infektionsschutzes. Dennoch bietet bereits diese kurze Darstellung erste Einblicke in die grundlegende Struktur und die umfassenderen moralischen und politischen Hintergründe der Diskussion. Offenkundig wurden in diesen »Corona-Diskursen«

32 Farrell T.W., Ferrante L.E., Brown T., Francis L., Widera E., Rhodes R., Hwang U., Witt L.J., Thothala N., Liu S.W., Vitale C.A., Braun U.K., Stephens C., Saliba D.: AGS position statement: resource allocation strategies and age-related considerations in the COVID-19 era and beyond. *J Am Geriatr Soc* 68(2020) H.6, 1136–1142; Montero-Odasso M., Hogan D.B., Lam R., Madden K., MacKnight C., Molnar F., Rockwood K.: Age alone is not adequate to determine health-care resource allocation during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Can Geriatr J* 23 (2020) H. 1, 152; für einen Überblick Jöbges S., Vinay R., Luyckx V.A., Biller-Andorno N.: Recommendations on COVID-19 triage: international comparison and ethical analysis. *Bioethics* 34(2020) H. 9, 948–959 sowie Ehni H.J., Wiesing U., Ranisch R.: Saving the most lives: a comparison of European triage guidelines in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Bioethics* 35 (2021) H. 2, 125–134.

33 Sant'Egidio: Unsere Zukunft – Nicht ohne die alten Menschen. <https://www.santegidio.org/pageID/37740/langID/de/Unsere-Zukunft--nicht-ohne-die-alten-Menschen-Appell-lesen-und-unterschreiben.html>, 2020, aufgerufen am 16. März 2022.

angesichts der Bedrohung durch die Pandemie Vorstellungen von intergenerationaler Solidarität und Verantwortung aufgegriffen und (mitunter neu) verhandelt. Dabei berühren die Beiträge zugleich kulturell tief verwurzelte Vorstellungen von Altern und Alter, wechselseitige Erwartungen und Verpflichtungen zwischen den Generationen sowie das grundlegende moralische Gefüge der alternden Gesellschaften der Gegenwart.

Zugleich ist der Diskurs jedoch keineswegs einheitlich, sondern variiert im Verlauf der Pandemie und offenbart erhebliche Unklarheiten, Divergenzen und Konflikte. Zunächst einmal bleibt oft unklar, wer genau als ›die Jungen‹ und ›die Alten‹ angesprochen wird. Weder kann die Gruppe der Babyboomer mit gebrechlichen Pflegeheimbewohnerinnen und -bewohnern gleichgesetzt werden noch die *Fridays for Future*-Bewegung mit der Generation der Millennials, die um die Zukunft ihrer Kinder und deren wirtschaftliche Existenzgrundlagen fürchtet. Darüber hinaus scheinen in der Debatte unterschiedliche Vorstellungen von intergenerationaler Solidarität und Verantwortung im Spiel zu sein. In der Betonung der Notwendigkeit, zu Hause zu bleiben, um die Infektionszahlen zu senken und gefährdete ältere Menschen zu schützen, kommen jedenfalls andere Vorstellungen intergenerationaler Verpflichtungen zum Ausdruck als in der Erwartung, ›die Alten‹ sollten sich zurücknehmen, um den Zukunftsaussichten der jüngeren Generationen nicht im Wege zu stehen. Eine Verständigung über diese vielfältigen und zuweilen gegensätzlichen begrifflichen und moralischen Grundlagen erfordert einen klareren und differenzierteren Begriff intergenerationaler Solidarität und Verantwortung.

3. Theoretischer Rahmen: Konzepte von Solidarität und Verantwortung

Die Intensität der Appelle an Solidarität und Verantwortung zwischen den Generationen zu Beginn der COVID-19-Pandemie bestätigt die Beobachtung, dass der Ruf nach Solidarität gerade in Krisenzeiten und in einem »moralischen Ausnahmezustand«³⁴ aufkommt. Zugleich unterstreichen die ambivalente und heterogene Verwendung der Begriffe sowie ihre oft intransparente Verschränkung mit ähnlichen

34 Derrmann S.: Gründe der Solidarität, Münster 2013, 209.

Konzepten wie ›Altruismus‹ oder ›moralische Pflichten‹³⁵ die Notwendigkeit einer theoretisch-moralphilosophischen Klärung.³⁶

Ein Ursprung des heutigen Verständnisses von Solidarität wird in der christlichen Tradition der ›Brüderlichkeit‹ und der Vorstellung einer universellen Gemeinschaft aller Menschen in der göttlichen Schöpfung verortet.³⁷ Im frankophonen Kontext entfaltete der Begriff dann in Verbindung mit dem revolutionären Ideal der *fraternité* einen erheblichen Einfluss.³⁸ Der französische Soziologe Émile Durkheim unterscheidet dabei etwa eine mechanische Solidarität, die auf gemeinsamen Traditionen, Lebenswelten und Werten in weitgehend homogenen Gesellschaften beruht, von einer organischen Solidarität in funktional ausdifferenzierten und damit stärker individualisierten modernen Gesellschaften.³⁹ Eine ähnliche Perspektive findet sich in Léon Bourgeois' Überlegungen zum Solidarismus: Ausgehend von der Vorstellung einer natürlichen Solidarität, die alle Menschen aufgrund ihrer wechselseitigen Abhängigkeit über Raum und Zeit hinweg verbindet, nutzt Bourgeois die Figur eines ›Quasi-Gesellschaftsvertrags‹, um die daraus resultierenden wechselseitigen normativen Verpflichtungen zu begründen.⁴⁰ Diese Verschränkung von normativen und deskriptiven Implikationen wird auch in einem anderen Kontext deutlich: der Arbeiterbewegung und ihrer Vorstellung von der Arbeiterklasse als einer Gemeinschaft mit gemeinsamen Lebensbedingungen und einem gemeinsamen Schicksal, die durch kollektives Handeln eine Verbesserung der eigenen Lage anstrebt.⁴¹ Vor diesem Hintergrund wurde das Konzept der Solidarität in den

35 Vgl. für den aktuellen Diskurs z.B. Solnit R.: ›The way we get through this is together‹: the rise of mutual aid under coronavirus. The Guardian, 14.05.2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/14/mutual-aid-coronavirus-pandemic-rebecca-solnit>, aufgerufen am 23. September 2020; El Ouassil 2020.

36 Zum Folgenden siehe Ellerich-Groppe N., Schweda M., Pfaller L.: #StayHomeFor-Grandma: Towards an analysis of intergenerational solidarity and responsibility in the coronavirus pandemic. *Social Sci Hum Open* (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2020.100085>.

37 Bayertz K., Boshammer S.: Solidarität. In: Gosepath S., Hinsch W., Rössler B. (Hg.) *Handbuch der politischen Philosophie und Sozialphilosophie*, Berlin 2008, 1197–1201.

38 Metz K.H.: Solidarity and history: Institutions and social concepts of solidarity in 19th Century Western Europe. In: Bayertz K. (Hg.): *Solidarity*, Dordrecht 1999, 191–207; ter Meulen R.: *Solidarity and justice in health and social care*, Cambridge 2017, 30–70.

39 Durkheim É.: *The division of labor in society*. Edited and with a new introduction by Steven Lukes. Translation by W. D. Halls, New York 2014.

40 Bourgeois L.: *Solidarität. Von den Grundlagen dauerhaften Friedens*, Frankfurt a.M 2020; ter Meulen 2017, 44–47.

41 Bayertz und Boshammer 2008.

1970er Jahren schließlich auch auf die Beziehungen zwischen den Generationen übertragen.⁴²

Ungeachtet der unterschiedlichen geistesgeschichtlichen Ursprünge und entsprechend großen Vielfalt an Implikationen und Konnotationen lassen sich konzeptionell zumindest drei übergreifende Elemente des Gedankens der Solidarität identifizieren.⁴³ Ein erster wichtiger Aspekt ist die Bezugnahme auf eine *Gruppe*. Solidarität bezieht sich immer auf eine Gemeinschaft, ein bestimmtes Kollektiv, das auf gewissen gemeinsamen Eigenschaften beruht, die seine Mitglieder miteinander verbinden und sie von anderen unterscheiden. Zweitens erfordert Solidarität ein *Commitment*, also eine spezifische Beziehung zwischen den Mitgliedern der jeweiligen Gruppe. Hier lassen sich verschiedene moralische Paradigmen sozialer Bindung und Verbundenheit ausmachen. So kann eine christliche Vorstellung, die auf der Idee einer alle Menschen gleichermaßen betreffenden Verletzlichkeit beruht, zu einer selbstlosen, barmherzigen Fürsorge für Schwache und Kranke führen. Im Unterschied dazu kann ein liberal-egalitäres Paradigma, das auf Ideale von Gleichberechtigung abhebt, Erwartungen an eine symmetrische und reziproke Unterstützung zwischen autonomen Individuen wecken. Ein kommunitaristisches Paradigma hingegen kann eher die Hingabe des Einzelnen an die Gemeinschaft als Ganzes betonen. Diese Beispiele offenbaren auch eine grundlegende Ambivalenz in der Verwendung des Begriffs »Solidarität«, der sowohl »intransitiv« die internen Beziehungen innerhalb einer Gruppe kennzeichnen als auch »transitiv« auf eine andere Gruppe gerichtet sein kann.⁴⁴ Drittens beinhaltet Solidarität immer auch die Bereitschaft zur Übernahme von *Kosten*, ist also mit Belastungen und Anstrengungen zum Wohle der jeweiligen Gruppe verbunden. Da die Ressourcen von Einzelpersonen und Gemeinschaften in der Regel begrenzt sind, müssen diese Kosten stets abgeschätzt und gegen andere konkurrierende Güter, Werte und moralische Normen abgewogen werden.

Mit Blick auf Generationenverhältnisse kann das Konzept der Solidarität weiter differenziert werden. Der Begriff der intergenerationellen Solidarität wurde ursprünglich von Bengtson in seinen Forschungen zu Generationenbeziehungen geprägt⁴⁵ und zielt hier im Wesentlichen auf den sozialen Zusammenhalt zwischen

42 Bengtson V.L., Olander E.B., Haddad A.A.: The »generation gap« and ageing family members: toward a conceptual model. In: Gubrium J.F. (Hg.) Time, roles, and self in old age, New York 1976, 237–263.

43 Siehe Ellerich-Groppe et al. 2020.

44 Taylor A.E.: Solidarity: obligations and expressions. J Political Philosophy 23(2015) H. 2, 128–145.

45 Cruz-Saco M.A.: Intergenerational solidarity. In: Cruz-Saco M.A., Zelenev S. (Hg.): Intergenerational solidarity strengthening economic and social ties, New York 2010, 19.

Generationen ab.⁴⁶ Dabei lässt sich intergenerationelle Solidarität auf unterschiedlichen Ebenen verorten. Auf der Mikroebene bezieht sich der Begriff in der Regel auf die Beziehungen zwischen Mitgliedern der Generationen innerhalb einer Familie, wie zum Beispiel die Verbindung zwischen Großeltern und Enkelkindern.⁴⁷ Die Beziehungen zwischen den Generationen innerhalb kleinerer Gruppen, Organisationen oder Institutionen ließen sich hingegen auf einer Mesoebene ansiedeln, z.B. die zwischen jüngeren und älteren Mitgliedern eines Vereins, einer Bildungseinrichtung oder eines mittelständischen Unternehmens.⁴⁸ Auf der Makroebene rücken schließlich gesamtgesellschaftliche Zusammenhänge in den Vordergrund, z.B. die Beziehungen zwischen ›den Jungen‹ und ›den Alten‹ innerhalb einer Gesellschaft oder zwischen der Kriegsgeneration und ihren Nachkommen, den Babyboomern.⁴⁹ Diese Unterscheidung zwischen der mikro-, meso- und makrosozialen Ebene ist auch für die spezifische Qualität des sozialen Zusammenhalts zwischen verschiedenen Generationen relevant. Während die wechselseitigen Beziehungen zwischen Mitgliedern verschiedener Generationen innerhalb einer Familie mit Vorstellungen von Nähe, persönlicher Zuneigung und emotionalen Bindungen verknüpft sind, werden die Beziehungen zwischen größeren demografischen Generationen häufig in formaleren Kategorien wie sozioökonomischen Vorstellungen von Umlagen oder dem kontraktualistischen Motiv eines Generationenvertrags konzeptualisiert.⁵⁰

Die oben herausgearbeiteten begrifflichen Elemente der Solidarität bedürfen entsprechend in Bezug auf Generationenbeziehungen einer näheren Bestimmung. So stellt sich im Hinblick auf die *Gruppenbezogenheit* die zentrale Frage, inwieweit Generationen überhaupt als klar umrissene Gruppen verstanden und identifiziert werden können. Unterschiedliche Verständnisse von Generationen, z.B. als Geburtskohorten, Positionen im Reproduktionszyklus einer Familie oder Klassen von Menschen mit gemeinsamen historischen Erfahrungen, haben offenkundig auch unterschiedliche Implikationen für das Verständnis von intergenerationeller Solidarität. Zwar setzt Solidarität immer ein gewisses Maß an Identifikation und Gemeinsamkeiten voraus, wie etwa einen gemeinsamen familiären Hintergrund oder geteilte historische Erfahrungen. Allerdings zeigt die Sozialforschung, dass

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- 46 Bengtson V.L., Oyama P.S.: Intergenerational solidarity and conflict. In: Cruz-Saco M.A., Zelenev S. (Hg.) Intergenerational solidarity: strengthening economic and social ties, New York 2010, 35.
- 47 Pfeifer S.K., Susman M.B. (Hg.): Families: intergenerational and generational connections, New York 1991.
- 48 Barabaschi B.: Intergenerational solidarity in the workplace: can it solve Europe's labor market and social welfare crises? SAGE Open 5 (2015) H. 4, 1–11.
- 49 Cruz-Saco M.A., Zelenev S. (Hg.): Intergenerational Solidarity. Strengthening economic and social ties, New York 2010.
- 50 Bengtson V.L., Achenbaum W.A. (Hg.): The Changing Contract across Generations, New York 1993.

es auch innerhalb von Generationen erhebliche soziale Unterschiede geben kann, deren Bedeutung gegenüber der von Unterschieden zwischen den Generationen keinesfalls unterschätzt werden darf.⁵¹ Darüber hinaus stellt sich die Frage, ob intergenerationelle Solidarität als Solidarität innerhalb einer übergreifenden Gruppe verstanden wird oder ob eine Generation sich gegenüber einer anderen solidarisch zeigen soll. In beiden Fällen kann die Identifikation mit der jeweils gemeinten Gruppe aufgrund von unterschiedlichen Lebensbedingungen problematisch sein. Insbesondere in einer Pandemie, in der die Risiken in der Bevölkerung ungleich verteilt sein können, kann die gemeinsame Grundlage für die Identifikation als oder mit einer Solidaritätsgruppe fragwürdig erscheinen.⁵² Was das *Commitment* anbelangt, lässt sich eine große Vielfalt an moralischen Paradigmen der intergenerationellen Solidarität unterscheiden. So kann beispielsweise die hierarchische Vorstellung einer Kette der *Generationen* asymmetrische und unidirektionale Beziehungen der Überlieferung, des Erbes und des In-der-Schuld-Stehens zwischen Vorfahren und Nachkommen nahelegen.⁵³ Demgegenüber bringt die moderne egalitäre Idee eines Generationenvertrags eher wechselseitige Rechte und Pflichten zwischen gleichberechtigten Parteien zur Geltung. Was schließlich die *Kosten* anbelangt, so ist in generationenübergreifenden Zusammenhängen auch mit einer fundamentalen Ungleichzeitigkeit zwischen dem Anspruch auf einen entsprechenden Beitrag und seiner Einlösung zu rechnen, einschließlich der Möglichkeit eines fortschreitenden ›Zuwachses‹ oder aber einer ›Abschreibung‹ von Kosten im Laufe der Zeit. In einigen Fällen mag der eigentliche Urheber eines solidarischen Akts nicht einmal mehr am Leben sein, während der Begünstigte vielleicht noch nicht einmal geboren ist.⁵⁴

Schließlich ist der Begriff der Solidarität auch eng mit einer anderen wichtigen moralischen Kategorie verbunden: der der Verantwortung. In der Tat können einige Verantwortlichkeiten als konkrete Ausprägungen und Artikulationen von Solidaritätsansprüchen verstanden werden. Wenn Solidarität im Wesentlichen eine Verpflichtung bedeutet, Kosten für andere zu übernehmen, dann kann diese Verpflichtung in Form einer Verantwortung ausgedrückt werden. Eine solche Solidarverant-

51 Abrams P.: The historical sociology of individuals: identity and the problem of generations. In: Ders. (Hg.): Historical sociology, Summerset 1982, 227–266.

52 Prainsack B., Buyx A.: Solidarity: reflections on an emerging concept in bioethics. <https://www.nuffieldbioethics.org/assets/pdfs/Solidarity-report.pdf>, 2011, aufgerufen am 17. April 2020.

53 Zirfas J.: Birth, progress, and appropriation: aging and generationality from the perspective of historical anthropology. In: Schweda M., Coors M., Bozarro C. (Hg.) Aging and human nature: perspectives from philosophical, theological, and historical anthropology, Cham 2020, 205–217.

54 Moody H.R., Achenbaum W.A.: Solidarity, sustainability, stewardship: ethics across generations. Interpretation 68(2014) H. 2, 150–158.

wortung kann etwa darin bestehen, einander zu helfen oder eine bestimmte Gruppe in einer Krisensituation zu unterstützen. Auch ›Verantwortung‹ ist moralphilosophisch betrachtet ein relationales Konzept, das eine Beziehung zwischen mehreren Größen impliziert.⁵⁵ In unserem Zusammenhang erscheinen insbesondere drei dieser *Relata* relevant, nämlich das Subjekt und das Objekt der Verantwortung sowie die zugrundeliegenden Standards: Jemand (das Verantwortungssubjekt) ist für etwas oder jemanden (das Verantwortungsobjekt) auf der Grundlage bestimmter Standards (*Normen*) verantwortlich. So ist beispielsweise eine Ärztin (Subjekt) für die Wiederherstellung und Förderung der Gesundheit ihrer Patientinnen und Patienten (Objekt) auf der Grundlage berufsethischer Grundsätze und gesetzlicher Vorschriften (Standards) verantwortlich. Darüber hinaus müssen auch die *zeitliche Ausrichtung der Verantwortung*, ihr *Zeithorizont* sowie die *Folgen* berücksichtigt werden. So kann sich Verantwortung auf eine Rechenschaftspflicht für mehr oder weniger weit in der Vergangenheit liegende Ereignisse oder aber auf die Zuständigkeit für mehr oder weniger weit in die Zukunft reichende Aufgaben und Entwicklungen beziehen. Es macht einen Unterschied, ob jemand retrospektiv für einen Autounfall verantwortlich gemacht wird, der sich vor einer Woche ereignet hat, oder prospektiv für die sichere Ankunft auf einem bevorstehenden Familienausflug. Schließlich sind Erfolg oder Versagen bei der Wahrnehmung einer Verantwortung in der Regel auch mit bestimmten *Konsequenzen* verbunden, sei es in Form von Belohnungen oder Sanktionen. Während beispielsweise einige Verantwortlichkeiten soziale Folgen wie moralische Billigung oder Missbilligung nach sich ziehen können, sind andere mit strikten rechtlich festgesetzten Konsequenzen wie einer Bestrafung verbunden.

Im Hinblick auf Beziehungen zwischen den Generationen kann und muss auch dieses allgemeine Konzept der Verantwortung wiederum näher spezifiziert werden. So wird im Kontext solidarischer Verantwortung zwischen Generationen die Unterscheidung zwischen intransitiver Solidarität innerhalb einer Gruppe und transitiver Solidarität gegenüber einer Gruppe zu einem ausgesprochen komplexen Thema. Im ersten Fall scheinen *Subjekt* und *Objekt* der Verantwortung letzten Endes zusammenzufallen: Die Mitglieder einer Gruppe sind als solche füreinander verantwortlich. Der zweite Fall hingegen erfordert eine eindeutige Definition der beiden *Relata* und wirft damit die schwierige Frage nach der Spezifizierung von Gruppen wie den ›Alten‹ und den ›Jungen‹ und ihren Beziehungen zueinander auf. Gerade wenn die Zuschreibung solidarischer Verantwortung weitreichende Konsequenzen haben kann, z. B. wenn es um Gesundheitsversorgung oder wirtschaftlichen Wohlstand geht, erscheint eine vage und unzulänglich begründete Vorstellung von ihrem Subjekt und Objekt kaum akzeptabel. Tatsächlich ist nicht einmal klar, ob Kollektive wie Generationen überhaupt geeignete Subjekte solidarischer Verantwortung

55 Schickanz S., Schweda M.: The diversity of responsibility: the value of explication and pluralization. *Med Stud* 3(2012) H. 3, 131–145.

darstellen können. Schließlich scheint die Übernahme von Verantwortung gewisse Merkmale von Personalität vorauszusetzen, wie z.B. Intentionalität und Selbstbestimmtheit. Es mag durchaus Formen kollektiver Autonomie und Handlungsfähigkeit geben, aber diese setzen aufseiten der betreffenden Kollektive ein gewisses Maß an interner Organisation voraus, z.B. einen definierten und institutionalisierten Kommunikationsfluss oder Entscheidungsprozess, und können daher nicht ohne Weiteres bei beliebigen Teilmengen der Bevölkerung wie ›den Jungen‹ oder ›den Alten‹ vorausgesetzt werden. Was das *Relatum* der *Standards* betrifft, so können die Bedeutung, die Implikationen und die praktische Reichweite der solidarischen Verantwortung zwischen den Generationen ebenfalls je nach zugrundeliegenden moralischen Paradigmen variieren. Wie sich bereits zeigte, betonen einige Paradigmen wie die traditionelle Idee einer *Kette der Generationen* eher unidirektionale solidarische Verantwortlichkeiten der Fürsorge, des Respekts oder der Dankbarkeit, während andere eher die reziproken solidarischen Verantwortlichkeiten der wechselseitigen Unterstützung zwischen Generationen betonen, wie z.B. die Vorstellung des Generationenvertrags. Darüber hinaus werden die Aspekte des *Zeitrahmens* und der *zeitlichen Ausrichtung* in intergenerationellen Kontexten besonders relevant, da intergenerationelle Beziehungen unweigerlich eine diachrone Dimension und damit eine Verschränkung prospektiver und retrospektiver Verantwortung einschließen, wie die Auseinandersetzung über intergenerationelle Verantwortung im Zeichen des Klimawandels zeigt.⁵⁶ Hier kann Verantwortung schließlich auf eine überaus langfristige moralische Bindung hinauslaufen, die weit in die Zukunft reicht.⁵⁷

4. Intergenerationelle Solidarität und Verantwortung im öffentlichen Diskurs – drei Fallbeispiele

Der umrissene Analyserahmen soll im Folgenden genutzt werden, um Rekurse auf intergenerationelle Solidarität und Verantwortung im öffentlichen Diskurs über die Corona-Krise exemplarisch aufzuschlüsseln. Diese Analyse zielt darauf ab, implizite konzeptuelle Zusammenhänge und zugrundeliegende moralische Prämissen aufzuzeigen. Dies stellt eine wesentliche Voraussetzung für die Diskussion über die Bedeutung und Legitimität solcher Appelle dar. Für die Analyse ziehen wir je ein Fallbeispiel aus der Europäischen Politik, der Zivilgesellschaft und dem Mediendiskurs heran. Die Auswahl der Fälle ist dabei in keiner Weise repräsentativ für die jeweiligen Bereiche. Es handelt sich vielmehr um ein theoretisches Sample, das die unterschiedlichen Verwendungen der beiden Konzepte und ihre jeweiligen konzeptu-

56 Page E.A.: *Climate change, justice and future generations*, Cheltenham 2006.

57 Jonas H.: *The imperative of responsibility: in search of an ethics for the technological age*, Chicago 1985.

ellen und moralischen Implikationen vorführen, aber auch jeweils weiterführende Fragen aufzeigen kann.

4.1 Schutz der Älteren als solidarischer Akt

Das erste Beispiel entstammt dem politischen Diskurs. Es handelt sich um eine Stellungnahme der Menschenrechtskommissarin des Europarates. Unter der Federführung des Europarates als internationaler Organisation werden völkerrechtlich verbindliche zwischenstaatliche Abkommen geschlossen, wie zum Beispiel die Europäische Menschenrechtskonvention. Die Erklärungen des Europarates sind daher sowohl für die nationale als auch für die supranationale Politikgestaltung und Rechtsetzung in Europa von großer Bedeutung. Die Erklärung der Kommissarin zur Pandemie wurde am 20. März 2020 unter der Überschrift »Older persons need more support than ever in the age of the COVID-19 pandemic« veröffentlicht⁵⁸. Die erste Nennung von ›Solidarität‹ in der kurzen Erklärung ist eher unspezifisch und eng mit dem Gedanken der Verantwortung verbunden (»everyone must do their part and uphold solidarity to this end«). Doch dann wird eine Präzisierung vorgenommen und der Text spricht ganz explizit von »inter-generational solidarity«:

»All our societies must find novel ways of boosting inter-generational solidarity and social contact with older persons without putting them at risk of infection. I am heartened by many local initiatives and actions by national NGOs to promote such innovative forms of social engagement. For example, the Flemish Older Persons Council has been raising awareness about the situation of older persons and encouraging novel actions, such as virtual meetings or daily telephone calls by volunteers. An initiative in Cornwall, UK, aims at facilitating postcards addressed to older neighbours to offer help to those in self-isolation. While civil society often reacts rapidly and generously in this domain, there is a clear role for European governments to actively promote this type of initiatives and intergenerational responsibility in general.«

Gleich im ersten Satz wird somit die Notwendigkeit betont, die Solidarität zwischen den Generationen zu stärken und neue Wege zu finden, um den Kontakt zwischen den Generationen weiter aufrecht zu erhalten. Dies können sowohl neue technologische Ansätze wie Onlinemeetings als auch Formen sozialen Engagements wie die genannten Postkartenaufrufe sein. Die Erklärung geht also von bereits bestehenden sozialen Bindungen aus, unterstreicht aber, dass zu deren Erhalt und Förderung in der Ausnahmesituation der Pandemie neue, besondere Methoden und Strategien erforderlich werden (»novel ways«, »innovative forms«, »novel actions«). In diesem

58 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/older-persons-need-more-support-than-ever-in-the-age-of-the-covid-19-pandemic>, aufgerufen am 27. Oktober 2023.

Zusammenhang unterstreicht die Erklärung die Bedeutung von Nähe, persönlichen Beziehungen, »social contact« (der als Gegenstück zu Isolation und *social distancing* gelesen werden kann) und emotionalen Reaktionen (»feel heartened«). Im Unterschied zu einem Verständnis des Sozialgefüges im Sinne institutioneller Strukturen und rechtlicher Regelungen (Gesellschaft) soll diese Art von Verbundenheit als soziales Band spürbar sein (Gemeinschaft).

In diesem Verständnis kann Solidarität nicht gleichsam von oben herab durch staatliche Regierungen geschaffen oder verordnet werden. Sie wächst vielmehr spontan »von unten« aus der Gemeinschaft heraus (»local initiatives«, »national NGO's«, »neighbours«, »civil society«). Die spürbare Verbundenheit der Mitglieder einer Gemeinschaft kann als Identifikationsgrundlage der Solidaritätsgruppe verstanden werden und wird so zur Quelle der Solidarität. Der Appell an die europäischen Regierungen, solidarische Initiativen zu fördern, verweist damit auch auf die zivilgesellschaftlichen Voraussetzungen der Entwicklung von Solidarität und wirft darüber hinaus die Frage nach dem Verhältnis von Solidarität und anderen moralischen oder rechtlichen Verpflichtungen in Krisenzeiten auf. Politik kann zwar an Solidarität appellieren, wenn sie bestimmte rechtliche Verpflichtungen institutionalisiert (wie im Fall der gesetzlichen Krankenversicherung oder einer Solidaritätssteuer), aber die der Solidarität zugrundeliegenden emotionalen und motivationalen Kräfte nicht anordnen.

Mit dem oben umrissenen Modell der Solidarität und Verantwortung lässt sich die innere Struktur und inhaltliche Ausrichtung der im Text angesprochenen solidarischen Verantwortung zwischen den Generationen näher aufschlüsseln. So ist das *Objekt* der solidarischen Verantwortung hier offenkundig die Gruppe der älteren Menschen. Ihre Darstellung als verletzlich und abhängig (»offer help«) zieht sich auch durch den gesamten weiteren Text (»necessary to protect residents«, »helping those in a vulnerable situation«, »without putting them at risk of infection«). Schon in der Überschrift wird die Gruppe der Älteren als bedürftig dargestellt: Sie benötigen mehr Unterstützung als je zuvor. Damit wird den Alten allgemein ein besonderer Status zugeschrieben – auch schon vor der Pandemie. Zugleich kommen weder die Unterschiede zwischen älteren Menschen noch ihre eigenen Ressourcen und Fähigkeiten in den Blick.

Im Unterschied dazu bleibt das *Subjekt* der solidarischen Verantwortung in der Erklärung eigentümlich unspezifisch. Benannt wird nicht eine bestimmte Gruppe, sondern vielmehr eine allgemeine Öffentlichkeit, sozusagen die »normale« Bevölkerung (»civil society«). Implizit scheint dies darauf hinzudeuten, dass ältere Menschen nicht wirklich als Teil der Zivilgesellschaft angesehen werden, oder zumindest als ein irgendwie besonderer, abweichender Teil. Tatsächlich ist die einzige andere Gruppe, die der Text im Zusammenhang mit älteren Menschen erwähnt, die der Pflegekräfte (»it also puts both residents and care staff at increased risk of infection«). Insgesamt entsteht durch die gesamte Rhetorik der Verlautbarung das

Bild eines asymmetrischen Verhältnisses: Die angesprochenen zivilgesellschaftlichen Akteure agieren vom überlegenen Standpunkt einer stärkeren Position (»generously«).

Die *zeitliche Ausrichtung*, die im Statement zum Ausdruck kommt, ist eher prospektiv, der Zeithorizont aber so eng gesetzt (»rapidly«), dass die unmittelbare Gegenwart den Bezugspunkt bildet. Dementsprechend kann der zeitliche Rahmen als die akute momentane Krisen- und Notsituation gesehen werden (»triage«, »crisis situation«, »danger«). Die Aufgaben staatlicher und regierungsamtlicher Akteure werden dagegen eher in einer längerfristigen Perspektive angeführt (»reforms«, »after the current health crisis«). Solidarität erweist sich somit als eine Kategorie für den »moralischen Ausnahmezustand«, die für unmittelbare (Re-)Aktionen auf eine Krise geeignet ist, aber langfristig mit anderen, stabileren und dauerhafteren moralischen und rechtlichen Regelungen kombiniert werden, in diese eingebettet sein oder zu ihnen hinführen muss.

Schließlich können auch die zugrundeliegende *Norm* sowie die *normprüfende Instanz* näher bestimmt werden. Hier kommen supererogatorische Vorstellungen zum Tragen, die nicht zwingend in der Idee der christlichen Nächstenliebe, aber doch in einem allgemeinen humanitären Ethos der Menschenwürde und Empathie verwurzelt sind. So erscheint es grausam und unmenschlich, sich gegen ältere Menschen zu wenden, wie auch an anderen Stellen des Textes deutlich wird (»I was shocked, for instance, to see hashtags which are cruel and dehumanizing to older people trending on Twitter«). Insgesamt wird die Hilfe der Zivilgesellschaft so nicht als Erfüllung eines berechtigten Anspruchs, eines einklagbaren Rechts oder einer moralischen oder rechtlichen Verpflichtung dargestellt, sondern als großzügiger, wohlätiger Akt. Im Gegensatz dazu werden staatliche Akteure eher mit politischen Verantwortlichkeiten und rechtlichen Verpflichtungen in Verbindung gebracht (»clear role«; und weiter unten im Text: »must pursue«, »European states' duty«, »failings of large, institutional settings«). Diese werden aus normativen Größen abgeleitet, die die Autorin des Textes als durch die Pandemie besonders bedroht ansieht: das Recht auf Gesundheitsversorgung sowie andere Menschenrechte älterer Menschen. Ihre Bewahrung stellt das eigentliche Ziel der Mobilisierung der Solidarität zwischen den Generationen dar.

Während die Idee der intergenerationellen Solidarität oft mit der Vorstellung einer symmetrischen und reziproken Beziehung verbunden ist, scheint die Erklärung des Rates eine solche wechselseitige Solidarität nicht vorzusehen. Stattdessen wird eine unidirektionale und asymmetrische Beziehung in Anschlag gebracht. Der Text nimmt eine klare Aufteilung der Gemeinschaft in ein starkes Subjekt und ein schwaches Objekt der solidarischen Verantwortung vor. Darüber hinaus wird die Solidarität der Zivilgesellschaft im Unterschied zu den langfristigen Aufgaben der staatlichen Akteure, die in Begriffen von Pflicht und Schuldigkeit formuliert sind, nur in Ausnahmefällen (Krisen) aufgerufen und erscheint als eine spontane und freiwillige

lige Anstrengung. Sie gleicht einer Ressource, die die Politik nicht aus sich heraus (wieder-)herstellen, sondern nur zu schützen oder zu kultivieren versuchen kann. Auf diese Weise versucht die Erklärung, ein gewisses Maß an soziomoralischer Verbindlichkeit und Verantwortung zu beschwören, das über formalisierte Regelungen hinausgeht.

4.2 Große Herausforderungen – große Solidarität

Wie sich gezeigt hat, setzen politische Akteure in puncto Solidarität und Verantwortung zwischen den Generationen große Hoffnungen in die Zivilgesellschaft. Als Fallbeispiel aus dem zivilgesellschaftlichen Diskurs dient uns eine Erklärung der AGE Platform Europe, die am 4. April 2020 unter dem Titel »COVID-19: With great challenge must come great solidarity« veröffentlicht wurde.⁵⁹ Die AGE Platform Europe ist ein Netzwerk von europäischen Non-Profit-Organisationen. Sie beschreibt sich selbst als »Plattform, die die Interessen der 200 Millionen Bürger über 50 in der Europäischen Union zum Ausdruck bringen und unterstützen [...] und Aufmerksamkeit für ihre Belange schaffen soll.«⁶⁰ Der Text beginnt mit der Aussage, die globale Herausforderung von COVID-19 erfordere

»strong action [...] to protect the whole population and leave no one behind. [...] [P]ublic authorities are taking a great variety of measures [...] to provide necessary care and support to those who need it most. Our response to COVID-19 pose unique threats to the equal enjoyment of human rights by older persons. [...] *We must stand in solidarity against COVID-19.* The ongoing crisis cannot be tackled unless we all do our part and stand in unity against the pandemic.«

und weiter heißt es:

»Action to support those who are in vulnerable situations and solidarity are equally essential components of our collective response. More than ever, this pandemic demonstrates the need for societal cohesion, solidarity between and within generations and community resilience. [...] *COVID-19 is not an older persons' disease. We are all vulnerable and interdependent during the pandemic.* [...] On many occasions since the beginning of the crisis, older persons have been pictured as frail, worthless, or a burden to society. [...] *Older persons are valuable members of our societies.* They contribute in numerous ways to their families and their communities.«

59 <https://www.age-platform.eu/special-briefing/covid-19-great-challenge-must-come-great-solidarity>, aufgerufen am 27. Oktober 2023.

60 <https://www.age-platform.eu/about-age>, aufgerufen am 27. Februar 2021 [eigene Übersetzung].

Neben dem Staat, zivilgesellschaftlichen Akteuren oder dem Individuum (»everyone«) wird in der AGE-Stellungnahme immer wieder ein universelles Wir angesprochen. Wie im ersten Beispiel bleibt auch hier das *Subjekt* der solidarischen Verantwortung allerdings weitgehend unbestimmt. Es scheint jedoch klar zu sein, dass sich dieses Wir nicht auf eine bestimmte Gruppe von Menschen (z.B. die Jüngeren) bezieht, sondern auf eine Art allgemeine, umfassende Gemeinschaft. Hinsichtlich der Frage, ob ältere Menschen mit zu diesem Wir gehören oder nicht, scheint der Artikel allerdings ambivalent zu sein und schwankt zwischen verschiedenen Positionen. Auf den ersten Blick scheinen die Älteren als eine besondere Gruppe (»those who need it most«) gesehen zu werden. In dieser Hinsicht scheinen sie nicht in das universelle Wir einbezogen zu werden, sondern das Gegenüber einer Interaktion, das *Objekt* solidarischer Verantwortung zu bilden. Gleichzeitig wird jedoch die Darstellung älterer Menschen als gebrechlich und hilfsbedürftig als eine Form von Altersdiskriminierung kritisiert, die den Eindruck erwecken kann, dass sie eine »burden to society« darstellen. Im Vergleich zu den »vulnerablen Älteren« im ersten Beispiel wird der Beitrag älterer Menschen hervorgehoben, nicht nur in der Vergangenheit, sondern auch in der aktuellen Krise. Sie seien nach wie vor »valuable members of our societies«. Vor diesem Hintergrund lässt sich der Status der Gruppe der älteren Menschen am besten als »Mitbürgerinnen und Mitbürger höheren Alters« beschreiben.

Im Gegensatz zum ersten Beispiel wird Solidarität hier also eher im Sinne einer reziproken Beziehung und wechselseitigen Zusammenarbeit verstanden. Die *zeitliche Richtung* und der *zeitliche Rahmen* verweisen auch auf die Idee einer Reziprozität der Solidarität über die Zeit hinweg. Im Vergleich zum Text des Europarates betont das AGE-Statement eher die Gemeinsamkeiten als die Unterschiede. Mit Verweis auf die Weltgesundheitsorganisation wird betont, dass COVID-19 eben keine altersspezifische Krankheit sei. Das vermeintlich besondere Interesse der Älteren entpuppt sich somit als Interesse aller, das auch die Jüngeren einschließt und ihnen folglich eine höhere Identifikation mit den Alten ermöglicht. Das Ziel ist es, »to protect the whole population and leave no one behind«. Eine mögliche Spaltung der Gesellschaft wird als gefährliche Begleiterscheinung der Pandemie angesehen. Durch den Verweis auf Verletzlichkeit als anthropologische Konstante sowie auf ihren Beitrag zur Gesellschaft werden ältere Menschen als Teil des umfassenden Wir begriffen.

Wie das erste Beispiel beruht auch die Stellungnahme von AGE auf der Vorstellung einer bereits bestehenden Gemeinschaft, die alle Generationen umfasst. Allerdings geht der Text von einer eher reziproken, symmetrischen Beziehung zwischen den Mitgliedern dieser Gemeinschaft aus. So tritt eine umfassendere Solidaritätsgruppe in den Vordergrund. Daher ist es in diesem Text auch nicht notwendig, neue Formen der Unterstützung und des Zusammenhalts zu beschwören. Vielmehr kann an die bereits bestehenden erinnert werden (»More than ever, this pandemic

demonstrates the need for societal cohesion, solidarity between and within generations and community resilience«). Entsprechend zeichnet sich die zugrundeliegende *Norm* einer solidarischen Verantwortung über die Generationen hinweg ab: Es handelt sich um das egalitaristische Ideal einer unveräußerlichen Menschenwürde und universeller Menschenrechte, die für jeden einzelnen Menschen durchgesetzt werden müssen. Dieses Ideal scheint verbunden mit Vorstellungen von Verletzlichkeit und wechselseitiger Abhängigkeit als anthropologischen Grundbedingungen.

Während die Stellungnahme des Europarats intergenerationale Solidarität im Sinne einer großzügigen Unterstützung der Schwachen durch die Starken versteht (transitiv, asymmetrisch), beschreibt AGE die Solidarität also im Sinne eines gemeinschaftlichen Kampfes (intransitiv, symmetrisch) gegen einen gemeinsamen Feind (»We must stand in solidarity against COVID-19«). Für AGE ist Solidarität nicht nur ein vollkommen freiwilliger (wenn auch nobler) Akt, sondern Teil eines moralischen Vertrags. Die Hilfe ist mehr Ausdruck einer moralischen Verantwortung als ein Akt der Nächstenliebe und des Wohlwollens: »*We also all have a responsibility to be more present to the people around us, our families, our neighbours and everyone in our community*«. Solidarische Verantwortung ist hier keine abstrakte Bezugsgröße, sondern ein Handlungsgrundsatz, der durch lokale und soziale Nähe gefördert wird. So wird Solidarität eher in einer politischen Tradition als Prinzip des sozialen Kampfes verstanden, das den Zusammenhalt stärkt. Sie schafft durch den gemeinsamen Feind eine Gemeinschaft von Gleichen, die durch das kollektive Eintreten für dieselben vitalen Bedürfnisse und Interessen geeint sind.

4.3 Solidarität durch Eigenverantwortung

Das dritte Beispiel stammt aus der Neuen Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ). Die NZZ ist eine Schweizer Tageszeitung mit einer großen Leserschaft im deutschsprachigen Raum. Sie veröffentlicht auch regelmäßig Übersetzungen fremdsprachiger Artikel und Stellungnahmen führender intellektueller Persönlichkeiten, die zur Diskussion über Themen von gesamteuropäischer Tragweite beitragen. Der Artikel »Die Senioren können sich eigenverantwortlich vor dem Virus schützen: Solidarität mit den Jungen heisst, sich für eine Rückkehr zur Normalität einzusetzen«⁶¹ wurde am 17. April 2020 veröffentlicht und ist in Form eines Kommentars geschrieben. Zunächst sollen wieder einige Schlüsselsätze und Passagen veranschaulichen, wie sich die Argumentation des Artikels entfaltet:

»Die Kosten der Corona-Krise bezahlen vor allem die Jüngeren. Sie sollen wieder frei arbeiten und wirtschaften können. [...] In der Lockdown-Strategie stellt der

61 <https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/corona-krise-die-senioren-koennen-sich-selber-schuetzen-l-d.1552257>, abgerufen am 27. Oktober 2023.

Schutz der Alten ein zentrales Argument dar. Gleichzeitig treffen die Konsequenzen der Strategie vor allem die unter 65-Jährigen. Deshalb haben einige Seniorinnen und Senioren, unter ihnen die Autoren dieses Textes, eine Petition lanciert, die für eine rasche Freigabe aller Aktivitäten plädiert [...] Menschen über 65 gehören nach Auffassung der Epidemiologen zu den mehrheitlich Gefährdeten, nicht so sehr zu den Gefährdern. Daher sollten sie sich durch grössere Vorsicht und Zurückhaltung, also durch Selbstverantwortung, schützen und sich dagegenstemmen, dass man ihretwegen alles herunterfährt. [...] Ihr Ziel [der Petition] ist die rasche und reibungslose Rückkehr zur Normalität. Die Initianten sind nämlich besorgt, dass der nicht nur wirtschaftlich extrem teure Ausnahmezustand unnötig verlängert wird.«

Schon die Überschrift des Kommentars scheint einen vielversprechenden Einstieg in die Analyse zu bieten. Erstens wird darin im Vergleich zu den beiden vorangegangenen Texten die Richtung der Solidarität umgekehrt: Die Alten werden aufgefordert, sich mit den Jungen zu solidarisieren. Indem der Artikel die Älteren als eine Gruppe darstellt, die für sich selbst Verantwortung übernehmen kann, scheint er auch dem negativen Bild vom Alter als einem verletzbaren, bedürftigen und abhängigen Zustand zu widersprechen. In der Idee der Eigenverantwortung sind die Entitäten des *Subjekts* und des *Objekts* der Verantwortung identisch. Schließlich spricht der Titel von einer Rückkehr zur Normalität. Ungeachtet des konservativen Untertons ist die *zeitliche Richtung* prospektiv: Alte, vertraute Verhältnisse sollen wiederhergestellt, der Krisenmodus überwunden werden (»Normalität« vs. »Notfall«). Der zeitliche Rahmen ist das Hier und Jetzt (»rasche und reibungslose Rückkehr«).

So scheint der Titel auf den ersten Blick ein moralisches Paradigma der Solidarität und Verantwortung zu beschwören, das von Ideen der Selbstüberschreitung und Generativität geprägt ist, der dem späteren Erwachsenenalter zugeschriebenen Sorge um künftige Generationen und über das eigene Leben hinausreichenden Belange.⁶² Ein solcher Text könnte sich mit der (Neu-)Verhandlung von Generationenbeziehungen innerhalb von Familien in der COVID-19-Krise befassen, z.B. damit, wie Großeltern ihre eigenen Kinder entlasten können, die in der Krise mit Homeoffice, Homeschooling und finanziellen Einbußen zu kämpfen haben. Auch könnten Vorschläge formuliert werden, dass ältere Menschen sich zurückziehen und isolieren, damit Kindergartenkinder leichter ihre Freundinnen und Freunde treffen und Schulkinder wieder Zugang zur Bildung haben können.

Allerdings schlägt der Text argumentativ eine andere Richtung ein. Im zweiten Satz stellen die Autoren die Kernbotschaft ihrer Petition vor: die freie Entfaltung wirtschaftlicher Interessen (*arbeiten und wirtschaften*) und die Rückgewinnung von Freiheit und Handlungsfähigkeit der jungen Generationen. Bei der Kritik an

62 Kotre J.N.: *Outliving the self: how we live on in future generations*, New York 1996.

Lockdownmaßnahmen beziehen sie sich auf die »massiven Eingriffe in das Wirtschafts- und Gesellschaftsleben«, nicht aber auf Interventionen in das Familienleben, das Bildungssystem oder das individuelle Wohlergehen. Allein die Bezeichnung der »unter 65-Jährigen« ist Ausdruck einer ökonomischen Betrachtungsweise. Indem die Biografie nach dem Zeitpunkt des Ausscheidens aus dem Erwerbsleben eingeteilt wird, wird gleichzeitig ein Bild der Älteren als unproduktiv nahegelegt. Die Behauptung, dass die negativen Folgen der Schließung vor allem die jüngere Generation betreffen, steht im Kontrast zu den vorangegangenen Beispielen, die sich auf die Beeinträchtigungen der Gesundheit und des Wohlbefindens älterer Menschen konzentrierten. Nicht nur, dass diese hier relativiert werden (als unwichtig oder von den Senioren bereitwillig akzeptiert). Es wird allgemein davon ausgegangen, dass die Älteren unrechtmäßige Profiteure der Abriegelung und die Jungen die eigentlichen Leidtragenden sind.

Schließlich spricht der Artikel von »zunehmend untragbaren und unbezahlbaren Zwangsregimen«, die durch »Zwangssolidarität« geschaffen würden, und stellt diese den »Werten der Freiheit und der Selbstverantwortung« gegenüber, die »für jede Gemeinschaft überlebenswichtige Beachtung« verdienen. Mehr als das Ideal der Generativität kommen hier also (markt-)liberale Normen der individuellen (unternehmerischen) Freiheit und Eigenverantwortung zum Ausdruck. Die Stellungnahme wendet sich entschieden gegen staatliche Regulierung, die im Sinne von Zwängen und Verboten interpretiert wird. Stattdessen wird älteren Menschen zugetraut, sich in der Krise selbst zu versorgen, indem sie individuelle Tugenden wie »Vorsicht« und »Zurückhaltung« an den Tag legen. Es käme einer Diskriminierung gleich, ihnen den Status verantwortungsbewusster moralische Akteure und Bürgerinnen bzw. Bürger abzuspochen. Auch wer von Risiken betroffen ist, muss (und kann) diese Risiken und die möglicherweise resultierenden negativen Folgen für die eigene Gesundheit und das eigene Leben eigenverantwortlich tragen. Im Gegensatz zum ersten Beispiel, in dem den »vulnerablen Älteren« generell die Kompetenz abgesprochen wurde, sich der Pandemie allein zu stellen, scheint es für die »kompetenten und pflichtbewussten, aber auch engagierten Alten« eine Pflicht zu sein, einen eigenverantwortlichen Beitrag zu leisten. Das sich hier abzeichnende (markt-)liberale moralische Paradigma identifiziert also die individuelle Eigenverantwortung als Kern der intergenerationellen Solidarität. Das Bemühen, für sich selbst zu sorgen, um den Jungen nicht zur Last zu fallen und ihrer Freiheit und ihrem künftigen wirtschaftlichen Wohlergehen nicht im Wege zu stehen, wird als ultimative Manifestation der Solidarität und Verantwortung zwischen den Generationen beschrieben.

Indem der NZZ-Artikel zur Solidarität mit »den Jungen« aufruft, kehrt er die in den beiden vorangegangenen Beispielen dargestellte Generationenkonstellation um. Er versteht die Solidarität zwischen den Generationen weder als solidarische Unterstützung der Schwachen wie die Erklärung des Europarates noch als Teil

eines verbindlichen moralischen Generationenvertrags wie die Stellungnahme der AGE. Vielmehr entfaltet er eine (markt-)liberale Idee von Solidarität. Der Europarat spricht von Solidarität als einem freiwilligen Akt großzügiger Hilfe für die Schwachen. Der NZZ-Artikel hingegen, der ebenfalls die Freiwilligkeit der Solidarität betont (»Solidarität, die nicht freiwillig ist, ist keine Solidarität«), interpretiert den Versuch, nicht zur Belastung für Jüngere zu werden, als Ausdruck der intergenerationellen Solidarität. Während in der Stellungnahme von AGE Solidarität als symmetrisches Konzept in dem Sinne verstanden wird, dass jede Generation zu einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt ihren Beitrag leistet, ist der Solidaritätsbegriff des NZZ-Artikels insofern symmetrisch, als er die Idee freier und gleichberechtigter Individuen in den Mittelpunkt stellt, die in der Lage sind, für sich selbst zu entscheiden und Verantwortung zu übernehmen – auch wenn dies bedeutet, (mehr) Risiken einzugehen.

5. Diskussion und Ausblick: Zusammenhalt der Generationen?

Die Begriffe der Solidarität und Verantwortung zwischen den Generationen scheinen in den Diskursen über geeignete Maßnahmen zur Bekämpfung der COVID-19-Pandemie allgegenwärtig zu sein. Sie bilden zentrale Bezugspunkte in politischen Erklärungen, zivilgesellschaftlichen Debatten und öffentlichen Mediendiskursen. Die exemplarische Analyse der drei ausgewählten Fälle macht jedoch deutlich, dass es erhebliche Unterschiede in der Verwendung und den normativen Implikationen dieser Konzepte geben kann.

In den ersten beiden Beispielen lässt sich in Bezug auf die Gruppenkonstellation unterscheiden zwischen einer Konzeption von Solidarität *innerhalb* einer Gruppe und der einer Solidarität *gegenüber* einer Gruppe. Während im AGE-Beispiel vor allem von einer transgenerationalen Gemeinschaft die Rede ist, in der Subjekt und Objekt der solidarischen Verantwortung letztlich zusammenfallen, geht es in der Erklärung des Europarats eher um zwei unterschiedliche Gruppen, nämlich die Jungen und die Alten. Bei näherer Betrachtung zeigen sich hier zwei unterschiedliche moralische Paradigmen der Solidarität: Auf der einen Seite finden wir die Vorstellung einer allumfassenden Solidarität über alle Altersgruppen und Generationen hinweg, die auf einer gemeinsamen menschlichen Verletzlichkeit und einer allgemeinen Bedrohung der Gesundheit und des Wohlergehens aller beruht. Auf der anderen Seite gibt es eine eher asymmetrische und unidirektionale Beziehung zwischen einer überlegenen Gruppe, die die Schwachen und Vulnerablen aus Mitgefühl und Fürsorge unterstützt. Beide Paradigmen haben sowohl unterschiedliche moralische Implikationen als auch je eigene Schwierigkeiten. Während das Verständnis von Solidarität zwischen den Generationen als Solidarität *innerhalb einer Gruppe* Fragen nach moralisch relevanten Unterschieden zwischen den Mitgliedern dieser

imaginierten allumfassenden und gleichberechtigten Solidaritätsgruppe aufwirft, könnte die Vorstellung von Solidarität *gegenüber einer anderen* Gruppe zur Reproduktion von altersbezogenen Stereotypen, Diskriminierung und *Othering* der Älteren führen.

Im dritten Beispiel werden ältere Menschen, das Alter und die Beziehungen zwischen den Generationen auf grundsätzlich andere Weise dargestellt. Obwohl auch die Autoren des NZZ-Artikels akzeptieren, dass ältere Menschen in Bezug auf COVID-19 ein besonderes Risiko tragen, ziehen sie daraus ganz andere Schlussfolgerungen in Bezug auf intergenerationelle Solidarität und Verantwortung. Die Zugehörigkeit zu einer Risikogruppe bedeutet für sie, dass man mehr Verantwortung übernehmen muss, um der Gesellschaft nicht zur Last zu fallen. In diesem Beispiel wird intergenerationelle Solidarität also nicht als interner Zusammenhalt einer Gesamtgruppe oder als asymmetrische Beziehung einer überlegenen Gruppe zu einer anderen, schwächeren Gruppe konzipiert, sondern als Verantwortung einer schwachen, aber engagierten und kompetenten Gruppe gegenüber dem Rest der Gesellschaft. Dieses moralische Paradigma betont die Eigenverantwortung der Einzelnen, während jegliche staatliche Intervention oder Rücksichtnahme als Hindernis für echte Solidarität gewertet wird. Natürlich kann auch dieses Konzept problematisiert werden, da Solidarität hier Gefahr läuft, für eine einseitige Verantwortungszuschreibung an ältere Menschen instrumentalisiert zu werden.⁶³

Insgesamt verdeutlichen die drei Beispiele die Bandbreite der Sichtweisen der vermeintlich homogenen Gruppe der Älteren und ihres Stellenwerts im moralischen Gefüge der Gesellschaft. Vor der Pandemie hatten sich die *Fridays for Future*-Proteste vor allem auf die vermeintlich ›ignoranten, besserwisserischen Alten‹ und ihren angeblich egoistischen Lebensstil konzentriert. Während ähnliche altersfeindliche Stereotype nach wie vor bestehen,⁶⁴ ist das Bild im Zuge von COVID-19 vielfältiger, komplizierter und ambivalenter geworden. In der Anfangsphase der Coronapandemie wurde die diskursive Bühne von den ›vulnerablen Älteren‹ beherrscht, die der Hilfe der ›normalen‹ Bevölkerung bedürfen. Ein solches Bild neigt dazu, neue Formen eines »mitfühlenden Ageismus« zu fördern.⁶⁵ Mit zunehmender Dauer der Pandemie und der politischen Maßnahmen zu ihrer Bekämpfung und Kontrolle wurden diskursiv auch die gleichberechtigten ›Mitbürger höheren Alters‹ und

63 Schweda M., Pfaller L.: Responsibilization of aging? An ethical analysis of the moral economy of prevention. In: Leibing A., Schickanz S. (Hg.): Preventing old age and decline? Critical observations on aging and dementia, Oxford und New York 2020, 192–213.

64 Meisner B.A.: Are you ok, Boomer? Intensification of ageism and intergenerational tensions on social media Amid COVID-19. *Leis Sci* (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2020.1773983>.

65 Vervaecke D., Meisner B.A.: Caremongering and assumptions of need: the spread of compassionate ageism during COVID-19. *Gerontologist* (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnaa131>.

die ›kompetenten, pflichtbewussten und engagierten Alten‹ angesprochen, was Anlass zur Sorge hinsichtlich einer möglicherweise problematischen »Responsibilisierung« des Alters gab.⁶⁶ Die weitere Forschung wird zeigen müssen, wie sich diese Bilder und die entsprechenden Appelle an intergenerationale Solidarität und Verantwortung auch vor dem Hintergrund weiterer Krisen entwickeln oder durch andere ersetzt werden.⁶⁷

Darüber hinaus weisen diese Überlegungen auf einen weiteren wichtigen Aspekt hin, der bei der Analyse zeitgenössischer Diskurse über intergenerationale Solidarität und Verantwortung berücksichtigt werden muss: die jeweilige Sprecherposition und die den Stellungnahmen zugrundeliegenden Motive und Interessen. So müssen die Äußerungen im Kontext des institutionellen Hintergrunds ihrer Autorinnen und Autoren sowie ihrer Verortung im Gesamtdiskurs betrachtet werden. Die Erklärung des Europarates drückt seinen Einsatz für den Schutz der Menschenrechte aus. AGE als Netzwerk für NGOs, die sich für die Interessen älterer Menschen einsetzen, zielt darauf ab, Exklusion durch Ausgleich sozialer Ungleichheiten und Verweis auf universelle Menschenrechte und Vulnerabilität als anthropologische Konstante zu überwinden. Im Gegensatz dazu scheint das dritte Beispiel eher durch eine marktliberale Sicht geprägt zu sein, vielleicht nicht zuletzt aufgrund der institutionellen Zugehörigkeit der Autoren als ehemalige Leiter neoliberaler *Think Tanks* und Interessenvertreter von Unternehmen. Die Beispiele zeigen demnach auch die Notwendigkeit, machtkritische Überlegungen in eine Analyse intergenerationaler Solidarität und Verantwortung einzubeziehen. So bedarf es bestimmter Ressourcen, um einen öffentlichkeitswirksamen Aufruf zur Solidarität zu starten. Ebenso müssen die im Diskurs artikulierten Vorstellungen und moralischen Paradigmen von intergenerationaler Solidarität und Verantwortung mit den politischen und wirtschaftlichen Standpunkten und Interessen ihrer Vertreterinnen und Vertreter in Bezug gesetzt werden. Dazu gehört letztlich auch die Berücksichtigung nationaler Besonderheiten und Unterschiede in den jeweiligen Traditionen sozialetischen Denkens und Handelns, den politischen Wohlfahrtsregimen und der öffentlichen Deliberation. In einer solch differenzierten machtkritischen Perspektive können auch zugrundeliegende Interessen und Motivationen sowie die Frage nach der Authentizität von Appellen an Solidarität und Verantwortung in den Blick genommen werden.⁶⁸

66 Graefe S., Haubner T., van Dyk S.: »Was schulden uns die Alten?« Isolierung, Responsibilisierung und (De-)Aktivierung in der Corona-Krise. *Leviathan* 48(2020) H. 3, 407–432.

67 Morrow-Howell N., Gonzales E.: Recovering from coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): resisting ageism and recommitting to a productive aging perspective. *Public Policy Aging Rep* 30 (2020) H. 4, 133–137.

68 Zu ersten Überlegungen in einer solchen Perspektive vgl. Ellerich-Groppe N.: Zwischen neuer Solidarität und Entsolidarisierung – Der Sozialstaat angesichts des digitalen Wandels. *Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41358-021-00300-4>.

Schließlich können zugrundeliegende Interessen und Motivationen nicht nur in ihrer Eigenlogik rekonstruiert, sondern auch moralphilosophisch im Hinblick auf ihre Gültigkeit und Akzeptabilität bewertet werden. Der hier vorgestellte Ansatz einer deskriptiv-ethischen Diskursanalyse zielt darauf ab, einen ersten Schritt in diese Richtung zu gehen: Erst wenn implizite konzeptuelle Annahmen und moralische Prämissen expliziert werden, kann eine offene und transparente Diskussion der normativen Bedeutung, Legitimität und Tragfähigkeit von Appellen an intergenerationelle Solidarität und Verantwortung stattfinden. Dabei beleuchtet die Analyse auch das umfassende moralische Gefüge intergenerationaler Beziehungen, das nicht auf Solidarität allein reduziert werden kann. Solidarität und solidarische Verantwortung können den Zusammenhalt zwischen den Generationen stärken, aber sie können andere, grundlegendere und gewichtigere moralische und rechtliche Verpflichtungen wie etwa das Menschenrecht auf angemessene Gesundheitsversorgung im Alter nicht relativieren oder ersetzen. So ist die Frage, ob besonders gefährdete Menschen mit Gütern und Hilfsleistungen versorgt werden sollten, die für ihr Überleben in einer Pandemie unerlässlich sind, nicht nur eine Frage der Solidarität, sondern vor allem ein elementares Gebot der Menschlichkeit und der sozialen Gerechtigkeit. In diesem Sinne ist die Corona-Krise auch als eine Chance zu verstehen: Indem sie alte Routinen und vermeintliche Gewissheiten in Frage stellt, zwingt sie uns, die wechselseitigen Verpflichtungen und Verantwortlichkeiten zwischen den Generationen, die die grundlegende *Moral Economy* unserer spätmodernen, alternden Gesellschaften ausmachen, kritisch zu prüfen und gegebenenfalls neu zu verhandeln.

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Solidarität – eine medizinethische Sicht¹

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Mit dem Begriff der »Solidarität« verbinden wir etwas Tugendhaftes oder ein gutes Verhalten gegenüber anderen. Besonders im vergangenen Jahr wurde der Begriff häufig bemüht. Mit Ausbruch der Pandemie wurde er häufiger auf Google gesucht², aber auch Möglichkeiten, Hilfestellungen zu gewähren, verzeichneten eine erhöhte Suchabfrage im Vergleich zu Themen der vorangegangenen Jahre.³

Einführend soll die Komplexität des Begriffs der Solidarität erörtert und Solidarität von mir als ein freiwilliger, über die reine moralische Pflicht des »Helfens« hinausgehender Appell verstanden werden. Im weiteren Diskurs werde ich versuchen, den Begriff der Solidarität bzw. eine eventuelle »Verpflichtung zu solidarischem Verhalten« aus einer persönlichen, medizinischen Sicht einzuordnen. Dazu dienen Beispiele der aktuellen Coronapandemie, hier insbesondere der Impfdebatte, aber auch der Geschichte und Gegenwart der Transplantationsmedizin.

1. Solidarität als Wohltätigkeit und soziale Gerechtigkeit

Offensichtlich beschäftigt die Menschen das Schicksal anderer, sei es aus Mitgefühl, eigener Betroffenheit oder Mitmenschlichkeit. Gleichzeitig wird zur Solidarität aufgerufen. Zum Beispiel um andere zu schützen, knappe Güter wie Beatmungsgeräte, Medikamente oder Impfstoffe gerecht zu verteilen, Existenzen zu sichern, Schüler*innen eine Perspektive zu geben oder aus Gründen der Anerkennung des der Pandemie besonders ausgesetzten Personals.

Die erkennbare Vielfaltigkeit der Verwendung des Begriffs ist Ausdruck des Geltungsanspruchs, welche »Solidarität« in der gesellschaftlichen Auseinandersetzung

1 Ich danke Herrn Prof. Bernhard Sill für die Zusammenarbeit im Team-Teaching für unseren Lehrauftrag »Grund- und Grenzfragen medizinischer Ethik« und im Besonderen für die wertvollen Anregungen zur Verfassung dieses Artikels.

2 Vgl. <https://trends.google.de/trends/explore?date=2020-01-01%202020-12-31&geo=DE&q=Solidarität>, abgerufen am 31.08.2021.

3 Vgl. <https://trends.google.de/trends/explore?date=2019-09-01%202020-12-01&q=How%20can%20I%20help>, abgerufen am 31.8.2021.

hat. Deskriptiv ist Solidarität das Bestreben Anderen zu helfen. Solidarität wird zur ethisch gebotenen Pflicht und würde somit einem freiwilligen Handeln aus Mitgefühl entspringen oder als Haltung gegen »Leid und Unrecht«⁴. Präskriptiv wird es im Sinne eines Appells, füreinander einzustehen, verwendet.⁵ Umgangssprachlich kann mit dem Ausdruck »sich solidarisch erklären« auch die Anerkennung einer außergewöhnlichen Leistung gemeint sein. Dabei geht diese Leistung über das gewöhnlich erwartete Maß hinaus, Solidarität in diesem Zusammenhang ist die Anerkennung einer supererogatorischen Handlung, die sich durch eine Haltung auszeichnet, die über das, was die moralische Pflicht gebietet, hinausgeht. Solidarität ist dabei weder »moralisch geschuldet« noch »aus Mitgefühl oder dem Wissen um wechselseitige Abhängigkeit heraus motiviert«, sondern eine »moralische Leistung der Übergebühr«⁶.

Im christlichen Sinne ist der Appell zur Hilfeleistung auch ein Akt der Nächstenliebe, aus der Solidarität erwächst. Dies bedeutet nicht unbedingt, dabei gegen die eigenen Interessen oder uneigennützig zu handeln. Gerade dann, wenn Solidarität aber bedeutet, gegen eigene Interessen zu handeln, weil die individuell gewünschte Freiheit eingeschränkt wird, ist ihre ethische Vermittlung in einer vom Meinungspluralismus geprägten Gesellschaft schwierig. Doch erst bei der Bereitschaft zur Einschränkung der individuellen Freiheit zeigt sich die Solidarität des Einzelnen. Nach Jürgen Habermas ist somit Solidarität »keine Nächstenliebe, aber erst recht keine Konditionierung zum Vorteil einer Seite. Wer sich solidarisch verhält, ist bereit, sowohl im langfristigen Eigeninteresse wie im Vertrauen darauf, dass sich der andere in ähnlichen Situationen ebenso verhalten wird, kurzfristige Nachteile in Kauf zu nehmen«⁷.

Auch wenn die Nächstenliebe als religionskulturelle Form der Solidarität durchaus nachvollziehbar erscheint, kann Solidarität jedoch nicht allein darüber definiert werden. Den Formen der Solidarität ist gemein die Orientierung an der Wohltätigkeit. Ein solches Verhalten braucht in aller Regel eine besondere Einstellung und Bereitschaft. Denn solidarisches Handeln als »Helfen wollen«, Appell zum Helfen, Füreinander-Einstehen, geht oft mit einer Einschränkung der individuellen Freiheit zum Wohle der Gemeinschaft einher.

Gleichwohl kann Solidarität auch als sozialetisches Prinzip die Strategie verfolgen, soziale Gerechtigkeit herzustellen.⁸ Hierbei richtet sich die Aufforderung

4 Bobbert, Monika: Pflicht zur Solidarität? Zur Legitimität sozialer Sicherungssysteme. In: Jahrbuch für Christliche Sozialwissenschaften 48 (2007) 182.

5 Vgl. ebd.

6 Ebd., 183.

7 Habermas, Jürgen: https://www.zeit.de/2018/28/protektionismus-europa-grenzen-rueckzug-herausforderungen?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F, abgerufen am 23.8.2021.

8 Vgl. ebd.

zur Solidarität an eine Institution, die auf einer Gemeinschaft gründet, welche ihre Regeln wie etwa die der Leistungsgewährung an Schwächere oder Geschädigte, selbst gestaltet hat. In diesem Fall kann Solidarität in Form der Gerechtigkeit auch gefordert werden.⁹ Indem der Staat über legitimierte Institutionen Vorgaben macht, können Maßnahmen zum Schutz des Gemeinwohls und von Menschenleben im Rahmen der Pandemie auch als eine Form der sozialen Gerechtigkeit angesehen werden.

2. Intention zur Solidarität

Zu Beginn der Coronapandemie gab es viele Solidaritätsbekundungen mit Mitarbeitenden im Gesundheitswesen für ihre Leistung und der Gefahr, der sie sich aussetzten. Ausgedrückt wurde die Anteilnahme für eine gemeinsam zu bewältigende Leidsituation und damit das Zeugnis eines Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühls gegeben. Eine Verpflichtung, auch selbst etwas tun zu müssen, oder eigene Einschränkungen sind mit dieser Solidaritätsbekundung nicht unmittelbar verbunden.

Die Intention jedweder Solidarität wird durch den Charakter und die Sozialisation der betreffenden Person geprägt, welche sie ausübt, passt sich aber auch den spezifischen Umständen der aktuellen Situation, in der sich die Person befindet, an.

Dies erfordert eine Haltung, die »uns selbst gegeben« ist, »nicht als freie Schöpfer unserer selbst, sondern als Reaktoren – als Verarbeiter von Ausseneinflüssen«¹⁰. Die Haltung zu einer Sache kann geformt werden, es ist dann nicht nur ein »sollen«, sondern auch ein »wollen«. »Haltung ist das an mir, was ich aus mir, aus dem Vorgefundenen mache«¹¹.

Durch die gesellschaftliche oder politische Beeinflussung dieser Haltung kann solidarisches Verhalten weitergetragen und können dessen Ziele erreicht werden. So ist z. B. die Darstellung menschlichen Leids in den Medien ein effizientes Mittel, die Haltung der Menschen zu ändern.

Sie wird durch Betonung der Tatsache, dass – bildlich gesagt – alle in einem Boot sitzen, gefördert, der Einzelne dazu bewegt, sich dem gemeinsamen Ziel unterzuordnen. »Solidarität [in diesem Sinne] bedeutet die Bereitschaft zu prosozialen Handlungen auf der Grundlage relevanter Gemeinsamkeit, die der

9 Vgl. *Steinvorth, Ulrich*: Kann Solidarität erzwingbar sein? In: Bayertz, Kurt (Hg.): *Solidarität Begriff und Problem*, Frankfurt a.M. 1998, 64f.

10 *Sommer, Andreas Urs*: Auch du bist ein böser Mensch: über den Unterschied zwischen Gesinnungseuphorie und Haltungsethik. Online abrufbar unter: <https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/gesinnung-versus-haltung-sind-wir-alle-boese-ld.1513692>, abgerufen am 23.8.2021.

11 Ebd.

solidarbereiten Person etwas abverlangen. Sie besteht weder automatisch noch unbegrenzt«¹².

Eine Handlung kann aus reinem Eigeninteresse erfolgen, weil in einer vergleichbaren Situation die gleiche oder eine ähnliche Behandlung erwartet wird. Die Haltung welche für die Handlung ausschlaggebend ist, wäre dann nicht der Gemeinschaftsgedanke, sondern die eigene Angst davor, nicht in der gleichen Art wie andere behandelt zu werden.¹³ Beim solidarischen Handeln aus Fairness ist demgegenüber die Tatsache ausschlaggebend, dass bereits viele Teile der Gesellschaft eine bestimmte Haltung eingenommen haben und sich das Individuum dieser aus Fairness den anderen gegenüber nicht entziehen kann oder möchte. Hier zieht quasi die Gesellschaft den zögernden Einzelnen mit sich, möglicherweise als bloßen Mitläufer, oder aber auch aus der seitens des Einzelnen gewonnenen Einsicht, dass es gut ist, weil es viele tun.

Gänzlich altruistisch wäre das Handeln aus Opferbereitschaft. Bei dieser Haltung wird weder eine direkte noch eine indirekte Gegenleistung erwartet.¹⁴ Solidarität wird hier aus einer »moralischen Intuition«, die in allen Menschen mehr oder weniger verankert ist, erzeugt im Sinne »mitmenschlicher Verbundenheit, humanitärer Zusammengehörigkeit und einem ursprünglichen Gemeinschaftsgefühl gegenüber allen Menschen, die in Not sind und Hilfe brauchen«¹⁵. Die solidarische Handlung erfolgt aus einer dem Zweck dienenden inneren Haltung heraus.

3. Individuum und Solidarität

Allen Formen der Solidarität gemeinsam ist die individuelle Einschränkung der Freiheit. Freiheit bedeutet, selbst über sein Wirken innerhalb der Gemeinschaft zu entscheiden. Es bedeutet eine eigenständige Position zu einem Problem zu finden und aus dieser Position heraus zu handeln. Dabei kann sowohl die Position als auch die Handlung bewertet werden.

Erfolgt die Handlung aus Eigeninteresse, so ist diese Einschränkung natürlich subjektiv auch gewollt und einfacher um- bzw. durchzusetzen. Für manche mag es

12 *Deutscher Ethikrat*: Solidarität und Verantwortung in der Corona-Krise. Ad-Hoc-Empfehlung. Berlin 2020, 5.

13 Vgl. Merkel, Reinhard: Deutscher Ethikrat, Forum Bioethik: Pro + Contra: Widerspruchsregelung bei der Organspende am 12.12.2018, S. 5–8 der Transkription: <https://www.ethikrat.org/fileadmin/PDF-Dateien/Veranstaltungen/fb-12-12-2018-transkription.pdf>, abgerufen am 22.6.2021, 7. Monika Bobbert spricht hier von »zweckrationalem Tausch« (Bobbert: Pflicht zur Solidarität, 184f.)

14 Vgl. Merkel: Deutscher Ethikrat, 10.

15 *Grosse Kracht, Herman-Josef*: Jenseits von Mitleid und Barmherzigkeit. Zur Karriere solidarischen Denkens im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, JCSW 48 (2007) 16.

strenggenommen dann fraglich sein, ob hierbei von einer Solidarität im originären Sinn gesprochen werden darf. Denn die »wohlthätige« Handlung ist ja unübersehbar auch an die Bedingung geknüpft, eine entsprechende Gegenleistung zu empfangen. Auch wenn durch die Handlung ein gemeinsames Ziel erreicht wird, entspricht die Haltung nicht dem Gedanken der Solidarität im Sinne der Wohlthätigkeit, sondern erwartet eine ausgleichende Gerechtigkeit. Klar ist, dass dies in bestimmten Situationen, wie beispielsweise der Organspende nicht möglich ist. Andererseits kann in anderen Bereichen durch entsprechende Vereinbarung innerhalb einer gesellschaftlich legitimierten Organisation ein solcher Ausgleich gefunden und damit das gemeinsame Ziel schneller erreicht werden.

Schwieriger gestaltet sich die Vermittlung der Einschränkung individueller Freiheitsrechte bei den beiden anderen Formen, denn dazu muss das betreffende Subjekt zunächst auch einsichtig sein. Zur Vermittlung dieser Haltung muss plausibel erklärt werden können, ob und wieviel »Pflicht« oder freiwillige Einsicht zu solidarischem Handeln erforderlich ist, um ein für das Gemeinwohl erforderliches Ziel zu erreichen.

Der Begriff der »Pflicht«, der gerade ebenso oft fällt, wenn von Solidarität gesprochen wird, darf nicht mit Zwang verwechselt werden, denn eine Handlung, die unter Zwang ausgeübt wird, kann nicht solidarisch sein. Die Pflicht sollte vielmehr deontologisch verstanden und begründet werden, indem die Handlung allgemeinen Grundsätzen folgt, verallgemeinerbar und für alle verbindlich gemacht wird.¹⁶ Als erkannte Pflicht ist die der Sittlichkeit erwachsene, freie Hilfeleistung zu betrachten.

Die Solidarität sollte aus dieser Wohlthätigkeit entspringen oder noch darüber hinaus gehen. Sie erweist sich als ein positives Haltungsbild, eine Tugend, die ein Mensch hat, um über das Maß des gewöhnlich geübten moralischen Verhaltens hinauszugehen. Die Tugend ist »als sittliches Können (moralische Kompetenz) [zu] verstehen, das den Menschen befähigt, mit den Anforderungen des Lebens, seinen Chancen und Gefahren im lebenslangen, personal-relationalen Reifungsprozess wertend, wertunterscheidend und sich entscheidend zurechtzukommen. Einzelne Haltungsbilder sind dann Aspekte dieser moralischen Kompetenz, je nachdem auf welchen Bereich der Wirklichkeit sie sich beziehen.«¹⁷ Die persönliche Einstellung zu dieser Haltung ist dementsprechend verhaltensprägend. Die Frage, durch welche Maßnahmen zur Solidarität motiviert werden kann, ob sie überhaupt gefordert werden darf und ob gegebenenfalls Sanktionierungsmöglichkeiten bestünden, ist eine Frage *sui generis*, die einer eigenen – zusätzlichen – Erörterung bedürfte.

16 Vgl. Kersting, Daniel: Gibt es eine moralische Pflicht zur Organspende? In: Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie 61 (2013) 140.

17 Müller, Stephan E.: Bausteine zur theologischen Ethik. Band I, Regensburg 2015, 60.

4. Gemeinschaft und Solidarität

Vielmehr stellt sich auch in der Medizin die grundsätzliche Frage, wie Menschen dazu motiviert werden können, sich solidarisch zu verhalten. Wie auch immer die Solidarität definiert wird, immer liegt ihr eine gewisse mitmenschliche bzw. zwischenmenschliche Verbundenheit zugrunde, sei es aus gemeinsamer Leiderfahrung, oder sei es aus Mitfühlen mit dem Leid(en) anderer Menschen. Neben der besonderen Einstellung und Bereitschaft zu solidarischem Verhalten ist das Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl ein stark bindendes Element. Seine Entwicklung ist daher innerhalb einer vertrauten Gruppe oder nach gemeinsam erlebtem Leid einfacher, als wenn es sich um fremde Personen handelt oder Geschehnissen die weit entfernt stattfinden.¹⁸ Gleichzeitig liegt darin auch ein Problem. Denn wenn sich die Solidarität nur innerhalb einer Gruppe entwickelt, kann diese nicht weitere Kreise ziehen, sich damit auch nicht weiterverbreiten.¹⁹ Zudem fehlt bei entfernteren Ereignissen, wie Katastrophen oder Epidemien in anderen Ländern, aber auch bei der Organspende an Fremde, der direkte Bezug, sodass sich dieses Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl nicht entwickeln kann.

Darüber hinaus deuten verschiedene Gruppen Solidarität aus ihrer Perspektive unterschiedlich. Immer setzt Solidarität jedoch ein »bestimmtes Verständnis von Gerechtigkeit bzw. moralischer Richtigkeit«²⁰ voraus. Solidarität impliziert stets eine Wertung. Sich nicht solidarisch zu verhalten ist in der Regel moralisch negativ konnotiert. Deshalb ist der Appell an die Solidarität bei jeder Argumentation auch ein ungewöhnlich starker Appell, der gerade auch politisch unbedingt mit Bedacht gewählt werden sollte. Da niemand zu etwas gezwungen werden darf und möchte, löst der Appell an die Solidarität implizit Schuldgefühle aus, wenn man sich dem Aufruf der Solidarität nicht anschließt. Die Dynamik innerhalb einer Gruppe kann deshalb dazu führen, dass sich mehr Mitglieder diesem Aufruf anschließen auch wenn sie von der Richtigkeit nicht überzeugt sind. So gesehen lösen Ereignisse die uns nicht unmittelbar betreffen oder berühren auch nicht so starke Schuldgefühle aus, wenn im Einzelfall kein solidarisches Verhalten gezeigt wird.

Ob sich jemand solidarisch verhält oder nicht hängt, somit von vielen Faktoren ab. Der Versuch einer klaren Beschreibung des Verhaltens ist kaum möglich und muss letztlich unscharf bleiben, weshalb eine letztgültige Bewertung (un)solidarischen Verhaltens wohl nicht pauschal vorgenommen werden kann. Eine Geldspende hängt vom eigenen Vermögen ab, die Organspende z.B. von der eigenen Todesvorstellung, eine Impfung von der Angst vor Nebenwirkungen. Solche subjektiven

18 Vgl. https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/jahr-der-solidaritaet-warum-wir-nicht-mit-all-en-gleich.1005.de.html?dram:article_id=487862, abgerufen am 21.7.2021.

19 Vgl. ebd.

20 *Bobbert*: Pflicht zur Solidarität, 183.

Empfindungen lassen eine Bewertung von dritter Seite scheitern. Gerade in der Medizin, in der sich der vielfältige Bedeutungsinhalt des Begriffs widerspiegelt, ist die Aufforderung zur Solidarität oder die Rede von einer solidarischen Pflicht schwierig. Vielmehr sollte der appellative Charakter des Wortes im Vordergrund stehen.

5. Solidarität in der Transplantationsmedizin

Gerade in schwierigen Entscheidungsfragen, wie es sie beispielsweise bei der Organtransplantation gibt oder eben auch während dieser Pandemie, zeigt sich der Zusammenhalt einer Gesellschaft. Dabei habe ich schon dargestellt, dass sich solidarisches Verhalten innerhalb einer Schicksalsgemeinschaft leichter entwickelt als gegenüber Fremden. So ist es zwar nachvollziehbar, dass immer wieder die Organspende als solidarischer Akt beschrieben wird. Doch solange keine mehrheitliche Betroffenheit entsteht, ist die Bildung eines solidarischen Gedankens schwierig, und das nicht zuletzt deshalb, weil die Organspende einem anonymen Empfänger gilt. Hinzu kommt der Wunsch nach einer fairen, gewissenhaften Verteilung der gespendeten Organe. Das erfordert großes Vertrauen in ein funktionierendes Spendsystem, welches, wie der Organspendeskandal 2012 zeigte, leicht verloren gehen kann und dann nur schwer wiederzugewinnen ist.

Kurz vor dem weltweiten Ausbruch der Coronainfektion wurde in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland ein Gesetz verabschiedet, das zuvor ein Jahr lang kontrovers diskutiert wurde. Ziel des Gesetzes war es, Möglichkeiten zu schaffen, die Zahl der Organspender*innen zu erhöhen und verloren gegangenes Vertrauen wieder zu gewinnen. Gesundheitsminister Jens Spahn wollte gemeinsam mit weiteren Abgeordneten verschiedener Parteien versuchen, über die Einführung einer Widerspruchslösung zur Organspende die im europäischen Vergleich niedrige Spenderate zu erhöhen. Die teilweise emotional geführten Debatten – insbesondere die Argumentation über die »Solidarität« oder die »mitmenschliche Verpflichtung« – zeigen, wie schwierig befriedigende Lösungen sind.

Über die Tatsache, dass täglich Patient*innen auf der Warteliste versterben, weil sie kein Organ erhalten,²¹ war man sich einig; der Weg, wie eine Erhöhung der Spendezahlen bewirkt werden kann, war dagegen strittig. Kritik wurde dabei insbesondere am Mangel der Selbstbestimmung und Kontrolle bei der Widerspruchslösung geübt.²² Ich möchte hier nicht das Für und Wider des jeweiligen Verfahrens dis-

21 Vgl. <https://www.aerztezeitung.de/Politik/Organspende-Situation-ist-beschaemend-402543.html>, abgerufen am 16.7.2021.

22 Vgl. Deutscher Ethikrat, Pro + Contra: Widerspruchsregelung bei der Organspende, 2018 <http://www.ethikrat.org/forum-bioethik/pro-contra-widerspruchsregelung-bei-der-organspende/>, abgerufen am 22.6.2021.

kutieren, welches wirklich dazu führen könnte, Spendezahlen zu erhöhen, oder ob es für die niedrige Rate in Deutschland eventuell auch andere Gründe geben könnte. Obwohl der Tod auf der Warteliste mit den derzeitigen Therapiemöglichkeiten nie ganz ausgeschlossen werden kann, so könnten ihn entsprechende Spendezahlen doch verringern.

Dies sollte der Leitgedanke sein, sodass sich unabhängig vom jeweils gewählten Verfahren die Frage stellt, ob es nicht eines jeden Menschen Pflicht wäre, Organe zu spenden, anstatt sie nach dem Tod der Fäulnis zu überlassen. Gesellschaftlich wird ein entsprechend hoher moralischer Druck aufgebaut, Sozialverbände und Mediziner sehen in einer Pflicht zur Organspende mehrheitlich die Chance gegeben, Menschenleben zu retten.²³ Das unantastbare Persönlichkeitsrecht jedes Lebenden wirkt dabei jedoch auch über den Tod hinaus. Das bedeutet, dass ein toter Körper nicht einfach zu einem allgemeinen Gut wird und ohne Weiteres »ausgeschlachtet« werden dürfte.²⁴ Diese grundsätzliche Feststellung sollte den Diskurs leiten, denn sie zeigt eine definitive Grenze moralischen Handelns auf, die nicht überschritten werden sollte.

Daniel Kersting führt drei Punkte auf²⁵, weshalb eine Organspende keine moralische Verpflichtung beinhaltet:

1. Unbestreitbar ist die Organspende zur Rettung eines Lebens eine moralisch wertvolle Handlung. Doch dann müssten alle Handlungen, so sein erster Punkt, die darauf abzielen Menschenleben zu retten auf den Prüfstand, auch solche, die nach unserem Verständnis unmoralisch wären. Eine Bewertung der Handlung darf also nicht aufgrund der wünschenswerten Konsequenz erfolgen.²⁶

Transkription: <https://www.ethikrat.org/fileadmin/PDF-Dateien/Veranstaltungen/fb-12-12-2018-transkription.pdf>

23 Vgl. Jonitz, Günther: »Es ist ein Akt der Humanität, Organe zu spenden und Menschen Leben zu schenken.«, Deutsches Ärzteblatt am 25.9.2018 abrufbar unter: <https://www.aerzteblatt.de/nachrichten/98101/Organspende-Aerzte-und-Politiker-ringem-den-richtigen-Weg>, abgerufen am 22.6.2021; <https://www.aerzteblatt.de/nachrichten/98101/Organspende-Aerzte-und-Politiker-ringem-den-richtigen-Weg>, abgerufen am 22.6.2021.

Vgl. Finkenzeller, Martin, Organspende ist »ethische Pflicht«, https://www.vdk.de/rheinland-pfalz/pages/organspende/67730/organspende_ist_ethische_pfllicht?dscc=ok, abgerufen am 22.6.2021.

24 Vgl. Deutscher Ethikrat, Pro + Contra: Widerspruchsregelung bei der Organspende, 2018, Seite 10 der Transkription: <https://www.ethikrat.org/fileadmin/PDF-Dateien/Veranstaltungen/fb-12-12-2018-transkription.pdf>

25 Zu den folgenden drei Punkten vgl. Kersting: Gibt es eine moralische Pflicht zur Organspende?, 139f.

26 In China werden beispielsweise Exekutierte automatisch zu Organspendern: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/panorama/organhandel-in-china-tod-auf-bestellung-1.2267742>, abgeru-

2. Bei der Wertung einer Handlung als moralisch gut wird sie zu isoliert betrachtet. Doch Handlungen sind, so sein zweiter Punkt, nicht eindimensional, sondern komplexe Gebilde, die im praktischen Zusammenhang immer von der individuellen Prägung und dem gesellschaftlichen Kontext abhängen. »Der moralische Gehalt einer konkreten Einzelhandlung wohnt dieser also nicht per se inne, sondern kann immer nur in Relation zu den besonderen Umständen der Handlungssituation bestimmt werden.«²⁷
3. Wenn eine moralische Pflicht zur Organspende postuliert wird, so sein dritter Punkt, wird gleichzeitig implizit behauptet, es gäbe seitens des einzelnen Individuums keine guten moralische Gründe gegen die Organtransplantation. Damit würden soziokulturelle, religiöse, intrapersonelle, Zweifel an der Hirntodkonzeption usw. automatisch ausgeschlossen.

In einer gemeinsamen Stellungnahme der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland und der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz aus dem Jahre 1990 wurde die Organentnahme, auch wenn die Entscheidung von Freiwilligkeit geprägt werden sollte, als Akt der Nächstenliebe erklärt.²⁸ Diese Aussage beinhaltet eine eindeutige Wertung der Handlung mit entsprechendem moralischem Appell. Auch wird die Begrifflichkeit der Nächstenliebe und Solidarität vermischt, was jedoch wie erwähnt nicht gleichzusetzen ist. Bedeutet diese Wertung, so wäre zu fragen, dann nicht bei genauerer Betrachtung, dass die Verweigerung einer Organspende gegen das Gebot der Nächstenliebe verstößt und damit bezogen auf die Ethik der beiden großen Kirchen unseres Landes einem unmoralischen Verhalten gleichkäme?²⁹

Eine Wertung dieser höchstpersönlichen Maßnahme kann und darf jedoch nicht vorgenommen werden, da jeder Mensch aus religiös-weltanschaulichen, persönlichen oder sonstigen Gründen eine Organtransplantation ablehnen dürfte, ohne deshalb verurteilt zu werden. Gleichzeitig sollte und müsste jedem bewusst sein, dass es einen eklatanten Mangel an Organen gibt und derzeit viele Menschen, die gerettet werden könnten, auf der Warteliste sterben.³⁰ Hinter jeder nicht realisierten Transplantation steht ein Schicksal und damit auch ein Mensch mit seinem

fen am 21.7.2021. <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2021-06/china-un-sonderberichterstaetter-organraub-haeftlinge-minderheiten>, abgerufen am 21.7.2021.

27 *Kersting*: Gibt es eine moralische Pflicht zur Organspende?, 140.

28 Vgl. Organtransplantationen. Erklärung der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz und des Rates der EKD, Bonn – 17: »Aus christlicher Sicht ist die Bereitschaft zur Organspende nach dem Tod ein Zeichen der Nächstenliebe und Solidarisierung mit Kranken und Behinderten.«

29 Vgl. *Eibach, Ulrich*: Organspende: Moralische Pflicht und Akt der Nächstenliebe? Eine theologisch-ethische und seelsorgliche Sicht. In: *Wege zum Menschen, Zeitschrift für Seelsorge und Beratung, heilendes und soziales Handeln* 65 (2013) 529.

30 Vgl. <https://www.aerztezeitung.de/Politik/Organspende-Situation-ist-beschaemend-402543.html>, abgerufen am 21.7.2021.

Wunsch zu leben und seiner Dankbarkeit für die Möglichkeit, das benötigte Organ zu erhalten. Aus dieser Perspektive ist es auch verständlich, dass im Umfeld von Organbedürftigen die Befürwortung einer Organspende groß ist.³¹ Dies unterstreicht die Beobachtung, dass solidarisches Verhalten innerhalb oder in unmittelbarer Nähe einer Gruppe die gemeinsames Leid erlebt größer ist.

Daniel Kersting rekurriert auf Immanuel Kant und versucht die Problematik dadurch zu lösen, dass nicht die einzelne Handlung isoliert beurteilt wird, vielmehr »Maxime, also allgemeine Grundsätze des Handelns«³², gefunden werden sollen. Dabei ist die individuelle Situation, die Lebenseinstellung und Sozialisation zu berücksichtigen, immer unter Berücksichtigung des mit Anderen geteilten Lebens.³³ Einfacher gesagt: Jeder Mensch sollte sich Gedanken machen, wie er zu der Thematik steht, und das nicht zuletzt auch vor dem Hintergrund, in einer Gemeinschaft zu leben, der gegenüber er in gewisser Weise auch verpflichtet ist. Die Überlegungen müssen im Sinne einer »moralisch-praktischen Selbstorientierung«³⁴ erfolgen und können nicht von einer übergeordneten Institution bestimmt und geregelt werden. Gerade weil bei Gesundheitsfragen diffuse Ängste eine Rolle spielen, darf eine selbstbestimmte Entscheidung, die über den Tod hinaus gilt, nicht ausgeschlossen, gleichzeitig jedoch das Anliegen der Gemeinschaft nicht vernachlässigt werden. Das heißt dann: »Selbstbestimmung und Gemeinsinn im Autonomieprinzip [sind] zum Ausgleich zu bringen.«³⁵

Deshalb ist es durchaus möglich, ein verpflichtendes Element einzuführen, nämlich die Pflicht zum gemeinschaftlichen Nachdenken. Diese »minimale Pflicht, wenigstens mitzudenken, [kann] institutionalisiert werden [...]«³⁶. Dies kann sowohl durch eine Zustimmung- bzw. Entscheidungslösung als auch durch die Widerspruchslösung erfolgen. Bei letzterer ist aber der Druck zur Auseinandersetzung größer, was die individuelle Freiheit einschränkt. Es bedeutet jedoch entgegen mancher Behauptung keine Pflicht zur Spende. Damit wird die Handlung der Organspende zwar für den Spender zu einem Akt der Menschenliebe und die

31 Vgl. Henn, Wolfram: Deutscher Ethikrat, Forum Bioethik: Pro + Contra: Widerspruchsregelung bei der Organspende am 12.12.2018, S. 16–18 der Transkription: <https://www.ethikrat.org/fileadmin/PDF-Dateien/Veranstaltungen/fb-12-12-2018-transkription.pdf>, abgerufen am 22.6.2021, 16.

32 Kersting: Gibt es eine moralische Pflicht zur Organspende, 140.

33 Vgl. ebd.

34 Ebd.

35 Meyer-Magister, Hendrik: Gemeinwohl und Selbstbestimmung bei der Organspende. In: Feiler, Therese (Hg.): Gemeinwohl, Polis, Individuum. Bioethik im Kontext, München 2019, 17, online abrufbar unter: https://www.ttn.st.evtheol.uni-muenchen.de/publikationen/ttn_edition/ttn_edition_2019.pdf.

36 Ebd.

Handlung an sich eine der wohl großzügigsten. Es kann daraus jedoch keine moralische Pflicht im Sinne des »Ich bin dem Gemeinwohl verpflichtet, deshalb muss ich Organe spenden« abgeleitet werden. Die Verwirklichung einer Organspende, die gleichbedeutend ist mit dem Tod des Spenders, ist als eine über die gesellschaftliche Verantwortung hinausgehende supererogatorische Handlung, als ein originärer Akt der Solidarität gegenüber einem hilfsbedürftigen Fremden anzusehen.

Begreift man Solidarität als Zusammenhalt innerhalb der Gemeinschaft, so wird dies schon durch das gemeinsame Durchdenken des Handlungszusammenhangs der Organspende zum Ausdruck gebracht, unabhängig von der frei getroffenen individuellen Konsequenz, die das hat. Solidarität wird einem unbekanntem, schwerkranken Organempfänger in Form des Mitfühlens beim Bedenken der Organspende, der eigenen Organspendebereitschaft und der entsprechend getroffenen Entscheidung vermittelt. Durch verschiedene Vorstöße des Gesetzgebers wird versucht, eine moralische Verpflichtung aufzubauen und somit eine Entscheidung zu »erzwingen«. Jedoch ist es unmöglich – weder mit moralischen noch mit juristischen Mitteln, jemanden dazu verpflichten zu wollen, über die Organspende nachzudenken. Auch eine Widerspruchslösung, die genau deshalb propagiert wurde, ist nicht gleichbedeutend mit einem wahrhaft stattfindenden entsprechenden Gedankengang. Vielmehr könnte sie sogar zu mehr Widerstand führen und einer unreflektierten Ablehnung der Organspende ungewollt den Weg bahnen. Die Solidarität mit potenziellen Empfängern kommt aber gerade dadurch zum Ausdruck, sich über die postulierte moralische Pflicht hinaus, freiwillig, selbstständig und unabhängig Gedanken zum Thema zu machen. Auch wenn es bedeutet, sich in jungen Jahren mit dem eigenen Tod auseinandersetzen zu müssen ist die Haltung dazu, die Angst davor zu überwinden und eine Entscheidung zu treffen ein solidarischer Akt.

Da der Begriff der Solidarität implizit auch eine Wertung beinhaltet, bedarf die getroffene Entscheidung, auch die Nicht-Entscheidung, keiner Begründung. Seine Organe nicht spenden zu wollen, darf somit auch nicht als unsolidarisch oder gar unmoralisch im Sinne eines »nicht pflichtgemäßen Handelns« verstanden werden.

Die Solidarität, welche durch eine Entscheidung zum Ausdruck kommt, betrifft nicht nur die Organempfänger, sondern auch Angehörige und die Arbeitenden im Gesundheitswesen. Eine große Problematik der Organspende liegt darin, dass eine Behandlung an einem Menschen vorgenommen wird, der definitionsgemäß tot ist. Er wird nicht mehr um seiner selbst willen behandelt; das Worumwillen gilt dem Leben eines anderen Menschen.³⁷ Dabei geht von diesem unversehrten Körper das Signal der Lebendigkeit aus. Alle Körperausscheidungen funktionieren, Haare wachsen, die Haut ist warm usw. Für Angehörige ist häufig nicht zu begreifen, dass sie dennoch jetzt von einem geliebten Menschen Abschied nehmen sollen.

37 Vgl. Eibach, Ulrich: Organspende, 520.

Eine Sterbebegleitung bei Organspenden und damit das für die Hinterbliebenen psychisch wichtige Abschiednehmen ist zudem durch die operative Organentnahme nicht möglich.³⁸ Dies macht ein Ansprechen der Organspende auch für Mediziner*innen schwierig. Die besondere Belastung dieser Situation kann zu Spannungen der zwischenmenschlichen Kommunikation und unnötigem Leid bei Angehörigen führen.

Die vorab getroffene Entscheidung eines Menschen zur Organspende ist für Angehörige aber auch für das Personal im Gesundheitswesen eine Beruhigung, signalisiert Verbundenheit und gemeinsames Tragen von Verantwortung im Sinne gegenseitiger Solidarität, auch wenn es dazu keine moralische Pflicht gibt. Im Augenblick der Todesmitteilung ist es für Angehörige so in jedem Fall einfacher, die Entscheidung ohne Traumatisierung³⁹ mitzutragen.⁴⁰

6. Solidarität im Kontext der Coronapandemie

Wie soll Solidarität verstanden werden, wenn das Gemeinwohl in großer Form oder gar die ganze Gemeinschaft bedroht ist. Eine solche Situation, die hochrangige Politiker*innen regelmäßig dazu verführt, Solidarität einzufordern, beschäftigt uns nun seit mehr als 18 Monaten.

Für Mediziner*innen bedeutet es, im Zuge der gerade die ganze Welt in Atem haltenden Pandemie möglichst wenig Menschenleben daran zu verlieren. In den meisten europäischen Ländern gilt eben gerade nicht das Motto des »Survival of the fittest«. Vielmehr wird sich der Erfolg der durchgeführten Maßnahmen an der Anzahl der geretteten Menschenleben messen lassen müssen. Nicht betrachtet wird dabei im Moment noch die uneinschätzbare Patientenzahl mit langfristigen medizinischen Folgen einer Coronaerkrankung, die bei den nun zunehmend betroffenen jungen Menschen durchaus relevant werden könnte.

Die für Mediziner*innen schlimmste Vorstellung war die mögliche Notwendigkeit der Triagierung, d.h. einer wegen Knappheitsbedingungen zu treffenden Entscheidung darüber, wer die besten Überlebenschancen hat und damit einer prioritären Versorgung zugeteilt wird. Die emotional massiv belastende moralische Verantwortung, die dabei auf den Entscheidenden ruht, ist enorm und sollte nach Möglichkeit nur im Team getroffen werden. Deshalb war es nicht nur zur Eindämmung der Infektion, sondern auch aus einer moralischen Verpflichtung gegenüber dem

38 Vgl. ebd.

39 Eine Traumatisierung geht dabei in beide Richtungen: Einerseits können Angehörige keinen Abschied nehmen, andererseits kann die Ablehnung einer Spende durch die Angehörigen ihnen ein schlechtes Gewissen verursachen.

40 Vgl. *Eibach, Ulrich*: Organspende, 519f.

Personal wichtig, möglichst weitreichende Maßnahmen zu ergreifen, damit eine Überlastung des Gesundheitswesens mit der Folge der Notwendigkeit einer Triage ausbleibt. Gleichzeitig wirkt hier Solidarität als sozialetisches Prinzip der sozialen Gerechtigkeit. Es war wichtig klare Regeln für die Verteilung knapper Güter wie Beatmungsgeräte zu Beginn der Pandemie, oder der Impfung im weiteren Verlauf aufzustellen und sich gemeinschaftlich daran zu halten.

Zur Rechtfertigung der Maßnahmen wurde oft der Gedanke der Solidarität bemüht. Der Appell an die Solidarität gilt dem Zusammenhalt, dem gemeinsamen Durchstehen der Krise. Das freiwillige Einhalten vereinbarter Regeln und die damit verbundene persönliche Einschränkung ist als solidarisches Verhalten zu gewichten, und die Mehrheit verhält sich entsprechend. Doch aufgrund unserer Meinungsppluralität – so hat sich gezeigt – funktioniert das allein auf dieser Grundlage nicht, weshalb sanktionsbewehrte Regeln unverzichtbar sind.

Die Notwendigkeit, sich an die geforderten Regeln zu halten, entsteht aus dem Grundgedanken, dass diese nicht schaden, dafür aber auf einfache Weise viele Menschenleben gerettet werden. Dadurch, dass sie für alle Menschen gleichermaßen gelten, sollte auch kein Neidgefühl entstehen.

Neben dem Schutz der Mitmenschen wird durch das gemeinsame Einhalten der verordneten Maßnahmen ein Signal an die Mitarbeitenden im Gesundheitswesen gesendet. Es ist ihre berufliche Pflicht, erkrankten Menschen zu helfen, und mit der entsprechenden Selbstverständlichkeit kommen sie dieser Pflicht täglich nach, auch wenn es bedeutet, sich selbst unter den gegebenen Umständen in Gefahr zu bringen. Die Belastungen des Personals insbesondere auf den Intensivstationen war hoch.⁴¹ Zum Glück war aber im Vergleich zu anderen europäischen Ländern die Kapazitätsgrenze nie überschritten.

Jede weitere Person, die ihr Schicksal durch unvernünftiges Handeln herausfordert, belastet das System und damit auch die Beschäftigten in diesem System unnötig. Diejenigen, die sich womöglich auch gegen ihre eigene Überzeugung an Regeln halten, zeigen ihren Gemeinschaftsgeist in doppeltem Sinn. Gegenüber anderen Mitmenschen, weil sie so die Erkrankungszahlen niedrig halten, und gegenüber dem ärztlichen und pflegerischen Personal, welches bis an seine Belastungsgrenzen arbeitet.

Solidarisches Verhalten ist somit weitaus mehr als nur klatschen und Transparente aus dem Fenster hängen. Es bedeutet Verantwortung übernehmen für eine Gemeinschaft, indem die ergriffenen Maßnahmen, so schmerzhaft sie auch sein

41 Vgl. <https://www.br.de/nachrichten/bayern/coronakrise-bayerns-krankenhauspersonal-am-limit,SGcn1Ry>, abgerufen am 16.7.2021. Vgl. <https://www.br.de/nachrichten/bayern/ueberlastet-in-die-vierte-welle-klinikpersonal-schlaegt-alarm,SeNAPXF>, abgerufen am 16.7.2021. Vgl. Karagiannidis, Christian et al.: COVID-19-Pandemie: Pflegende deutlich häufiger krank. In: Deutsches Ärzteblatt 118 (2021) A1352f.

mögen, nicht nur um des Gesetzes willen, vielmehr aus einer verinnerlichten Überzeugung akzeptiert werden. Solidarität bedeutet eben mehr zu tun als das, was moralisch oder juristisch geboten ist.

So gesehen sind beispielsweise nachbarschaftliche Hilfen im Falle einer Quarantäneanordnung als supererogatorische Handlungen eine klare solidarische Aktion ebenso wie die freiwillige Arbeitsbereitschaft ehemaliger oder verrenteter Pflegekräfte.⁴²

Inzwischen haben wir ein wirksames Mittel, um die Pandemie einzudämmen, und erneut entwickelt sich eine Debatte um die Solidarität. Impfungen gegen das Coronavirus scheinen, zumindest solange sich keine aggressiveren Varianten entwickeln, gut gegen schwere Verläufe zu schützen. Damit wären durch Impfungen immerhin Befürchtungen hinsichtlich der Überlastung des Gesundheitswesens wie auch der psychischen Überbelastung des Personals⁴³ reduziert.

Unweigerlich wird damit, wie in der derzeitigen Diskussion immer deutlicher zu hören ist, eine Pflicht zur Impfung verbunden. Zu unterscheiden ist dabei eine gesetzliche Pflicht und eine moralische, eben eine dem Miteinander geschuldete Verantwortung. Auf letztere wird derzeit gesetzt in der Hoffnung, dass möglichst viele Menschen ein Einsehen haben, somit sich und andere schützen und letztlich durch eine hohe Impfquote das Virus auszumerzen. Als Ausdruck eines solidarischen Verhaltens wäre die Impfung trotz Bedenken zum Schutz aller daher freiwillig anzunehmen. Leider ist die Aussicht, einzig aufgrund der moralischen Verpflichtung und dem Appell an die Solidarität eine entsprechende Quote zu erreichen, schlecht. Deshalb werden immer mehr Möglichkeiten diskutiert, wie diese Quote erhöht werden kann, bis hin zum Gedanken einer gesetzlichen Pflicht. Weil eine Impfung eine Verletzung der körperlichen Unversehrtheit und damit einer Grundrechtverletzung darstellt, sind letzterer enge Grenzen gesetzt, auch wenn das Infektionsschutzgesetz diese Möglichkeit unter bestimmten Umständen explizit vorsieht.⁴⁴ So gab es in der Vergangenheit (von 1874 bis 1983) lediglich eine echte

42 Vgl. z.B. <https://www.br.de/nachrichten/bayern/mehr-nachbarschaftshilfe-in-der-corona-pandemie,SYhCsD7>, abgerufen am 16.7.2021. Vgl. z.B. https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Reden/2021/03/z10326-OV-Corona-Engagierte.pdf?__blob=publicationFile, abgerufen am 16.7.2021. Vgl. <https://www.donaukurier.de/nachrichten/bayern/Gesundheit-Krankheiten-Landtag-Covid-19-Corona-Bayern-Huml-1000-Pflegekraefte-meld-en-sich-zum-Corona-Einsatz;art155371,4534230>, abgerufen am 16.67.2021.

43 Zur psychischen Belastung vgl. *Kramer, Victoria* et al.: Subjective burden and perspectives of German healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. In: *European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience* 271 (2021) 271–281.

44 Vgl. *Deutscher Ethikrat*: Impfen als Pflicht. Stellungnahme, Berlin 2019, 37; vgl. § 20 Abs. 6 IfSG (Infektionsschutzgesetz).

Impfpflicht, die gegen die Pocken, welche dadurch ausgerottet werden konnten.⁴⁵ Die bereits 2019 – also ein Jahr vor der Coronapandemie – veröffentlichten Überlegungen des Deutschen Ethikrats zur Impfpflicht in Bezug auf die Masernimpfung könnten z.T. auf die derzeitige Debatte übertragen werden.

Zunächst muss unterschieden werden, welchem Zweck die Impfung dient. Dazu ist der Übertragungsweg und das Virusreservoir zu betrachten. Es gibt Impfungen gegen Erreger, die ubiquitär vorkommen wie das Tetanusbakterium oder durch einen Wirt übertragen werden wie die Frühsommermeningomyelitis (FSME). Hier hilft eine Impfung lediglich dem Impfling in Form eines Individualschutzes.⁴⁶ Eine Pflicht zur Impfung verbietet sich rechtlich und moralisch, da jeder selbst die Freiheit haben sollte, sich zu schützen. Eine starke Gemeinschaft kann auch ein unvernünftiges Verhalten tolerieren, genauso wie Rauchen, Trinken oder sonstiges risikoreichen Verhalten in der Freizeit nicht sanktioniert wird, solange es niemand anderen gefährdet.⁴⁷

Anders verhält es sich mit Erregern, die nur von Mensch zu Mensch übertragen werden können. Neben dem Übertragungsweg ist hier auch die Infektiosität und die Mortalität zu beachten. Zudem muss berücksichtigt werden, ob es andere wirksame Mittel gegen die Erkrankung gibt.⁴⁸ Ein solcher Erreger kann durch entsprechende Eindämmung innerhalb der Population nicht mehr zirkulieren, die sogenannte Herdenimmunität ist erreicht. Der Erreger kann sogar gänzlich ausgerottet werden. Neben dem Individualschutz zählt hier als zweites Ziel einer Impfung der Gemeinschaftsschutz. Menschen, die aufgrund einer eigenen Erkrankung keinen Impfschutz erhalten können (z.B. Impfversager oder Kinder, für die es keine Zulassung gibt) werden durch eine entsprechend hohe Anzahl geimpfter Personen mitgeschützt.

Um dieses zweite Ziel zu erreichen, ist es notwendig, dass möglichst alle, die eine Impfung erhalten dürfen, auch geimpft werden. An dieser Stelle könnte eine gesetzliche Impfpflicht greifen, die jedoch o.g. Kriterien berücksichtigen muss. So ist der Übertragungsweg nicht unbedeutend, denn ein Erreger, der nur über sexuelle Kontakte oder kontaminiertes Blut übertragen wird, kann durch andere Schutzmaßnahmen wirksam bekämpft werden. Eine Impfpflicht würde zu weit greifen. Wird dagegen – wie bei dem Coronavirus – ein Erreger über die Luft übertragen, können Schutzmaßnahmen deutlich schwieriger und auch einschneidender sein, wie wir es z.B. mit der derzeitigen Maskenpflicht erleben. Zudem müssen Kontagiosität (Ansteckungsfähigkeit) und Schwere der Erkrankung dem Risiko

45 Vgl. Robert Jütte (2020) <https://www.bpb.de/apuz/weltgesundheits-2020/318298/zur-geschichte-der-schutzimpfung>, abgerufen am 16.8.2021.

46 Vgl. *Deutscher Ethikrat*: Impfen als Pflicht. Stellungnahme, Berlin 2019, 21.

47 Vgl. ebd., 59.

48 Vgl. ebd. 17ff.

einer Impfung gegenübergestellt werden. Je leichter ein Erreger übertragen wird und je schwerwiegender die Erkrankung verlaufen kann, desto wichtiger ist ein gemeinschaftlicher Impfschutz. Das bisherige und leider einzige Erfolgsbeispiel ist die Eradikation der Pocken. Hier wurde trotz recht hoher Impfkomplicationen aufgrund der Gefährlichkeit dieser hochansteckenden Erkrankung eine Impfpflicht durchgesetzt und letztlich der Erreger eliminiert.⁴⁹ Ein ähnliches Ziel hatte sich die Weltgesundheitsorganisation bei der Poliomyelitis (Kinderlähmung) gesteckt, scheiterte jedoch bisher an verschiedenen Gründen, die hier nicht weiter erläutert werden können.⁵⁰ Auch die Masern gelten mit einem Kontagiositätsindex von annähernd 100 % als hoch ansteckend.⁵¹ Dabei wird diese Erkrankung häufig als harmlose Kinderkrankheit unterschätzt. Sie ist jedoch weltweit eine der häufigsten Todesursachen im Kindesalter, löst bleibende Schäden aus und verläuft auch im Erwachsenenalter häufig sehr schwer.⁵² Demgegenüber scheint die Impfung individuell und gemeinschaftlich zuverlässig zu schützen, weshalb für bestimmte Bereiche eine Impfpflicht eingeführt wurde. Entgegen der oft populistischen Argumentation einer generellen Impfpflicht besteht diese aber auch für Masern nicht.⁵³

Anders als bei akuten Erkrankungen gelten für die Impfstoffentwicklung höhere Maßstäbe, da sie nicht zur Abwehr einer akuten Erkrankung dienen, sondern der Prävention. Das bedeutet: Gesunde Menschen, die nur potentiell erkranken könnten, erhalten eine medizinische Leistung, die sie wiederum potentiell schädigen könnte.⁵⁴ Deshalb werden »Impfrisiken [...] tendenziell im Vergleich zu den Infektionsrisiken als größer wahrgenommen«⁵⁵.

In der Diskussion über eine Impfpflicht darf die strenge Sicht einer Rechtspflicht nicht mit der Solidarität innerhalb einer Gemeinschaft verglichen werden. Die Rechtspflicht kann nur als *Ultima Ratio* greifen; davor ist vielmehr auf die

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- 49 Vgl. <https://www.aerzteblatt.de/pdf.asp?id=35258>, abgerufen am 16.8.2021.
Vgl. https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/Infekt/Biosicherheit/Agenzien/bg_pocken.pdf?__blob=publicationFile, abgerufen am 16.8.2021.
- 50 Die WHO brachte 2012 einen Plan auf den Weg, die Polioimyelitis innerhalb von 6 Jahren auszurotten: Vgl. <https://www.who.int/news/item/25-04-2013-global-leaders-support-new-six-year-plan-to-deliver-a-polio-free-world-by-2018>, abgerufen am 16.8.2021. vgl. <https://www.br.de/nachrichten/wissen/welt-polio-tag-kinderlaehmung-ist-immer-noch-nicht-aus-erottet,RfiNlpa>, Artikel vom 25.1.2021, abgerufen am 16.8.2021.
- 51 Vgl. *Deutscher Ethikrat*: Impfen als Pflicht, 13.
- 52 Vgl. ebd. 14. Vgl. <https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/impfpflicht.html>, abgerufen am 16.8.2021
- 53 Vgl. <https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/impfpflicht/faq-masernschutzgesetz.html>, abgerufen am 16.8.2021.
- 54 Vgl. *Deutscher Ethikrat*: Impfen als Pflicht, 52.
- 55 Vgl. ebd., 43.

Freiwilligkeit dank gewonnener intellektueller Überzeugung und einer entsprechenden ethischen Einstellung zu setzen.⁵⁶ Fehlende Information und Aufklärung scheinen vermutlich ein Hauptgrund der schlechten Masernimpfquote zu sein.⁵⁷ Dabei erhöht gerade die »Vermittlung von Wissen zum Gemeinschaftsschutz die Impfbereitschaft [...], sofern die Risiken denen man sich damit aussetzt, als gering eingeschätzt werden«⁵⁸. Offenbar scheint das solidarische Verhalten als ergänzende Komponente zu einer moralisch oder juristisch verpflichtenden Handlung durch Überzeugung und Appell an den Gemeinschaftssinn durchaus zu greifen. In der gerade erlebten Pandemie ist es daher unerlässlich, auch an den Gemeinschaftssinn zu appellieren. Denn es handelt sich um einen leicht übertragbaren, damit sehr ansteckenden und potenziell tödlichen Erreger. Derzeit besteht keine Aussicht auf eine adäquate antivirale Therapie im Falle einer Erkrankung, weshalb die Impfung als präventive Maßnahme zur Eindämmung bleibt.

In Bezug auf eine Masernimpfpflicht hat sich der Deutsche Ethikrat eher für »sozial verbindliche Ethos-Regeln«⁵⁹ ausgesprochen. So wird der Nachweis einer ärztlichen Impfberatung vor der Anmeldung in einer Kindertagesstätte als »rechtstechnische Stärkung einer moralischen Impfpflicht« gesehen und damit als sanfter Druck im Falle eines Abweichens von der Impfung gewertet. Eine sanktionsbewehrte Impfpflicht wird in dieser Stellungnahme entgegen des dann verwirklichten Gesetzes nur vorgeschlagen, wenn es sich z. B. um medizinisches Personal handelt – also um Personen die andere, geschwächte Personen anstecken könnten.⁶⁰ Ohne in die Zukunft blicken zu können, schrieb der Deutsche Ethikrat in der Stellungnahme weiter, dass in einer besonderen Gefahrenlage diese Einschätzung einer an verbindlichen Ethos-Regeln orientierten Impfpflicht geändert und zur Abwehr der Gesundheitsgefährdung großer Bevölkerungsteile rigidere Interventionen gerechtfertigt sein könnten.⁶¹

Auch das Infektionsschutzgesetz sieht das so vor, wobei durch ein Urteil des Bundesverwaltungsgerichts aus dem Jahre 1959 auch die verfassungsmäßige Zulässigkeit eines solchen Gesetzes bestätigt wird.⁶² Diese Situation scheint mit der Co-

56 Vgl. ebd., 47.66.

57 Vgl. ebd., 67.

58 Ebd., 33.

59 Ebd. 48.

60 Vgl. ebd.

61 Vgl. ebd.

62 Vgl. Urteil des Bundesverwaltungsgerichts vom 14.07.1959 – I C 170.56, <https://openjur.de/u/2347742.html>, abgerufen am 16.7.2021. 2016 (!) hat der Wissenschaftliche Dienst des Bundestages die Zulässigkeit einer Impfpflicht geprüft und folgende Schlussfolgerung gezogen: »Eine Impfpflicht für bedrohte Teile der Bevölkerung im Falle der epidemischen Ausbreitung einer übertragbaren Krankheit mit schweren Verlaufsformen würde somit einen Eingriff in das Recht auf Leben und körperliche Unversehrtheit aus Art 2 Abs. 2 GG darstellen, der verfas-

ronapandemie eingetroffen zu sein, weshalb eine offene Diskussion über eine Impfpflicht gerechtfertigt ist. Dabei ist die gesellschaftliche Impfpraxis »geradezu [...] [ein] Musterbeispiel solidarischen Handelns [...], bei dem das Individual- und das Gemeinwohl eng miteinander verschränkt sind«⁶³.

Wie eng die Verschränkung ist, zeigt sich an mehreren Stellen. Die moralische Pflicht eines gemeinschaftlichen Schutzes durch die Impfung bewirkt, dass Menschen, die aus medizinischen Gründen nicht geimpft werden können, oder aktuell noch Kinder unter 12 Jahren, gemeinschaftlich geschützt werden. Ihnen wird dadurch auch wieder ein normaler Schulbesuch und die Pflege der für ihre Entwicklung so wichtigen Sozialkontakte ermöglicht. Die Maßnahme kann somit auch als »intergenerationelle Gerechtigkeit« gewertet werden.⁶⁴ Volkswirtschaftlich haben die bisherigen Maßnahmen hohe Kosten verursacht, sodass es aus dieser Sicht eine moralische Pflicht wäre, durch die Impfung wieder zu einem »normalen« wirtschaftlichen Gefüge zurück zu finden.⁶⁵ Menschen aus wohlhabenden Staaten mit guter medizinischer Infrastruktur haben im Sinne einer weltweiten moralischen Verpflichtung die Verantwortung, die Erkrankung durch eine Impfung nicht weiter zu tragen, und das gerade in Gebiete, die ihre Bevölkerung nicht so schützen kann, wie wir es derzeit tun, da sie eine schlechte(re) Gesundheitsversorgung haben.⁶⁶

Alle diese Argumente basieren auf der Annahme einer moralischen Verpflichtung, appellieren damit mehr oder minder stark an den Gemeinschaftssinn jedes Individuums. Wie hoch diese moralische Pflicht ist, lässt sich aus dem Risiko der Gefährdung Dritter ableiten und dürfte bei einer Coronainfektion als sehr hoch angenommen werden. Eine allgemeingültige rechtliche Verpflichtung lässt sich daraus jedoch nur schwer ableiten.

Die solidarische Haltung als Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl des Menschen mit dem Menschen zeigt sich aber nicht allein in der einfachen Akzeptanz der moralischen Pflicht, sondern in der darüber hinaus gehenden inneren Haltung, sich trotz möglicher Skepsis zum Wohle aller impfen zu lassen. Im speziellen Fall der Coronaimpfungen sind dabei gerade junge Menschen, die von einer Erkrankung weniger zu befürchten haben, im Fokus. Ihre Impfbereitschaft kann als Solidarität in Form einer über die nötige moralische Pflicht zum Schutz anderer hinausgehende Haltung gewertet werden. Denn sie können sich und andere durch andere Maßnahmen schützen, sind bei einer Infektion weniger gefährdet und müssten sich somit

sungsrechtlich jedoch gerechtfertigt erscheinen kann.“ <https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/413560/40484c918e669002c4bb60410a317057/wd-3-019-16-pdf-data.pdf>, abgerufen am 16.7.2021.

63 *Deutscher Ethikrat*: Impfen als Pflicht, 55f.

64 Vgl. ebd., 56.

65 Vgl. ebd., 61.

66 Vgl. ebd., 60.

möglichen Nebenwirkungen einer Impfung nicht fügen. Gerechtigkeit, im weitesten Sinne, und Wohltätigkeit kann in Form der solidarisch induzierten Impfbereitschaft zum Ausdruck gebracht werden.

Viel deutlicher ist die moralische Pflicht bei der Impfung von medizinischem Personal. Generell ist dabei zu klären, ob die weiche, eher subjektiv erscheinende »moralische Pflicht« im gewollten Maße wirken kann oder inwieweit es in speziellen Bereichen nicht strengere Vorgaben geben muss. Personen im Gesundheitswesen sind einerseits selbst gefährdet, andererseits gefährden sie selbst durch eine unerkannte Erkrankung geschwächte Patient*innen. Durch eine eigene Erkrankung, dem dadurch bedingten Ausfall und Quarantäneverordnungen für Kontaktpersonen im beruflichen Umfeld werden weitere Patient*innen indirekt gefährdet, da das Personal fehlt, um eine sichere Arbeitsleistung zu gewährleisten. Personengruppen, die für Gesundheit und Aufrechterhaltung des öffentlichen Lebens verantwortlich sind, haben daher eine besondere moralische Pflicht zur Impfung, wobei sich unter bestimmten Umständen durchaus auch eine juristische Verpflichtung rechtfertigen ließe.⁶⁷

Begründet werden kann dies durch die freiwillig getroffene Berufswahl, die erhöhte Verantwortung und die Vorbildfunktion. Deshalb muss eine juristische und berufsrechtliche Sanktionierung möglich sein, und es darf deshalb auch »die grundrechtlich garantierte Berufsfreiheit zum Schutz wichtiger Gemeinschaftsgüter eingeschränkt werden«⁶⁸.

Gerechtigkeit beruht darauf, frei über seine Lebensumstände entscheiden zu dürfen, unter der Voraussetzung, dass die Rechte anderer dadurch nicht eingeschränkt werden. Orientiert man sich einzig daran, so wird es aufgrund der Vielfältigkeit der Meinungen schwierig diese Pandemie zu überstehen. Solidarität in der speziellen Situation der Coronapandemie muss über die einfache Gerechtigkeit hinausgehen und als Wohltätigkeit erkannt werden.⁶⁹ Das bedeutet, dass auch Menschen, die am Sinn der getroffenen Maßnahmen zweifeln oder einer Impfung skeptisch entgegenstehen, die Maßnahmen umsetzen, um gemeinschaftlich diese Krise durchstehen zu helfen. Das bedeutet nicht, begründete Kritik nicht äußern zu dürfen; in einer Demokratie muss das grundsätzlich möglich sein. Das heißt jedoch auch, sich zu guter Letzt dem Gebot unterzuordnen, also mindestens das moralisch Gebotene gemeinschaftlich umzusetzen. Damit wird man selbst geschützt, schützt andere und wird durch Reduktion von Erkrankungen denjenigen, deren Schicksal es ist, sich dennoch anzustecken, die bestmögliche Versorgung zukommen zulassen, da Krankenhäuser so nicht überlastet werden. Denjenigen,

67 Vgl. ebd. 61f.

68 Ebd., 63f.

69 Zur Bedeutung des Zusammenhalts moderner Gesellschaften und Freiheit vgl. *Steinvorth*: Kann Solidarität erzwingbar sein? 60ff.

die trotz der Gefahr arbeiten müssen, wird gleichzeitig signalisiert, dass *alle* alles daransetzen, die Infektionszahlen gering zu halten, um sie damit weder psychisch noch körperlich übermäßig zu belasten.

Solange die Prävention in Form der Impfung die einzige Möglichkeit zur Eindämmung der Pandemie bleibt, hat jeder Mensch, der sich impfen lassen kann, auch eine moralische Pflicht, dies zu tun. Dies gründet rein medizinisch auf der Tatsache einer leicht übertragbaren potenziell tödlichen Viruserkrankung und ethisch auf der Pflicht, zum Wohle der Gemeinschaft zu handeln, solange es keine adäquate Alternative gibt. Die moralische Pflicht bleibt dabei ein Appell an die Vernunft jedes Individuums ohne rechtlichen Verpflichtungsgrad. Eine Begründung der Ablehnung ist nicht nötig; jedoch kann durch andere Rechtsmittel – ethisch gut begründet – der Druck auf die Nicht-Impfwilligen erhöht werden. Die Solidarität erkenne ich darin, dass trotz aller Skepsis gegenüber einem neuartigen Vakzin und seiner schnellen Entwicklung, sich alle gemeinschaftlich diesem Risiko der Impfung aussetzen und zum Wohle der Gemeinschaft impfen lassen.

Klar zu fordern und von Solidarität im eigentlichen Sinne abzugrenzen, ist die Pflicht zur Impfung von Personal, dass durch seine Tätigkeit Menschen, die aufgrund ihrer Grunderkrankung nicht geimpft werden können oder Kinder sind, gefährden würde.

7. Fazit

Solidarität ist ein komplexer Begriff und weist zahlreiche Facetten auf. Er wird häufig benutzt, um ein Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl auszudrücken, den Gemeinschaftssinn zu unterstützen oder unbürokratische Hilfe im Sinne einer moralischen Attitüde zu bieten. Sie stellt ein tugendhaftes positives Haltungsbild dar, über das ein Mensch verfügen können sollte. Solidarität und moralische Pflicht überschneiden sich, wobei die Solidarität oft über eine pflichtgemäße Handlung hinausgeht (supererogatorische Handlung). Der Begriff der Solidarität sendet in seiner Verwendung ein starkes humanitäres Signal aus. Durch den Appell an die Solidarität können auch Menschen bewegt werden, denen die moralische Pflicht allein nicht als Handlungsaufforderung reicht. Erst die Erinnerung an den Gemeinssinn bewegt sie, eine bestimmte Haltung einzunehmen. Insofern kommt der Begrifflichkeit der Solidarität auch im medizinisch-ethischen Zusammenhang eine zusätzliche Bedeutung im Umgang mit heiklen Themen, wie sie in der Bewältigung der Coronapandemie oder der Organtransplantation notwendig sind, zu.

Solidarität bedeutet selbstlos zu handeln, ohne eine Gegenleistung zu erwarten, und eigene Egoismen zurückzustellen. Der Solidarität wohnt eine positive Konnotation inne. Gemeinhin wird unsolidarisches Verhalten abgelehnt, während solidarisches Handeln als tugendhaft und vorbildlich gilt. Darin liegt eben auch das Pro-

blem in der Verwendung des Begriffs. Solidarität kann nicht für alle gleich gewichtet oder als für alle gleichermaßen geltend gefordert werden. Somit kann es keine solidarische Pflicht geben. Es gibt vielmehr moralische und rechtliche Pflichten, die sich überschneiden können, während solidarisches Handeln über das, was moralisch und/oder rechtlich gefordert werden kann, auf bewusst und betont freiwilliger Basis hinausgeht. Es bleibt dennoch die unbestreitbare implizite positive Wertschätzung der Solidarität. Dies sollte im Sprachgebrauch berücksichtigt werden, da es im Umkehrschluss dazu führt, eine Haltung, die nicht den Standards bestimmter Solidaritätsforderungen entspricht, als schlecht zu bewerten und möglicherweise so bestimmte Teilgruppen der Gesellschaft ausschließen.

Solidarität sollte aus einem empathiegeprägten inneren Antrieb heraus entstehen, denn das macht sie zu einer belastbaren und nachhaltigen Größe, die unverzichtbar ist und bleibt. Dies ließ sich an zwei Beispielen zeigen: Aus medizinischer Perspektive existiert eine moralische Pflicht, sich mit dem Thema der Organspende auseinanderzusetzen. Durch die entsprechende Positionierung signalisiert man über die Grenze der Auseinandersetzung hinaus seine Solidarität mit Betroffenen (Organempfängern), deren Angehörigen und medizinischem Personal (indem die Last einer Entscheidung bzw. der Aufklärung abgenommen wird). In der Verwirklichung einer postmortalen Organspende zeigt sich dann die eigentliche Solidarität mit dem schwer erkrankten Organempfänger, denn dazu ist niemand moralisch verpflichtet. Die Spende geht also über das hinaus, was moralisch geboten ist. Diese supererogatorische (solidarische) Handlung schließt ein »unsolidarisches Verhalten« aus, das über das pflichtgemäße Handeln hinausgehendes nicht als generell verbindliches eingefordert werden kann. So gesehen ist die Organspende keine solidarische Pflicht.

In der erlebten Pandemie, insbesondere dann, wenn es darum geht, andere Menschen zu schützen, werden Maßnahmen mit dem Ethos der Solidarität gegenüber dem Mitmenschen begründet. Aber auch dann, wenn es um die Verteilung oder Beschaffung knapper Güter geht, wird der Begriff benutzt. Solidarität steht hier als Garant einer egalitären, gerechten Verteilung knapper Güter.

Die Einschränkungen oder der (vorübergehende) Verzicht auf Grundrechte sind eine besondere Herausforderung, denn sie betreffen unser menschlichstes Inneres und unsere kulturelle Sozialisation. In Erinnerung an die bewegenden Bilder aus Bergamo oder an die Massengräber Brasiliens scheint zu Beginn der Pandemie die Motivation zum gemeinschaftlichen Handeln groß gewesen zu sein. Es gab viele Initiativen, die im kleinen und großen Rahmen Hilfe boten. Die Betroffenheit war Movers für ein solidarisches, über das moralisch Gebotene hinausgehendes Denken und Handeln, denn es hätte jeden von uns treffen können. Im Unterschied zu einer Organspende war hier die Bedrohungslage unmittelbar. Durch die eigene Leiderfahrung und/oder die Betroffenheit vom Leid der Mitmenschen wird Solidarität und der damit verbundene Gemeinschaftssinn greifbar. Das gefühlte Risiko mobilisiert

zur Einhaltung bzw. Akzeptanz der angeordneten Maßnahmen. Je näher diese direkte Leiderfahrung durch Erfahrungen oder eigene Ängste ist, desto bereitwilliger werden Freiheiten zugunsten der gesellschaftlich erforderlichen Maßnahmen zurückgestellt.

Die Qualität der Umsetzung getroffener Maßnahmen, sowie deren Einhaltung erfordert ein Höchstmaß an moralischem Pflichtbewusstsein. Solidarisches Verhalten bedeutet, die auf Basis wissenschaftlicher Erkenntnisse und durch Mehrheitsbildung getroffenen Maßnahmen auch dann zu akzeptieren, wenn man sie für unplausibel hält. Ein solches gemeinschaftliches Verhalten könnte eine nicht weiter zu begründende Allgemeingültigkeit erlangen, was möglicherweise auch rechtliche Sanktionierungen unnötig machen würde. Offensichtlich reichten moralische (auf Einsicht und Vernunft basierende) Pflichten nicht aus, weshalb die Maßnahmen teilweise rechtlich sanktioniert wurden. Ab diesem Zeitpunkt kann aber nicht mehr von einem solidarischen Verhalten gesprochen werden, da dieses rechtlich »erzwungen« wird. Solidarität erfordert eine freiwillige, wahrhaftige Einsicht und das Zurückstellen von Egoismen und persönlichen Freiheiten zum Wohle aller. Ähnliches gilt auch für Impfungen. Die Einsicht in die Notwendigkeit von Impfung über den eigenen individuellen Schutz hinaus zum Schutz ungewollt Ungeimpfter oder Kindern spiegelt die über die moralische Pflicht hinausgehende Solidarität. Dies gilt insbesondere für jüngere Menschen, für welche die Impfung weniger individuellen und mehr gemeinschaftlichen Schutz bedeutet.

Eine echte solidarische Haltung bewiesen und beweisen Menschen, die über das pflichtgemäß erforderliche Maß hinaus engagierte Hilfe anboten und anbieten, indem sie beispielsweise freiwillig wieder in den Gesundheitsdienst eintraten und eintreten, oder Nachbarschaftshilfe leisteten.

Das ärztliche Ethos verpflichtet, menschliches Leben zu schützen. Aus dieser Sicht wird jede Diskussion, die hier geführt wurde, obsolet. Es müsste alles daran gesetzt werden, dass Organe gespendet werden, die einschränkende Maßnahmen zur Bekämpfung der Coronapandemie könnten nicht streng genug und Impfungen sollten für alle verpflichtend sein. Doch so einfach ist das nicht, denn auch Mediziner*innen sollten sich der individuellen Freiheit jeder Person bewusst sein. Somit kann auch hier »nur« an die Vernunft und das Gemeinwohl, kurzum die Solidarität, appelliert werden, um schwierige medizinisch-ethische Situationen zu bewältigen.

Wie anfangs ausgeführt entwickelt sich Solidarität zunächst oft innerhalb einer (Schicksals-)Gemeinschaft. Alle, die im Gesundheitswesen tätig sind, stellen in gewisser Weise eine solche Gruppe dar. Auch wenn nicht alle gleicher Meinung sind, so bilden sich mehrheitlich oft gemeinsame Sichtweisen zu bestimmten Themen. Sie solidarisieren sich, um die Trauer über den Tod eines Patienten auf der Warteliste zu verarbeiten, die Frage nach einer Organspende an trauernde Angehörige heranzutragen, den Stress durch die Coronapandemie und die eigene Angst vor einer Infektion zu bewältigen. Bleiben diese Gedanken oder auch solidarischen Ideen unge-

hört, so wird eine Chance verpasst, die solidarische Haltung im Sinne einer freiwilligen Einsicht in ein dem Gemeinwohl verpflichtetes Verhalten in andere Gruppen zu tragen und ihr damit die nötige Breitenwirkung zu verschaffen.

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Solidarity and Critical Whiteness in Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

Anna-Lena Oldehus

In 2021, the world of anti-racist activists, critical race theorists, feminists, literary scholars, and critical thinkers lost the Black feminist activist and writer bell hooks. In her numerous publications and talks she positioned herself as ardent critic and radical analyzer of the intersectional oppressions caused by racism, patriarchy, and capitalism. In her text “Sisterhood: Political Solidarity between Women”¹, she laid out the adversarial power dynamics that split the feminist movement of her time along the lines of race² and class. According to hooks, the concept of ‘Sisterhood’ originally stood for unconditional solidarity among women³, but was all too often wrongly appropriated by *white* feminists: Instead of recognizing racialized and classed differences in women’s lived realities, ‘Sisterhood’ was used by *white* bourgeois feminists to build an illusive common ground of victimhood, effectively excluding the experiences and voices of Black women and women of color. Further, by cultivating this act of colorblindness,⁴ they perpetuated a powerful affective dynamic that protected *white* women* from feeling bad about their own complicity in

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- 1 hooks, bell: Sisterhood: Political Solidarity between Women. In: Feminist Review 23(1986) 125–138. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1394725>.
 - 2 Contrary to discourses in Germany, the concept and term of ‘race’ is established and used in academic and non-academic discourses in the United States. In terms of definition, I follow Paula Moya’s and Hazel Markus’ explanation, as laid out in her book *Doing Race*: “Contrary to what most people believe, race and ethnicity are not *things* that people *have* or *are*. Rather, they are *actions* that people *do*. Race and ethnicity are social, historical, and philosophical *processes* that people have done for hundreds of years and are still doing. They emerge through the social transactions that take place among different kinds of people, in a variety of institutional structures [...] over time, across space, and in all kinds of situations” (Markus, Hazel Rose/Moya, Paula M L.: *Doing Race*. 21 Essays for the 21st Century, New York 2010, 4).
 - 3 The asterisk here represents the category of women as a gender inclusive subject position, not restricted to biologist markers or social attributions.
 - 4 The politics of colorblindness is rooted in the belief that in order to eliminate race and racism, one simply has to ‘not see’ color. Colorblindness has been described and discussed as counter-productive and harmful, as it erases discourses and efforts that make visible racial structures, hierarchies, and disparities. Colorblindness silences and sugarcoats racialized re-

the system of *white* supremacy. Instead of acknowledging and analyzing the existing differences between women*, a colorblind, *white* Sisterhood was cultivated only to cater to feelings of *white* comfort. hooks convincingly and unapologetically exposes the connections between colorblindness, acts of exclusion, and *white* feelings. She thereby points towards the *white* activists' illusion of relegating the perpetrator, the enemy, the sexist, the racist only to the *outside*, instead of acknowledging and reflecting on their own racist actions and complicities: They "did not acknowledge and confront the enemy *within*. They were not prepared to forego privilege and do the 'dirty work' [...] that is necessary in the development of radical political consciousness, the first task being honest critique and evaluation of one's social statuses, values, political beliefs, etc."⁵ While never leaving external structures of systemic oppression out of sight, hooks also always turns towards internalized forms of racism and sexism. To her, working through the inner workings of hostility is the ultimate consequence and necessity of solidarity.

Although most of her works were published in the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, hooks' impact is still present today and resonates through numerous references in academic talks and papers. Her ideas and observations make epilogues to novels and scholarly texts, they cover feminist merchandise like tote bags and t-shirts, or cardboard signs at feminist marches. For the field of literary studies, her essay on "Sisterhood" initiates considerations concerning the impact that contemporary literature can have on thinking about solidarity and *whiteness*: What does contemporary literature potentially do that speaks to hooks' remarks on (failed) solidarity, of her critique regarding colorblindness and *white* comfort? How does contemporary literature make us engage with questions of solidarity and *whiteness*? And, ultimately, how does that literature make us engage in the 'dirty work' that hooks identified as indispensable for the creation of solidary bonds?

In a reading of Junot Díaz's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*⁶ (2009), I hope to not only pay tribute to bell hooks' intellectual work on solidarity, but to also discuss answers to the questions posed above. *Oscar Wao* is narrated by Yunior who also appears as a character in the story. Covering the years from 1944 until the late 1990s, he tells the story of Oscar's family – his mother Beli, his sister Lola, and his grandfather, Abelard. Beli, fleeing from the dictatorship of Trujillo, goes into exile in the United States, where she raises Lola and Oscar, an overweight comic-nerd who finds refuge in role games, sci-fi novels, fantasy language, and the ever-lasting search for true love. By telling the story of the family de León, Yunior

alities, rather than generating equality. See, for example, Eddo-Lodge, Reni: *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People about Race*, London 2018, 82f.

5 hooks: *Sisterhood*, 128f, my emphasis.

6 Díaz, Junot: *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, New York 2007. In the following *Oscar Wao*.

also engages in the project of narrating the history of the Dominican Republic by including accounts about the multifaceted devastations that colonialism, US imperialism, and dictatorships have instilled in the country and its people. My reading of *Oscar Wao* continues hooks' discussion by focusing on structural and formal features of the novel that specifically expose hegemonic constructions of *whiteness*. To that end I will approach Díaz's text with an interdisciplinary frame of literary studies and critical whiteness studies. This framework enables me to consider the literary form of *Oscar Wao* and its effect on the reader, and to bring it in conversation with constructions of *whiteness* that are manifested in its alleged absence and universality. Thereby, it is not my intention to recenter *whiteness*, or to make visible what is invisible *and* hypervisible at the same time.⁷ Instead, I want to highlight structures and modes in *Oscar Wao* that make *whiteness* visible to shed light on its disabling potential for creating solidary bonds. As I will show, these moments of exposure generate responses of discomfort and *white* fragility and thereby offer moments of self-reflective work that bell hooks deemed necessary for a sincere solidary act of Sisterhood.

In order to bring my reading of *Oscar Wao* and bell hooks' elaboration on *whiteness* and solidarity into conversation, this contribution will focus on three aspects: First, I will discuss the emotional dimension of *white* fragility that *Oscar Wao* elicits. I read the engagement with this affective response as the 'dirty work' that bell hooks sees lacking in *white* feminists' activist work. In the second section I want to focus on the novel as a European bourgeois literary form. By focusing on dynamics and responses inside and outside Díaz's work, I will show how his novel responds to a larger decolonial critique that bell hooks already initiated with regard to *white* bourgeois feminist movements. Finally, I will explore the novel's capacity to narrate through difference. hooks sees difference, diversity, and alteration as pivotal to generating solidary bonds. Through its narrative structures the novel generates a story-telling mode that is a collective project and thereby questions *white* expectations of story-telling and representation.

7 Maureen Reddy points out: "Whiteness [...] seems invisible, transparent, to those who are white [...]. In contrast, whiteness makes itself hypervisible to those who are not white" (Reddy, Maureen T.: Invisibility/Hypervisibility: The Paradox of Normative Whiteness. In: *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy* 9(1998) H. 2, 55–64. <https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/43587107>, 55).

1. White Fragility in The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao

Aliza Hausman writes as an introductory statement on her blog *Memoirs of a Jewminicana*:

I'm sick of hearing people say they feel like they can't understand 'The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao' [sic] because of all those Spanish terms. Why didn't Junot Diaz [sic] and his lovely publishers throw in some sort of glossary in the back? Just what were they thinking? We'll never know.⁸

Hausman then provides an expansive list with translations for the many Spanish phrases and links to encyclopedia websites that explain the meaning of the numerous intertextual references that *Oscar Wao* includes. As literary scholar Rune Graulund notes, apart from standard American English, the most prominent languages and codes in the novel comprise: "(1) [...] standard Spanish; (2) Dominican Spanish; (3) street-speak English; (4) Spanglish; (5) nerd-speak" as well as "academic jargon" (32–3). I would add to this list the many pop-cultural, intertextual references as a sixth form of symbolic signifier to Marvel superheroes, comics, and role game figures. Through the use of many different linguistic registers, Díaz makes readers know a (fictional) world from which they are potentially and partially excluded via language and codes. Similar to the first blog entry, the following one shows how much frustration this exclusion causes and how much work reading *Oscar Wao* entails:

This [blog] is fantastic! I'm still only a third into the book and, while I'm interested in using a translating program to find out the Spanish meaning, I'd rather stay on the couch with my novel than go check the computer. It loses the flow. As soon as I found your glossary, I printed it out and stapled it into my book. I know it will improve my reading of the book now! (Bernice)⁹

I argue that the feeling of frustration is connected to the construction of *whiteness* as removed, invisible, and as assuming a neutral positionality. The text's use of many languages and references challenges the readers' position as absent spectators, forces them to do physical work (get up, print pages, staple them, etc.), and to engage with concomitant feelings of frustration. Readers cannot simply lie on the sofa, enjoy the privilege of accessing the text, and comfortably glide into the wondrous worlds of fiction. Instead, the text constantly exposes their ignorance

8 Hausman, Aliza: The Oscar Wao Vocabulary Dictionary Glossary, You're Welcome, Junot Diaz. In: *Memoirs of a Jewminicana*, 28 Dec. 2016. <https://alizahausman.com/2008/12/09/the-oscar-wao-vocabulary-dictionary-glossary-youre-welcome-junot-diaz/>.

9 Ebd., Posted June 5, 2009 at 8:42 pm.

and lack of knowledge, which not only requires them to engage in extra work, but also engenders an emotional response which I frame as what sociologist Robin DiAngelo terms *white* fragility: “White people in North America live in a social environment that protects and insulates them from race-based stress. This insulated environment of racial protection builds white expectations for racial comfort while at the same time lowering the ability to tolerate racial stress” (DiAngelo 54). She describes *white* fragility here with regards to its socio-affective dimensions in North American society. The notion of ‘racial protection’ and ‘racial comfort’ reminds us of bell hooks’ observations of *white* feminists’ shielding off racial stress through the politics of colorblindness. *Oscar Wao*, likewise, affectively undermines the alleged normalcy of *whiteness* as it causes moments of fragility not only through its many language registers and codes, but also through its form and structure.

As mentioned earlier, Yunior is narrator and fictional author of *Oscar Wao*. He is not removed or outside the story, but positions himself as the writer of it, while also appearing as a character. Throughout the novel, Yunior time and again addresses the reader directly as ‘you’. While this could be read as a moment of connection and inclusion (‘hey you, reader, good to have you on board!’), or a welcoming move as in a ‘Note to the Reader – let me explain to you how this story is going to work,’ Yunior uses the asides towards the reader to unsettle the reading position by constantly altering the proximity between text and reader. Very often, he uses footnotes, 33 in total, to add information to the plot proper and to address the reader. Instead of using footnotes as objective, quasi-academic textual space to provide context, Yunior keeps narrating through them in his rather uncouth attitude. Two very striking examples are the footnotes 1 and 5:

1. For those of you who missed your mandatory two seconds of Dominican history: Trujillo, one of the twentieth century’s most infamous dictators, ruled the Dominican Republic between 1930 and 1961 with an implacable ruthless brutality.¹⁰

[...]

5. [...] during the First American Occupation of the DR, which ran from 1916 to 1924. (You didn’t know we were occupied twice in the twentieth century? Don’t worry, when you have kids they won’t know the U.S. occupied Iraq either) [...].¹¹

By directly confronting the reader, the narrator subverts the role of the spectator: While the reader usually ‘watches,’ or rather, reads along the events of the story, the text in the footnotes looks back at the reader. The novel opens with a rather broad

10 Díaz, *Oscar Wao*, 2, fn 1.

11 Ebd., 19, fn 5.

perspective on the era of European colonization of the Americas and the enslavement of Africans, which, according to Yunior, brought an unredeemable curse, the *fukú*, to the Caribbean.¹² Very much following the features of a historical novel, the text initially grants a distance between the narrated events and the readers' involvement in them. Readers are spectators (albeit not un-moved) following the story from a comfortable distance of removed *whiteness*. It is safe to watch the wrong-doings of long-gone imperialists and historical villains. However, through the footnotes Yunior dismantles this safe distance of being removed, and puts readers on the spot. The *white gaze* is being disrupted, and the history of enslavement, imperialism, and colonialism is now looking back at 'you,' the *white* spectator. By setting the contemporary reader in direct connection to issues of violent events of the past, Yunior dissolves the temporal border between long-gone history and the readers' presence, between then and now. He thereby makes visible how the system of *white* supremacy has never ceased, but has merely changed form and continues, for example, in the privilege of ignorance. Further, readers have no chance to relegate any form of decolonial criticism to a more distanced diegetic level ('it's all just in the story'), but are faced with the fictional author directly confronting them. Thus, it is not only through moments of immediate exclusion via language, but also through the role of the narrator and the textual space of the footnote that *Oscar Wao* calls into question historical construction of *whiteness* as being removed and unmarked.

Does that mean that *Oscar Wao* is not meant for readers who assume a *white* subject position? That they are entirely left out of the intended readership? No, of course not. Literary critic Sean O'Brien states that despite *Oscar Wao's* overflow of untranslated languages, the text seems to always provide just enough intelligibility to follow along.¹³ One could argue that the author is the only person who can fully understand the novel's many registers and references, which, otherwise, create a complex dynamic of distance and proximity, access and exclusion. In terms of language registers and codes, it seems that *Oscar Wao* is written for everyone and for no-one. In terms of positionality, it leaves open who the intended readership is. I consider this open question a relevant one, particularly when turning towards deliberations of what the text might reveal about different communities and positionalities of readers. The text establishes flexible relations to readers that engender a self-reflective process based on, i.e., moments of exclusion and feelings of frustration. I therefore want to reiterate my point concerning constructions of *whiteness*: *Oscar Wao* takes *whiteness* out of its assumed position of being removed from the text and of being absent from long-gone historical events. It provides the opportunity for readers to

12 Vgl. ebd., 1.

13 Vgl. O'Brien, Sean: Some Assembly Required: Intertextuality, Marginalization, and 'The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao'. In: The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association 45(2012) H. 1, 75–94. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43150831>, 76.

reflect on their own entanglements and complicities in the ongoing history of *white* supremacy. The engagement with resulting feelings of irritation and frustration, of *white* fragility, as expressed by the bloggers, is exactly what enables the 'dirty work' that bell hooks asked for.

2. Writing Back to Bourgeois Ideals

One major point of critique that bell hooks repeatedly discussed in her text is that *white* feminists turned feminism a bourgeois class endeavor that excluded women's voices from lower social classes of all ethnic backgrounds: "[W]e cannot develop sustaining ties or political solidarity using the model of Sisterhood created by bourgeois women's liberationists".¹⁴ *White* women, hooks argued, theorized and enacted feminism through their ideals and worked towards their retention, as they saw these ideals to be universal, superior, and worth striving for. Other interpretations of feminist activism, other forms and perspectives were neglected and deemed adversarial to the cause.¹⁵ Interestingly, the development of the novel as literary form shows parallels to hooks' observations concerning political activism: Literary scholar Mariano Siskind elaborates on the role of the novel during the era of European Enlightenment and draws a connection between the rise of the novel and the distribution of European bourgeois ideals: "Because the novel was the hegemonic form that bourgeois imagination adopted in the nineteenth century, and because of the aesthetic and political force of the social totalities it was capable of constructing, most novels dealing with distant places produced powerful images of the globalization of bourgeois culture"¹⁶. The parallel that I see in hooks' and Siskind's elaborations is that both, activism and the novel, constitute powerful forms through which hegemonic *white* and bourgeois ideals were distributed, represented, and maintained.

How do considerations concerning those ideals and the novel relate to Junot Díaz's *Oscar Wao*? The beginning(s) of *Oscar Wao* offer ample possible connections here: The narrator begins the story by describing the curse that the enslavement of Africans through European colonizers had brought about the Caribbean:

They say it came first from Africa, carried in the screams of the enslaved [...] that it was a demon drawn into Creation through the nightmare door that was

14 hooks: Sisterhood, 128.

15 Vgl. ebd., 129.

16 Siskind, Mariano: The Globalization of the Novel and the Novelization of the Global. A Critique of World Literature. In: D'haen, Theo/Domínguez, César/Rosendahl, Mads (Hg.): *World Literature. A Reader*, London 2010, 329–352, 330.

cracked open in the Antilles. *Fukú americanus* [...] – the Curse and the Doom of the New World.¹⁷

These opening lines of Díaz's literary work read like a testimony to the repercussions of European globalization. While the European bourgeoisie in the 19th century considered the imperialist and colonialist endeavors to be a useful and necessary means to spread their enlightened principles and ethics (for example, via the novel)¹⁸, *Oscar Wao* directly confronts the readers in the 21st century with the horrors that these endeavors generated. He thereby refutes any myths that the phase of European Enlightenment was an era of universal progress and improvement and allows a different story to be told.

bell hooks states that one way to maintain their hegemonic power position within the feminist movement was for *white* women to assume a commonality of victimhood. Not only does hooks hold victimhood to be a detrimental position to activism as it negates agency and power that women own despite all hardship; also, she points out that the belief of a shared ground of oppression is a manipulative myth of *white* women/womanhood.¹⁹ Their insistence on common victimhood disabled solidary bonds as it rendered different realities invisible. According to hooks, it is through the acknowledgement of the various disadvantages and capacities that different and appropriate feminist responses can be generated. It is only by refuting the myth of common victimhood that solidary feminist bonds can originate. Instead of following only the ideals, interpretations, and theories of bourgeois *white* women, hooks encourages us to see feminist movements as an umbrella term under which many different voices and perspectives can hold – perspectives that are inevitable to engage with in order to work towards social justice. I read *Oscar Wao*'s opening as a similar take: He uses the novel as an umbrella medium through which a different perspective to the one of European Enlightenment and 19th century bourgeoisie can be told. He does not tell this story between the lines, subliminally or indirectly, but positions it right at the very beginning of his story. It is this perspective on history that functions as a gate through which readers enter the story. Of course, over the centuries the novel has been appropriated and developed through a myriad of authors, stories, influences, and agendas. But when following Siskind's conception of the novel as a bourgeois medium of 19th-century European globalization, Díaz's choice of opening reads like a response, like a correction, and a diversification of (hi)stories which can enable bonds of solidarity.

The beginning quoted above, however, is not the only one in the novel. *Oscar Wao*'s many beginnings and endings make it even more interesting with regard to

17 Díaz, *Oscar Wao*, 1.

18 Siskind, *The Globalization of the Novel*, 330.

19 hooks: *Sisterhood*, 127.

conceptions of the novel as a bourgeois medium: Characteristic of the European novel is the aspect of 'bildung' – of a character's gradual progress towards intellectual autonomy and self-improvement through reason and morality. The title of Díaz's novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, alludes to such a progress, as it sets out to tell the life-story of Oscar, as brief and wondrous as it may be. In order to frame progress, a story needs a definitive beginning and ending that *Oscar Wao* does not provide: The first beginning of the novel reads like a mystical historical novel, in which a yet absent narrator takes the readers to the curses, horrors, and wonders of the Caribbean. In a following chapter, the narrative perspective switches to Lola, Oscar's sister, who tells her story to Yunior. In her accounts she focuses on incidents about her family and her youth, leaving the reader wondering whether the novel is now her story. After switching back to Yunior, all subsequent chapters (and sometimes footnotes) imply new beginnings or the re-telling of a story: "[b]efore there was an American Story [...] there was their mother Hypatía Belicia Cabral"²⁰, "It started with me. The year before Oscar fell, [...]"²¹, "[w]hen the family talks about it at all – which is like never – they always begin in the same place [...]"²², and a footnote saying: "There are other beginnings certainly..."²³, in which Yunior considers the 'discovery' of the New World, or the U.S. invasion in 1916 to be alternative beginnings appropriate for the story. The same pattern is true for the ending of the novel: Chapter 7 is entitled "The Final Voyage" including a subchapter entitled "The Last Days of Oscar Wao." At the end of this chapter, Oscar, the (anti-)hero of the novel, is being shot; however, the novel does not conclude with his life's end. The following 8th chapter, "The End of the Story" includes a section "On A Super Final Note"²⁴, only to be followed by "The Final Letter," which after two and a half pages brings the novel eventually to an end. Not only does the novel present to us Oscar as an obese, nerdy, depressed, and constantly heart-broken anti-hero who is far from undergoing a progress that European 'bildung' would have predicted. It, too, does not offer the form through which readers could identify and witness any progress – neither for the characters, nor for the development of the story. *Oscar Wao* does not cater to readers' expectations or to European traditions of linearity and progress but follows its very own urge to simply and somehow tell story and history. It therefore requires readers to create an alternative mode of engaging with the text, similar to hooks call to "define our own terms"²⁵ with regard to forming bonds and connections outside of *white* bourgeois dominance.

20 Díaz, *Oscar Wao*, 77.

21 Ebd., 167.

22 Ebd., 211.

23 Ebd., 211, fn 22.

24 Ebd., 324.

25 hooks: *Sisterhood*, 129.

A glance towards critics' futile attempts to allocate *Oscar Wao* to a specific genre shows that *Oscar Wao* not only plays with the notion of genre as art form of the novel, but also undermines genres that allocate books according to specific expectations: While Monica Hanna describes *Oscar Wao* as a "Künstlerroman"²⁶, Elena Machado Sáez introduces it as "seductive novel"²⁷, and Daniel Bautista relates it to "fantastic literature," "tropical magic realism," and "punk-rock feminism"²⁸, literary critic Michiko Kakutani for *The New York Times* seems to have given up completely on coming up with any traditional literary genre categories and describes the novel as "Mario Vargas Llosa meets 'Star Trek' meets David Foster Wallace meets Kanye West"²⁹. Their rather creative bafflement expresses a conflict arising from the familiarity of the form 'the' novel and what *Oscar Wao* actually does. *Oscar Wao* is considered to belong to the 'New Global Novel,' to 'Contemporary Transnational Literature,' and even to a more radical and disputed form of 'Postrace Literature'. Novels published under these genre labels continue, but also refute, the legacy of postcolonial writing, as they negotiate not only the (European) form of the novel and the hegemonic position of the English language, but also the representations of diasporic communities and immigrants' experiences in a globalized and digitalized 21st century.³⁰ Authors of these books macerate and problematize seemingly dichotomous groups of 'them' and 'us' and refuse the role of a spokesperson or representative for an alleged homogenous community. They write about their own complicities in *white* supremacy and sexist structures, while unapologetically pointing towards any forms of racism and xenophobic traditions in contemporary U.S. society. They juggle various languages, dialects and slangs, and experiment with different forms of writing – not necessarily to please the readership, but to make their kaleidoscopic stories tellable. The many linguistic registers and the footnotes, discussed above serve as a fitting example, of course. These texts make use of the form of the novel, but play with it and fill it with contemporary diasporic and immigrant structures and content. They take the novel, and continue

26 Hanna, Monica: A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Cannibalist. Junot Díaz and the Decolonial Imagination. In: Hanna, Monica/Vargas, Jennifer Hardord/Saldívar, José David (Hg.): Junot Díaz and the Decolonial Imagination, Durham 2016, 89–111. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822374763-005>, 89.

27 Machado Sáez, Elena: Dictating Desire, Dictating Diaspora: Junot Díaz's the Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao As Foundational Romance. In: *Contemporary Literature* 52(2011) H. 3, 522–555. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cli.2011.0029>, 522.

28 Bautista, Daniel: Comic Book Realism: Form and Genre in Junot Díaz's The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao. In: *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 21(2010) H. 1, 41–53, 41.

29 Kakutani, Michiko: Travails of an Outcast. In: *The New York Times*, 4 Sept. 2007. <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/04/books/04diaz.html>.

30 See, i.e., works by Ocean Vuong, Taiye Selasi, NoViolet Bulawayo, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Edwidge Danticat, Elaine Castillo, Daphne Palasi Andreades.

the postcolonial tradition of leading it further and further away from its legacy of being mere medium for European bourgeois ideals. The novel therefore is and ever more becomes an umbrella that enables a myriad of perspectives, voices, forms, beginnings, and endings, through which any myths of commonality and universal ideals are challenged.

3. Speaking through Difference

In this last section I want to discuss bell hooks' insistence on acknowledging difference and diversity as an asset for solidarity. The previous discussion concerning the form of the novel and *white* bourgeois ideals already touched upon this issue. bell hooks encourages her readers to learn "to gain strength from our diversity".³¹ While this quote reads like a rather general and abstract assignment, hooks specifies it by elaborating on the significance of learning languages, cultural customs, and of doing research about each other's backgrounds. These abilities, and, more importantly, the willingness to achieve them, turn feminist gatherings into productive and joyous events.³² She capitalizes on the ability to communicate not only *via* different language and different codes, but also to nurture a self-reflective capacity to talk *about* those differences.³³ According to her, this ability enabled her and her students to feel "a sense of community, of Sisterhood".³⁴ Hence, it is not merely the dissolution of all difference through learning all languages and codes, but rather the permission to acknowledge and discuss difference appreciatively that generates solidary bonds. By focusing on narrating aspects of the story-telling process, I want to show how *Oscar Wao* enables readers to engage with difference on various levels. Yunior includes different voices (apart from the aforementioned different languages) and thereby not only gives up narrative authority, but also encourages readers to deal with perspectives that are contrary to fixed beliefs and perceptions. Further, the novel adjusts the role of the reader according to its 'need', forcing readers once again out of their assumed removed position somewhere outside the text. These communicative dynamics not only encourage readers to deal with difference and diversity for the sake of engendering a sense of Sisterhood; they are also connected to constructions of *whiteness*.

As mentioned earlier, the second chapter of the novel changes the narrative situation. The section opens with a text set in italics addressing a 'you', which is not the reader. Compared to the first part of the book, the tone changes with a more soft and

31 hooks: Sisterhood, 134.

32 Vgl. ebd., 134f.

33 Vgl. ebd., 135.

34 Vgl. ebd.

considerate vocabulary, and less slang. Later, when readers learn about the romantic relationship between Lola and Yunior, it becomes clear that the intimate, caring (however still cunning) voice was indeed Yunior's. It is therefore not his function as narrator that determines the tone of and the proximity to the text but *his* relation to the events and to the characters he tells readers about. From the narrator's accounts it becomes clear that the 'you' means Lola, Oscar's sister who, after three pages of cursive text, takes over as a part-time narrator of the novel. Lola's account is a transcript from a recording that Yunior made of her. Throughout the entire novel, Yunior includes hearsay and recordings into his story: "The moon, it has been reported, was full [...]"³⁵; "It was also reported that Oscar drooled on himself [...]"³⁶ Two sections are specifically entitled with "LA INCA SPEAKS" and "YBÓN, AS RECORDED BY OSCAR".³⁷ Although the novel sets out to narrate *the* life story of Oscar, Yunior as fictive author of that book time and again gives up his narrative authority over the storytelling process and turns the novel into a collective and subjective project. This book does not tell *the* story of Oscar de León, neither does it tell *the* story of the Dominican Republic, and it also is not told by one narrator alone. It is not (only) through the narrator's direct negation of telling the truth or of composing a complete version of the story, but through the text's inclusion of transcribed recordings that the story is represented by many, rather than by one. I want to connect the question of representation to constructions of *whiteness* to make hooks' rather vague ascriptions quoted above more tangible and relatable: Scholar and activist Peggy McIntosh considers it a *white* privilege to never having to speak for the entirety of her racial group.³⁸ People of Color, however, are often relegated into the position of a spokesperson for their community. By putting other characters 'on speaker' via the recordings, *Oscar Wao* refutes a narrative structure that fulfills any expectations concerning one-for-all representation. Instead, it presents a conglomerate of voices which in its entirety, creates the most integral version of the story that the fictive author deemed appropriate.

Of course, by including the recordings and references of hearsay, the narrator runs at risk to include conflicting or uncomfortable perspectives: As a young woman, Beli, Oscar's mother, is in a relationship with a man called 'the Gangster.' The Gangster is an associate of Trujillo, and Yunior makes it clear that he is engaged in multiple crimes which he executes for the dictator. However, by telling Beli's story and her connection to the Gangster, we also get to know a different side of him: Through her

35 Díaz, Oscar Wao, 146.

36 Ebd., 273.

37 Ebd., 289.

38 McIntosh, Peggy: *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* (1989) 1. In: Dies.: *On Privilege, Fraudulence, and Teaching As Learning*, New York 2019, 29–34. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351133791-4>, 30.

experiences, Yuniór depicts him as traumatized, beaten, and desperate. Yuniór, as narrator and fictional author of the book, owns a high level of authority of the storytelling and the interpretation of events. Showing the soft side of the Gangster could therefore be interpreted as a redemption for him, and in extension as an embellishment of the Trujillo regime. However, to navigate the different experiences and impressions of that one character, Yuniór lets Beli speak for herself when describing her physical and sexual encounters with the Gangster: "It felt unbelievably good to Beli, shook her to her core. (*For the first time I actually felt like I owned my skin, like it was me and I was it.*)".³⁹ The line set in italics visually mark the words as hers, not as Yuniór's. By quoting her directly, Yuniór is able to include another side of the Gangster without risking to redeeming him, personally, for his deeds and his complicities. Through Beli's accounts readers learn what the Gangster was *also* like, whether it fits any judgements about him, or not. Of course, the reader is not forced to develop any feelings of sympathy for the Gangster (also not after reading how traumatized he is through the violence he encounters and enacts while being on missions for the dictator). But the mere fact that this perspective is granted space in the text, that Beli's experiences with him are shared, avoids a singular narrative about good and bad in the novel and allows readers to grapple with the diverse complexities and relationships that life stories bring with them.

As a last discussion concerning the dynamics of difference that the novel enables, I want to return to the role of the reader. As I have discussed earlier, Yuniór uses footnotes to address readers directly. While these moments potentially generate feelings of discomfort, or *white* fragility by disrupting *whiteness'* alleged removed position, they also demonstrate the narrator's wish to get into a conversation. The tone in the footnotes emphasize a clear identifiable 'we' versus 'you,' but throughout the novel, this dichotomous relationality changes:

Between 1930 [...] and 1961 [...] Santo Domingo was the Caribbean's very own Peaksville, with Trujillo playing the part of Anthony [...]. You might roll your eyes at the comparison, but, friends: it would be hard to exaggerate the power Trujillo exerted over the Dominican people [...].⁴⁰

Yuniór addressing the reader here as 'friends' contrasts his rather reproachful tone in the first footnote. Yet, the narrator does not fully give up nagging the reader as too ignorant, naïve, or posh. The relationship that Yuniór maintains to the intended readers throughout the novel is flexible and changes according to what he wants to share and how he wants to address the reader. Any sentiments of friendship or sympathy are solely dependent on Yuniór's willingness to establish them, and they only

39 Díaz, Oscar Wao, 127.

40 Ebd., 224.

last as long as he wants them to. He never releases the readers into a position of redemption in which they can take care of uncomfortable feelings of fragility, frustration, and *white* tears. Once readers relax into a position of amenable connection to the narrator, which he himself establishes, he will cast them as ignorant and elitist outsiders again, only to then buddy up with the readers once more to laugh with them at the expense of Oscar. I interpret this flexible relation that Yuniors cultivates as a pivotal tool to prevent readers from turning *Oscar Wao* into a 'healing reading experience': bell hooks observed that in feminist movements, *white* women engaged with their own involvement in racism only as a "cathartic experience"⁴¹ that benefitted solely themselves but never translated into actual solidarity or political action. After learning about their own complicity in racist structures and actions, *white* women would use this insight only to stylize themselves as victims who were turned into racists by a *white* supremacist system. Yuniors's autonomous and flexible connection to the reader shares similarities in that it prevents readers from making this novel a cathartic reading experience for themselves: Just because the narrator addresses them as 'friends' does not mean that the novel will release the reader in a redeemed position in which all ignorance, privileges, and complicities are oblivious and forgotten. Rather, the flexibility of the narrator expresses the different roles, voices, attitudes that *he* needs to employ in order to tell this story right. I read the readers' task to grapple with this flexibility as part of the 'dirty work' that bell hooks has asked *white* people and feminists to do: The experience readers can gain from reading *Oscar Wao* is not a cathartic or a healing one that lets them indulge in *white* tears. The solidary act does not lie in a (shared) victimhood, but in taking on the role as unconditional reader, or audience, ready to read of and listen to stories, as uncomfortable and revealing as they might be.

4. On A Super Final Note

Oscar Wao negotiates solidarity on different textual levels. In her text "Asian Latino Conflict and Solidarity in Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*," Paula C. Park focuses on the characters' constellations and interracial relations in the story. Due to the fact that all characters are haunted by misfortunes and suffer under the violent oppressions of Trujillo, she argues that marginalized groups form solidary alliances of resistance⁴², despite the anti-Black or anti-Asian racism that characters

41 hooks: *Sisterhood*, 133.

42 Park, Paula C.: Asian Latino Conflict and Solidarity in Díaz's the Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao. In: *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 17(2015) H. 2. <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2511>, 6.

enact towards each other. Also, I'd argue, we find solidarity in the form of unconditional support and help in Yunior's and Oscar's friendship, and Oscar's relationship to his sister. However, in order to elaborate and discuss some of the key aspects of bell hooks' critique concerning the toxic intersections of race, class, and political activism, I found it particularly helpful to consider structural and formal aspects of the novel. By constantly negotiating the role of and the proximity between narrator and readership, as well as reappropriating aspects of the genre and the form of the novel, *Oscar Wao*, as a literary work, writes back to power dynamics of *white* (bourgeois) supremacy that bell hooks had already criticized in feminist activism. *Oscar Wao* invites readers, sometimes forces them, to grapple with feelings of frustration, surprise, entertainment, and irritation. It is through the role of the narrator, the function of the footnotes, and the effect of the recordings that the text demands emotional labor from the reader *as* solidary work. Bringing bell hooks' text on solidarity and *whiteness* into conversation with a contemporary literary work contributes to what literary scholar Paula Moya calls 'racial literacy': "becoming racially literate involves examining the relationship between race and power, attending always to the structural, as well as the individual and interpersonal, nature of race".⁴³ In my understanding this does not only include 'seeing' race in a literary text, or reading for race in an academic paper, or formulating critique about *white* supremacist representations in a story; it also includes listening to the ways that texts critique readers' positionality, particularly as hegemonic.

To use a text that was written and published in the 1980s and to bring it in conversation with a literary text from the 2010s bears the risk of forced connections between texts and authors. However, I wanted to follow Rita Felski's argument that historical periods are not "coffinlike containers"⁴⁴ in which intellectual thought, insights, and criticism fall into an eternal slumber of historicity. Especially by focusing on structural features of *Oscar Wao*, I argue that 1980s Black feminist thought very much resonates with issues concerning *white* supremacy addressed in literatures 30 years later. In interviews and essays Junot Díaz oftentimes refers to scholars and writers such as Toni Morrison, Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, and bell hooks, and emphasizes the fact that his work speaks to their legacy. Of course, ever since Roland Barthes had proclaimed the 'death of the author' in the 1960s, it has been deemed rather uncritical, short-sighted, sometimes even pathologizing to read a literary work through the life of the author. In the case of Junot Díaz (and many of his contemporaries), however, acknowledging biographical aspects can help to make different positionalities more visible on the literary market, but also in the literary

43 Moya, Paula: *The Social Imperative: Race, Close Reading, and Contemporary Literary Criticism*. Redwood City, 2015, 32.

44 Felski, Rita: *Context Stinks!* In: *New Literary History* 42(2011) H. 4, 573–591. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2011.0045>, 590.

imagination. I therefore want to close with a quote by the author himself, in which he expresses the joy and excitement that comes from getting into conversation about and through difference:

It was really fun to have these different registers going on and to force communities – it's not to say that the intellectual language is exclusively for a certain group, but I knew a lot of the Dominican kids I grew up with weren't going to know who the fuck Foucault was – but I thought it was real nice to put all these people together in one room and to see if they could speak to each other.⁴⁵

Díaz's excitement concerning people exchanging their different reading experiences of his novel relies on the notion of difference – and it is this notion of joyous difference that bell hooks had called for 30 years earlier. Fictional texts in their literariness, their formal, affective, and aesthetic capacities, and political texts, like bell hooks', can therefore form a meaningful symbiosis to continue theorizing and enacting solidarity.

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A Poetics of Merciful Solidarity

Practicing Nonviolence Through the Literary

Giovanna Covi

Writing this paper during the Covid-19 pandemic underscores my impression about the urge to revise the concept of solidarity in the face of the impelling challenges of the present. Since the Greek crisis, through the Brexit, and now with the ongoing pandemic and the explosion of the brutal war in Ukraine, this urge has made itself more and more plain. It seems evident to me that the question of whether to vaccinate is first of all a question of solidarity, perversely disputed in the name of freedom. It seems even more manifest to me that Putin's ferocious invasion of Ukraine excruciatingly threatening to spread war world-wide has shattered the simplistic equation of solidarity with peace to show the complexity of peace-making and the sometimes-necessary association of nonviolence with actions of resistance that may be violent. Even though the political rhetorical confrontation today is more commonly expressed in terms of social responsibility versus individual liberty, the binary paradigm is the same one deployed during the Cold War as a conflict: solidarity versus freedom, the collectivity versus the self, then expressed more emphatically as socialism and communism versus liberalism and capitalism. The paper regards theories that help us think differently and argues that such difference finds its materialization in three exemplary works of fiction: Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*¹ (2008) briefly treated as a representative classic, Michelle Cliff's *Free Enterprise*² (1993), analyzed more closely to give visibility to a less-known author, and Kaha Mohamed Aden's *Dalmar, La disfavola degli elefanti*³ (2019) offered as a promotion of marginalized literature.

This brings me to Fred Dallmayr's *Freedom and Solidarity: Toward New Beginnings*⁴, which convincingly argues that such rhetoric is built on the relation between society and the individual cast as a dichotomy of object versus subject. My argument stems from a deep concern about our violence-torn world and is triggered by the

1 Cf. Morrison, Toni: *A Mercy*, New York 2008.

2 Cf. Cliff, Michelle: *Free Enterprise: A Novel of Mary Ellen Peasant*. 1993, San Francisco 2004.

3 Cf. Aden, Kaha Mohamed: *Dalmar. La disfavola degli elefanti*, Milano 2019.

4 Dallmayr, Fred: *Freedom and Solidarity: Toward New Beginnings*, Lexington 2016.

determination to engage the current political crisis of democracy and the cultural crisis of modernity in order to foster the process towards building a cohesive and increasingly more just society. I side with Dallmayr, who claims that we need a different radical rethinking of human freedom and its constitutive relation to the surrounding social and natural world in which solidarity is no longer conceived as the antithesis to individual freedom.

I am pursuing his invitation by proposing to inflect solidarity with mercy within the frame of nonviolence provided by Leela Gandhi's theory about radical democracy and Judith Butler's theory about agential vulnerability and Rosi Braidotti's call for the posthuman.⁵ The definition of mercy that I am deploying here is drawn from considerations provided by Bryan Stevenson's *Just Mercy*⁶ (2015) and Emmanuela Zurli's "Kyrie eléëson"⁷ (2010) and finds its materialization in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*⁸ (2008), which casts mercy outside a relationship of sovereignty, apart from the idea of grace granted by a powerful entity from above.⁹ In Morrison's fiction, the slave mother who gave away her own daughter to another master in the final pages of the novel is finally given the possibility to speak. She states: "It was not a miracle. Bestowed by God. It was a mercy. Offered by a human" and offers the following elaboration: "to be given dominion over another is a hard thing, to wrest dominion over another is a wrong thing; to give dominion of yourself to another is a wicked thing"¹⁰.

Stevenson too casts mercy outside the power paradigm and is clear on the potential qualities of an open conceptualization of mercy, when he inverts the standard question about justice, "Do they deserve to die?" and rephrases it as, "Do we deserve to kill?"¹¹ thus underlining that mercy is a form of social empowerment especially when it is offered to those who do not deserve it. Speaking for the convicts, mostly African Americans, condemned to capital punishment, Stevenson's could be defined

5 I have first engaged a comparison between Leela Gandhi's and Judith Butler's theories of nonviolence in a paper presented at Brown University, during the seminar organized by the Middle East Studies Department, April 21–22, 2017. Now the publication of Rosi Braidotti's third volume on the posthuman, including the important references to Donna Haraway's and Karen Barad's theories, is calling for a wider comparative analysis of a transnational feminist discourse that is becoming more and more compelling.

6 Cf. Stevenson, Bryan: *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*, New York 2015.

7 Cf. Zurli, Emmanuela: *Kyrie Eleison, L'invocazione biblica a Dio, che ci ama come una madre*. In *Rassegna di Teologia* 51(2010) 215–232.

8 Cf. Morrison, *A Mercy*.

9 For further considerations on this interpretation of mercy, also based on readings of Morrison, Cliff and Aden, see my essay *Kyrie eleison: sostantivo femminile per una democrazia radicale* forthcoming in *La società del genere umano*.

10 Morrison, *A Mercy*, 167.

11 Stevenson, *Just Mercy*, 313.

a minor voice, comparable to Zurli's feminine interpretation of the Christian theological tradition within the patriarchal institution of the church. She too offers an epistemic turn when she traces the origin of mercy in motherly love, rather than in compassion or pity, and thus liberates the concept from its link with guilt. These two "minor" definitions of mercy, I claim, point towards Gandhi's dazzling vision of a secular horizontal eternity, because their grounding is viewed as reciprocal, unjustified, and even paradoxical love. Like a Derridean gift, gratuitous mercy may surprise us with a Butlerian vulnerability that turns into political agency. I like to believe that the mercy which does not depend on forgiving, which does not have the adulterous woman that the Lord should save from lapidation as its referent, the mercy that is rather the resistance of love against the impossibility to love, is tremendously empowering. Coupled with the idea of solidarity *for* peace, which is much more radical than the EU solidarity as liberal sovereignty, this idea of mercy as not merely compassion has the potential to be a promise for a nonviolent future that is material, even possible.

A brief reflection upon the aporetic nature of the concept of solidarity¹² highlights its Derridean "blind spots" and leads to its being expressed indeterminately, more as a proposition than as an accurate notion. The European Union is called to come to terms with this ambiguity, since it was declaredly born out of the will of its founders for solidarity, by addressing the conceptual split while addressing its own crisis. The classical rooting of the term solidarity is linked to the law and the economy: the juridical Latin phrase *in solidum obligari* (the obligation to pay one's debt in full), where *in solidum* means first of all complete. Two words in Italian derived from *in solidum* carry its second meaning: *soldo* (money) and *soldato* (soldier), thus solid, robust. The modern rooting of solidarity in the French Revolution, *solidarité*, is linked to ideology to indicate the nationalist feeling of fraternity shared by citizens within democracy, associated with political freedom and equality. In 1848, with the Chartist Convention of the International Workers Movement, the association came to include ethics, with the meaning of mutual help and support for a common struggle for labor and civil rights. The modern rooting thus links solidarity to community – specifically to the democratic nation, in fraternity, and to the working classes world-wide, in camaraderie. Within socialist ideology, solidarity expresses equality based on mutual trust; within liberal ideology, solidarity provides the basis of the welfare state. In our globalized times, solidarity expresses the dream for a humanity that is commonly shared; it is associated with love and charity, with voluntary work

12 I have first engaged a reflection upon the concept of solidarity during the Greek crisis, when the MLA first met outside the USA, in Germany, and I presented the paper *Europe's Crisis; Reconsidering Solidarity with Leela Gandhi and Judith Butler* published in *Synthesis* in 2016.

and international collaboration that seek peace and human rights. Clearly social solidarity is deeply rooted in politics and as such configures rather as a proposition than as a concept, in a way that is comparable to Étienne Balibar's *egaliberté*, understood as an aporetic condition that is rooted in bourgeois ideology but has a revolutionary potential within a tension that determines the political field within which popular sovereignty without exclusions may occur.

This double rooting, technical and nominal on the one hand, ideological and material on the other, raises the question of whether solidarity derives from its budget or its ethics, whether a society that we consider solid is also ethical. By casting solidarity within such binary rooting, the EU has culturally embedded its own paralysis, shaped by the weakness of separating politics from poetics, society from aesthetics, praxis from ethics, and also communal solidarity from individual freedom. I argue that we may be able to recast this immobilizing frame in the light of the feminist theories I have mentioned above.

The concepts of radical democracy as defined by Gandhi and of vulnerability as defined by Butler show how to understand solidarity relationally and reciprocally, even to propose another utopia, one that gets us out of merely thinking negatively, an inadequacy that has characterized leftist thinking (and acting) to the point of paralysis, a negativity that has diluted into nothing and given space to the proliferation of obscurantist forces. Gandhi's conceptualization of a community of affects¹³ sharing the common good through an ethics of imperfection (*Common Good*) and a politics of becoming minor¹⁴ offers me the opportunity to envision the goal. What further encourages me to undertake the task is Butler's definition of solidarity as a "a mode of sustaining conflict in politically productive ways, a practice of contestation" that produces a culture capable of exposing the "self-difference" at the core of each political position.¹⁵ In "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance"¹⁶ Butler also underlines that vulnerability is relational and necessary for thinking resistance.

I would reiterate that we need a utopia that is not ideal and perfect, but rather one that may take place, albeit imperfectly, in this world, here and now – an incongruously possible utopia, a paradox that Gandhi's nonviolent thinking helps us conceptualize. This day-after-day differently and temporarily articulated utopia is shaped through the one-to-one relationships that each person creates in their interaction with other persons, in the name of the common good, is articulated in

13 Cf. Gandhi, Leela: *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship*, Durham 2006.

14 Cf. Gandhi, Leela: *Utopal Life: A Genealogy for Global Ethics*. In: Robbins, Bruce/Horta, Paolo (eds.): *Cosmopolitanisms*, New York 2017.

15 Butler, Judith: "Merely Cultural." *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Cambridge 2015, 37.

16 Butler, Judith: *Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance* In: Butler, Judith/Gambetti, Zeynep/Sabsay, Leticia (eds.): *Vulnerability in Resistance*, Durham 2016, 12–27.

multiple languages and from different locations to seek a coming together, an assembly that may lead, perhaps surprisingly, possibly imperfectly, towards the desired change for radical democracy as nonviolent practice, ahimsatic mode, utonal life, and postcolonial historiography. Gandhi's call for becoming less in order to relate to each other as ordinary people, for accepting imperfection in order to counter the totalitarian, colonial, and liberal frame of domination, leads towards a nonviolent society centered on a "politics of friendship," hence on the Derridean notion of hospitality, grounded on radical relational subjectivity within which guest-friends are never known in advance. Acting under such conditions of unconstituted subjecthood requires countercultural revolutionary practices and inventive ethical enterprises¹⁷, the deployment of "solidarities" that "simply cannot be fixed in advance" and "a utopian mentality" that shows the way forward to a genuine cosmopolitanism: always open to the risky arrival of those not quite, not yet, covered by the privileges which secure our identity and keep us safe¹⁸. Such fierce activism takes the risk of affective incongruous relations among subjects who pursue self-ruination, which requires a politics that is also a poetics, a counter-narrative that does not repress desire and imagination to pursue cognition and justice¹⁹. I suggest that this poetics/politics opens up a middle ground between the monetary and the ethical within which solidarity may act materially and ethically.

I hear an echo of this positioning in Butler's "Merely Cultural," where she suggests that solidarity should not be based on the obliteration of the differences between identities, but rather on the "synthesis of a set of conflicts" and invokes "a practice of contestation" within which each political position discloses its own "self-difference" and does not pursue identitarian assimilation.²⁰ Thus conceived, solidarity becomes a cultural production capable of turning conflict into positive politics. Further, in *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Butler talks about an ethos of solidarity as a force that affirms mutual, reciprocal dependency. Butler's proposition allows us to see that ethical questions are always implicated in economic ones²¹ and invites us to think about vulnerability and agency together, to think about bodies that are actively and inactively supported both by infrastructures and social solidarity. By putting the body at the center of solidarity, I understand that Butler liberates philosophy from being confined to the realm of the intellectual as opposed to the physical, from banning sensibility in the name of sense, from being locked up within the merely conceptual, and frames a philosophy that allows the mind to be part of the body.

17 Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, 9.

18 *Ibid.*, 31.

19 Cf. *ibid.*, 142–176.

20 Butler, *Merely Cultural*, 37.

21 Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 22.

Such framing of irreducibly corporeal subjectivity, of vulnerability as politics rather than ideology, and of ethics as always responsive, relational, and collective is in tune with as Rosi Braidotti's call for the posthuman, which she articulated in three volumes between 2013 and 2022. She equates the Subject, the Self with consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behavior, and the Other with the sexualized, racialized, and naturalized, less than human, disposable bodies. She embraces a neo-Spinozian monistic ontology in which intelligent, self-organized matter has the priority. Posthuman knowing, she argues, compels us to figure the subject as nomadic, hence not as transcendental consciousness, but as relational entity, corporeal and incorporated, affective and responsible, that is as a continuum between mind and body, nature and culture. Posthuman feminism, she claims, entails a renewal of subjectivities and practices that include solidarity, care and compassion that radically revises the humanist legacy to express a positive trust in a future of solidarity among others.

These feminist theorists help clarify the resistance of the vulnerable to be a form of critique performed by bodily encounters that claim recognition within the public sphere and in the process reconstitute it and operate under principles of Gandhian nonviolence, under which solidarity can be recast as *ahimsa* or self-ruination, as the willingness to become less in order to relate. This model allows for relations to no longer stand in hierarchical order – neither dictatorially through domination nor liberally through generosity.²² Such relations are not between Self and Other, but are rather exchanges among singularities, others who are different but seek social inclusiveness and exchanges performed under conditions of equality, ruled by a politics of friendship and linked together by affiliations. This clearly challenges forms of subjecthood, both individual and national, based on the posing of an Other, on the masculinist grounding of domination and exclusion. It requires instead the joining of the cultural and the social performed by a poetical politics and a political poetics that speaks in multiple languages, inhabits borders, and does not categorize people according to abstract taxonomies. Gandhi argues that such radical democracy embraces an ethics of imperfection: the modern liberal fiction of the disembodied entity “the people” in representative democracy becomes a temporary, fragmented, yet powerful constituency through the sharing of a gathering among subjecthoods that are relational and non-normative. Gandhi's heuristic epistemology entails anarchism, disobedience, no-saying, imperfection, the staging of nonviolent militancy (which sometimes is not even pacifist, because it must respond to violence through civil disobedience) in pursuit of spiritual and political practices of becoming less, “minor,” because the subject is no longer lead by an ethics of virtue but rather an eth-

22 Gandhi, Leela: *The Common Cause: Postcolonial Ethics and the Practice of Democracy, 1900–1955*, Chicago 2014, 10.

ical commitment to the revolutionary ordinariness of the social contract (see “Lectio Magistralis”).²³

Nonviolence thus is defined by Gandhi not as the opposite of violence, nor is peace inflected as other from war, but rather as a practice of becoming, as the rejection of any hierarchical categorization and the abdication of power. Nonviolence embraces negativity by asking men to renounce to their own masculinity and by encouraging women to disobey, to cultivate their own no-saying in order to take better care of the world. Only by rejecting the perfectionism that joins fascism, imperialism, and liberalism to democracy, Gandhi argues, can democracy cease to be an ideological utopia and become the possible utopia of speaking a common language and being in common with others.²⁴ Solidarity for Gandhi, Butler, and Braidotti is conceived as subject formation; their politics/poetics yields hope for transformation precisely because it is not functionally grounded on pre-constituted identities.

I would like to hope that conceiving solidarity as ethical ordinariness and vulnerability within the posthuman frame may offer Europe the cultural means to face the dramatic challenges of the present. But how can these theories yield to practical transformation? This is where the political role of literature is crucial, in giving poetical shape to a re-imagination of the future.

Morrison's slave mother who gives away her daughter to a slave master embodies a definition of mercy theorized by Stevenson and Zurli to invite us to think differently, outside the power paradigm. Likewise, a narrative embodiment and poetic incarnation of the epistemic revision of the subject articulated by Gandhi, Butler, and Braidotti is evident in Michelle Cliff's *Free Enterprise: A Novel of Mary Ellen Pleasant* (1993).²⁵ This fiction allows us to step into interpretative configurations that frame mercy and solidarity relationally for people seeking the means to manage the interconnections that characterize lived lives in the present, and therefore needing a structural epistemic change. Such change was already pointed to by Phillis Wheatley's “'Twas Mercy that Brought Me from Africa [...]" inaugurating with a woman's

23 It is not marginal to the considerations in this article that Gandhi elaborates her position with reference to the Istanbul Convention for contrasting gender violence. The human society is torn equally by the ongoing proliferation of wars and by everyday practices of violence that hinge on ideologies of gendered and racial supremacy. Her *Lectio Magistralis* delivered at the Italian Parliament in 2016 is available in English as “Reflections on Violence and Non-Violence in UNIRE-Gender Violence is Also a Cultural Issue! Gandhi convincingly argues that tackling gender violence entails embracing the civil disobedience called for by nonviolence and praising the no-saying uttered by women—a cultural shift that our patriarchal societies have not yet undertaken.

24 Cf. Gandhi, *Leela: Lectio Magistralis*. In: *Libere dalla paura libere dalla violenza*, edited by the Delegazione italiana presso il Consiglio d'Europa, [Italian] Camera dei Deputati, 2016, 15–21, 21.

25 Cf. Cliff, *Free Enterprise*.

voice the African-American cultural tradition, a discourse forcibly located in the aporia between slavery and liberty, in which mercy retains a double-speaking that well expresses the play between sovereignty and relationality. Wheatley engages such double-speaking, so that mercy is not reduced to a mere gesture of charitable giving but is rather audaciously deployed and ironically used when speaking can only mimic and signify the master's voice.

Cliff's *Free Enterprise* retells John Brown's armed revolution through the framing of revolutionary history as nonviolent epistemology. Her narrative poetics allows a story of armed revolution to be paradoxically grounded on a nonviolent episteme; it articulates a neo-slave narrative in ways that produce radical transformative effects both historiographically and epistemologically. It expresses plantation slavery from a transnational perspective, thematizes it through a multifocal diasporic narrative, and queers both the master-slave dichotomous framing and the representations of gendered, sexualized, and racialized subjectivities. It produces epistemic twists that radically innovate our understanding of the economics of slavery. Vulnerability as political agency towards transformation and moral imperfection, towards radical democracy, materializes through what I would call merciful solidarity.

Cliff's absorbing narrative revolves around two women, the historical figure of Mary Ellen Pleasant and the legendary character of Annie Christmas, respectively a free Black entrepreneur and a mixed-race Jamaican evoking the heroine of African-American tall tales of the Mississippi Delta, who both join the abolitionist cause on the side of John Brown. It is both historical and autobiographical fiction, but not only. Subjectivities and communities are grounded in reciprocity, affective relations are formed in resistance in a narrative in which fact and fiction are inextricably tangled, as are Mary Ellen and Annie, as well as the many other characters. A complex plot includes the fragmentation, violence, and resistance of the Caribbean, as Cliff herself states, attentive to mix "time and incident and place and character and also form to try to mirror the chaos of the times".²⁶ Such a mix certainly makes her prose challenging, although I would suggest never obscure. By pursuing innovative thinking and experimental forms of expression, queering content and form simultaneously, it proceeds obliquely through interruptions and contradictions in the thick of an intercultural discourse that mixes imagination with legend to capture history, and uses poetry to express humanity through gaps and circles, documents and dialogues, signs and words, into the reality of the abolitionist struggle. Cliff's neo-slave narrative tells a story of resistance through a revision of the definition of resistance itself. Her story-telling not only generates a knowledge of the past that focuses on

26 Cliff, Michelle: *If I Could Write This in Fire, I Would Write This in Fire*. In: *The Land of Look Behind*. Ithaca, NY, 1985, 57–76, ix.

the oppressed and puts women into history, but also produces a knowledge that empowers the transformation of the present.²⁷

Cliff's writing is empowering not only because it focuses on the resistance to violence rather than on the subjugation of the victims to racist colonial power, but also because it nourishes critical thinking that privileges the complexity of relations rather than the simplification of a linear plot built around one main character. Her two main characters are minor voices who also represent multiple and at times conflicting ideas, and often leave the stage to other minor characters. Minor becomes major in this endless process and the plot unfolds as a continuous variation of major and minor tones, thus resembling the musician Harry Partch's utonal music, which – as Gandhi's essay "Utonal Life" explains – produces a music where "the minor mode exposes the raw assembly and immiscible gathering of musical tones, and opens them out to a multiplicity of unfinished relationships" and "breaches the exalted stability, consonance and resolution of the major mode"²⁸. Gandhi forcefully argues that "in the context of colonial encounter, major/minor globalisms (otherwise, otonal/utonal; totalizing/democratic) play out in diachronic interactions between an imperial variant that presents as a model of sovereignty, and an anti-imperial variant that presents as a model of relationality"²⁹. Cliff overtly accentuates the coexistence of major and minor in the resistance to domination. Her epistemic field includes the grounded body and groundless desire, the finite and what is not-yet-realized. In this field, connections and the results they yield become more important than the subjects who connect. Consequently, the dichotomous master-slave dialectics of colonial history is opened up, both to include queer variations in the past and to seek possible interactions between sovereignty and relationality in the present.

The title is also an act of double-talking, an act of African-American signifying. Taken at face value, *Free Enterprise* not only captures the core of capitalism – the reason for the institution of slavery – but also communicates ironically the glorious enterprises of resistance to slavery. This double meaning is superbly personified by the historical figure of Mary Ellen Pleasant. It is worth recalling what is historically documented about her. Pleasant was a frontier Black woman, and like most African Americans of her time, the identity of her parents and the date and place of her birth

27 In one of the few published critical essays on *Free Enterprise*, Bénédicte Ledent observes that it goes beyond unearthing the past buried by colonialism to acknowledge the ruptures and discontinuities invoked by Stuart Hall's use of historiography (177). Rajeswari Mohan compellingly develops this aspect of Cliff's writing and discusses the revolutionary character of her historiography to underline that her gendered excavation of the past has the specific purpose of decolonizing the present.

28 Gandhi, Leela: *Utonal Life: A Genealogy for Global Ethics*. In: Robbins, Bruce/Horta, Paolo (eds.): *Cosmopolitanisms*, New York 2017, 3.

29 *Ibid.*, 4.

remain uncertain. Here is how her biography is introduced in the *African American National Biography*:

Pleasant, Mary Ellen (1812?–1904), legendary woman of influence and political power in Gold Rush and Gilded Age San Francisco, was born, according to some sources, a slave in Georgia; other sources claim that her mother was a Louisiana slave and her father Asian or Native American. Many sources agree that she lived in Boston, as a free woman, the wife of James W. Smith, a Cuban abolitionist. When he died in 1844 he left her his estate, valued at approximately \$45,000.³⁰

According to an article published in *Ebony* in 1976, Pleasant's father might have been either a White slaveowner, a Cherokee, or a Kanaka, that is a Polynesian from the Sandwich islands, while her mother was a "full-blooded" Black slave from Louisiana (Bennett 71).³¹ Portraits of Pleasant show a woman that could pass for more than one racial identity, and could also have easily passed for White, had she wanted to. But we know, instead, that she never did. Pleasant was a free Black woman who claimed her Blackness and fought for the dignity and rights of the enslaved Black people with strong determination. With comparable willpower, she also struggled for her own economic independence and success, seeking freedom and fortune by going West; here she profited so well from the money she had inherited from her first husband that in the 1890 census she could list her occupation as "capitalist"³². Pleasant thus became a capitalist abolitionist free Black woman.

She arrived in San Francisco in 1849, when only 15 percent of the population of the city was female and the Black population numbered only 425.³³ She worked first as a cook and then as the owner of a boardinghouse, which eventually grew into a thirty-room structure. Her entrepreneurship allowed her to help many who had escaped from slavery, turning her boarding house into an important center for the underground railway. In 1976, a small park was dedicated to her where her building once was, and a plaque was installed that declared her birthdate to be certain: 1814. Pleasant also appears in one of the murals in the lobby of the Monadnock Building on Market Street, where she is portrayed as a prominent San Franciscan, together with architect Bernard Maybeck, actress Lotta Crabtree, dancer Isadora Duncan, and Civil Rights advocates Walter Lum and Harvey Milk.

30 Downey, Lynn: Pleasant, Mary Ellen (1812?–1904), legendary woman of influence... In: *African American National Biography*. Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, 30 Jan. 2013. Web. 18 Jan. 2017.

31 Cf. Bennett, Lerone Jr.: A Historical Detective Story, Part II: Mystery of Mary Ellen Pleasant. In: *Ebony* May 1979, 71, 86, 71.

32 Halley, Marian: Don't Call Her Mammy. In: *The New Fillmore*. Web. 18 Jan. 2017. <http://newfillmore.com/fillmore-classics/dont-call-her-mammy/>.

33 Adkins, Jan Batiste: *African Americans of San Francisco*, Charleston 2012, 7.

In 1858, Pleasant supposedly met John Brown in Canada and donated \$30,000 to his cause of slave rebellion. The conditional in the telling of this part of her story is again forced by the usual lack of official records about the history of the marginalized, to which she fully belonged by color and gender. After Brown was captured, following his failure to seize the arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Pleasant returned to San Francisco under the cover name of Mrs. Elle Smith. Apparently, she did so because Brown was carrying a note signed “W.E.P.,” which stated, “The ax is laid at the root of the tree. When the first blow is struck, there will be more money to help.” Presumably, Pleasant had written an “M” that looked like a “W” to protect herself.³⁴

There are, however, two events that allow us to lift the conditional in Pleasant’s biography since they are both documented in California legal records. The first grounds her legendary reputation on substantial facts, making her a milestone in San Francisco’s history of civil rights struggles. It also qualifies her as a worthy precursor of Rosa Parks: she sued the streetcar company twice, in 1866 and 1868, for having forbidden her from riding.³⁵ Although the Supreme Court eventually ruled against her, these two suits contributed to California passing a statute in 1893 that made segregation on streetcars illegal. The second involves her rejection of the name by which she became notorious: Mammy Pleasant. She firmly refused the nickname by returning to senders all the mail addressed to Mammy Pleasant.³⁶ She considered the epithet offensive since it suggested that a certain aura of mystery and suspicion surrounded her: either by indicating that she had voodoo powers over some wealthy men or by implying that prostitution was taking place in her house, which came to be known as “the house of mystery.” Most likely, her reputation as a voodoo queen, madame, or even a murderer derived from envy over her flourishing business, patriarchal opposition to her gender, racist hostility towards her color, and political disapproval of her abolitionist militancy.

Although fragmentary, the historical evidence is sufficient to demonstrate that Mary Ellen Pleasant was the “Mother of the Civil Rights movement” in California and the first African American woman millionaire.³⁷ The only double dealing that is documented in the incomplete historical record is her overt catering to wealthy Whites while secretly helping runaway slaves. She eventually died in poverty in San Francisco’s African-American district and was buried in Napa. Sixty-one years after

34 <https://hutchinscenter.fas.harvard.edu/pleasant-mary-ellen-1812-1904-legendary-woman-influence>

35 Hudson, Lynn M: *Mining A Mythic Past: The History of Mary Ellen Pleasant*. In: Taylor, Quintard/Moore, Shirley (eds.): *African American Women Confront the West, 1600–2000*, Norman 2003, 56–70, 59.

36 Halley, *Don’t Call Her Mammy*.

37 Bennett, *A Historical Detective Story*, 71.

her death, the San Francisco African-American Historical and Cultural Society arranged to have the words that she herself had dictated on her deathbed carved on her gravestone: “She was a friend of John Brown”³⁸.

Cliff gives full life to this legendary historical figure, by having her meet Annie Christmas, the legendary heroine of the Mississippi Delta, in 1858, one year before Brown’s defeat at Harpers Ferry. We readers actually meet Annie before we meet Mary Ellen, and Chapter One is titled “Annie Christmas.” The novel opens in 1920, 61 years after Annie met Mary Ellen. Incidentally, this is the same number of years Mary Ellen’s gravestone had to wait to be inscribed. We meet Annie at Carville, Louisiana, the historical place on the Delta north-west of New Orleans, once home of the Carville National Leprosarium built on the site of a former sugar plantation, then sold to the Federal Government in 1921 and turned into United States Marine Hospital Number 66.³⁹ The space in which we first meet Annie is exemplary of extreme marginalization.

Nevertheless, Cliff hastens to return Annie to the grand reputation of her legendarily defiant character and, by placing her within this specific historical context, she queers the narration. Annie is presented as a young Jamaican who sided with John Brown and, following his defeat, retreated into the Leper Colony, where she joins people who remember a world before the Whites and who help her recall an island whose history displays “Arawak. Slavery. Cane”⁴⁰ and is “bisected by a limestone aqueduct”⁴¹ – clearly Jamaica. The narrative opens with a description of the Caribbean that is both interpretatively accurate – “a confused universe [...] with no center and no outward edge. Where almost everything was foreign. Language, people, landscape even”⁴² – and politically incisive – “Tongues collided. Struggled for hegemony”⁴³. Various languages are listed with specific distinct characteristics: French indicates both fashion and sophistication and nostalgia for Toussaint; English is the language of commerce; Spanish of the categories; Latin is the language of the soul; Hebrew, Chinese, and Arabic are not shared; on the contrary, “African of every stripe”⁴⁴ runs into the languages of the superior classes and turns *le gens inconnu* into *Jonkonnu*.

It is immediately palpable that the proliferation of tongues expresses an abundance of people hierarchically ranked according to the racial taxonomy molded in

38 Ibid., 86.

39 In 1993, this facility became the National Hansen’s Disease Museum, the mission of which was to eradicate the stigma associated with leprosy and spread accurate information about the disease.

40 Cliff, *Free Enterprise*, 5.

41 Ibid., 10.

42 Ibid., 6.

43 Ibid., 6.

44 Ibid., 8.

Spanish and based on the breeding of animals. Although Annie's skin was "carefully inbred"⁴⁵ by her parents, proud to be *inconnu*, she chose to be African instead and joined the movement for the armed rebellion of slaves "on the mainland"⁴⁶ in the hope that things would really change, whereas on the island she saw only paralysis. Cliff's narration underscores the relationship between the United States and the Caribbean, thus queering the casting apart of these two Americas as polar opposites. The narration, moreover, underlines the participation of Caribbean people in US discourse: Annie's choice to relinquish her personal privileges as a member of *le gens inconnu* and her identification as Black puts her in the company of Mary Ellen Pleasant and Rosa Parks, who also assumed race as an act of will, as an act of anti-racism. Annie, like Mary Ellen and Rosa, politically claims her identity as forcefully as Cliff herself does in her *Claiming an Identity They Taught Me to Despise*. Such positioning is powerful evidence that their fight against racism does not fall into the trap of reversing racist categorizations. This narrative move lifts Blackness from the position of perennial victimhood, and conversely it also frees Whiteness from that of persistent perpetrator of racism. It raises political action from essentialist grounding, liberates it into the realm of self-consciously developed ideological positioning, and allows subjectivity to be defined by relations among multiplicities.

Identity as the negotiation between the given and the willingly performed is further embraced when Annie meets Mary Ellen at a restaurant called "Free Enterprise"⁴⁷. Annie is dressed like a man and their conversation is revealing when the more experienced Mary Ellen invites her to keep a female name as her battle name: "It's all well and good to dress as a man in the cause, my dear, but for heaven's sake, take a *nom de guerre* fit for a woman"⁴⁸. Readers are outright exposed to the implications of gender b(l)ending, understood as the freedom of becoming, of being other than what is pre-defined by the boundaries of one's body, by the color of one's skin, by the nationality that imposes forced territoriality. We understand here that the narrative is taking the risk of moving outside categorizations, and this break comes as no surprise because it follows the exposure of the colonialist implication of taxonomies in the previous pages and the rejection of labelling imposed by the Jesuits later in the story.⁴⁹ These two women therefore offer a new perspective on the history of the antislavery movement, not simply because of their so-far under-represented gender, but rather because they are women who self-consciously manage the social significance of masculinity and femininity to pursue their goals. And they do so without mimicking patriarchal power, without surrendering their being who they

45 Ibid., 9.

46 Ibid., 10.

47 Cliff, *Free Enterprise*, 25.

48 Ibid., 25.

49 Ibid., 111.

are. Rather, they take the risk of experimenting with their being women through a performance of masculinity and femininity according to their own needs, desires, and wills.

Initially their conversation turns to legendary female figures: for example, the woman from Africa working on the Mississippi without chains in revolutionary times and drifting out to the Caribbean after a peaceful death; the great Nanny of the Maroons and her magical powers.⁵⁰ This exchange offers a reflection upon the necessity of engaging the factual together with the imaginary: the historical and mature Mary Ellen scolds the legendary and young Annie for suggesting that these figures of African power are just imaginary. She provokes Annie with a sarcastic tone: "If so many can believe in that other twelve and their divine center, water into wine, rolling back the stone, rising up, take-up-thy-bed-and-walk, Lazarus, why can't you believe in her?"⁵¹ At this point in their conversation an unknown factual-heroic figure materializes in Annie's memory: Industry, an enslaved African woman who served the *gens inconnu*, whom Annie loved as a child; she "slept on a pallet" next to Annie's bed⁵² and would tell her stories about the Maroons; she stubbornly fought for her own freedom but did not succeed. Annie admits that she could not save her even though she "believed in her"⁵³ and confesses: "I saved myself instead"⁵⁴. Sadly, the system of racial domination could not be defeated by their affectionate bond.

It is this conversation that leads the young Jamaican fighter to assume the nom de guerre of the African slave. The exchange between Mary Ellen and Annie raises their consciousness about joining the armed antislavery revolution. Significantly, they never mention John Brown, never discuss the idea of revolution in the abstract, and never talk about taking up arms. Instead, their conversation unfolds in search of their personal, intimate roots that give a sense to the need for action. I am suggesting that they approach the idea of revolution with a feminist difference. Revolution is not presented as a metaphysical utopia but rather is pragmatically constructed through a relation between women, built on ordinary, everyday experience. Revolution is defined through a consciousness-raising practice.

This is definitely the case in Chapter Two, where in the Leper Colony we meet individuals who are so diminished in their humanity that they are distinguished only by a number instead of a name.⁵⁵ They start a story-telling group that rewrites the history of modern colonization through a multivocal and intercultural circle that effectively creates a coalition of humans constituted by diverse relations to the flowing

50 Ibid., 27.

51 Ibid., 27.

52 Ibid., 28.

53 Ibid., 28.

54 Ibid., 29.

55 Ibid., 40.

of the telling rather than by identity categories. I suggest that this affective community, albeit incoherently, points to the “horizontal infinitude”⁵⁶ that Gandhi indicates as the only possible utopia for human eternity. Through their telling, they live on, although life has been denied to them.

The systematic colonial reordering of plants and even animals⁵⁷ is first narrated by the Hawai’ians.⁵⁸ The uncompromising commentary of the narrator of “great-grandfather’s story” prevents us from resting on any assumed truth, be it of History or Counter-history. He bluntly says that the ancestors had “purified the experience [...] made a monument [...] to our people’s innocence,” and then adds: “the truth, I suspect, lies somewhere in between. It usually does”⁵⁹. With this specification, we are taken immediately from Hawai’i to Jamaica where, referring to Jamaican Revivalism, Annie declares, “the history of my part of the world, is of the one-step-forward, two-step-back variety”⁶⁰. Her tale is followed, four pages later, by the history of the rape of Tahitian women by the mutineers of the ship that was transporting breadfruit from Tahiti to the West Indies.⁶¹ All these stories show “the imbalancing of the world”⁶² caused by colonial imperialism. We then hear Rachel’s story, which begins in a temple, moves to the Spain of the Inquisition, and discreetly escapes from there behind “the Niña, Pinta and Santa Maria, in search of a new world, but for different reasons than [...] *El Señor Colonización*”⁶³, to declare that she ended up “in the hills, a *cimarrón*”⁶⁴.

Rachel, the “wandering Jew,” assures Annie that once told, the stories “do not die”⁶⁵. The adjective “placeless” defines Annie in these pages and marks her affiliation with Rachel as well as with the Author. In fact, in Cliff’s autobiographical *Claiming an Identity They Taught Me to Despise*, Section VIII, we read the following exchange: “I always ask about these people. Somewhere I have confused them with lepers. ‘Are they lepers?’ I ask my father. ‘No, Not lepers; just people with no place to go’”⁶⁶. A “new kinship” is thus “forged”⁶⁷ through the stories by these many “placeless” that

56 Gandhi, *Lectio Magistralis*, 21.

57 Cliff, *Free Enterprise*, 55f.

58 *Ibid.*, 45–51.

59 *Ibid.*, 51.

60 *Ibid.*, 52.

61 *Ibid.*, 54–58.

62 *Ibid.*, 56.

63 *Ibid.*, 60.

64 *Ibid.*, 61.

65 *Ibid.*, 59.

66 Cliff, Michelle: *Claiming an Identity They Taught Me to Despise*. 1980. In: *The Land of Look Behind*, Ithaca, NY 1985, 19–52, 47.

67 Cliff, *Claiming an Identity*, 43.

have suffered discrimination and exile. Their kinship displays identities that are relational, both in their own self-construction and in the construction of their new community. Resilience and resistance are built on the adaption to, and the queering of the continuous and diverse flowing of their multivocal, intercultural, fragmented, translated, and dialogical narration.

Rachel's story is followed by another told by a woman who is an "exception to the general rule of darker-skinned races"⁶⁸. She takes us to Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, the world's longest known cave system; it became part of the grand tour of America in the 19th century and its peculiar fascination was sung, among others, by Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1857. He describes the cave as "a kingdom of illusions," "an alarming gallery" as he weighs practicality with poetry and play, as he praises the intellect for seeking the truth in Nature and also accepts the effects that illusions produce on our emotional understanding of the world.

Emerson's reflections must have been influenced by the African-American history that marks this natural site. The cave was certainly known by Native Americans and its first tourist guides were slaves, among them the most renowned is Stephen Bishop, described by a visitor as "a slight, graceful, and very handsome mulatto"⁶⁹. He had a good reputation due to his precise knowledge of the extensive network of the cave; he produced books and maps that circulated also overseas, and showed a fine appreciation of the natural wonders, as well as a dramatic ability to tell and sing stories about the cave. This entrepreneurial histrionic figure was brought to Mammoth in 1838 in his teens as a slave and gained his freedom only in 1856, one year before his premature death at 37. Today two neo-slave narratives by Elizabeth Mitchell and Roger W. Brucker bring his legendary and fragmentary reputation to full life. In 2000, Davis McCombs published a book of poems titled *Ultima Thule*⁷⁰, which sing four-hundred years of human presence into and above the Mammoth Cave from the point of view both of a slave guide and explorer in the mid-1800s and of the author who was a park ranger in the 1990s. These recent texts offer an important counter-history.

Cliff's text digs even deeper into the cave and leads us beyond counter-historiography. In *Free Enterprise*, Kentucky woman #12548 tells about colored people who lived in the lowest levels and only came up to trade with her father; they were "Africans mixed with Indians, Cherokee and Creek and all kinds, half-breeds, quarter-breeds, whatever [...] they called themselves Maroons, and they mined the caverns for lead and zinc"⁷¹. She adds: "for the most part it was peaceful between the whites and the

68 Cliff, *Free Enterprise*, 61.

69 National Park Service: Black History at Mammoth Cave. In: Mammoth Cave. National Park Service. Web. 18 January 2017.

70 McCombs, Davis: *Ultima Thule*, New Haven 2000.

71 Cliff, *Free Enterprise*, 63.

coloreds, each kept to themselves, each was armed. Peaceful, and profitable too⁷². Yet, although it was okay to make a profit, it was not good to “get too close⁷³” because the papers, including eastern magazines like *Harper’s* and *The Atlantic*, kept reminding them, the Whites, that “you couldn’t trust any of the darker races, the servile ones. Male or female. Indian or African. Not even those living ten feet down into Ultima Thule”; then one night the militia came down to Ultima Thule to kill and behead on the charge of “servile conspiracy to commit revolution⁷⁴”.

So ends Chapter Two, with an act of institutional violence. The power of the militia buries in silence, with the assumed “revolution,” the entire community living in the cave. Cliff’s narrative makes us watch this act of state violence from an important perspective, the point of view of the victims. This is of vital importance because it dehumanizes the criminals instead of the victims, thereby dismantling the paradigm of the assumed legitimacy within which the state acts.

To expand comparatively on the significance of this narrative point of view, let us consider how often we represent violence, including the widespread violence by men against women, by resting on the pattern within which it has been enacted. In so doing we privilege the perspective of the perpetrator, show the victim as such, deprived of agency, and protect the criminal’s privacy. Even within campaigns to oppose domestic violence, at the center of the stage we more often see the brutalized body of the victim and her fear than the face of the perpetrator and his rage.

Cliff subverts this paradigm and in so doing, I claim, she liberates alternative possible representations and understandings of violence, where vulnerability is conceived in the terms articulated by Butler, as a politics that yields political agency. In “Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance,” Butler underlines that vulnerability is relational and necessary for thinking resistance. Vulnerability becomes agency when bodies assemble together to oppose power and form coalitions, sometimes only temporarily and even unintentionally. Cliff shows how these communities are constituted by resistant and revolutionary agency. Her narrative style compellingly questions the conditions that allow the reproduction of violence, both dominant institutional violence and insurrectional revolutionary violence. It does so by searching nonviolence in revolutionary practice, instead of easily relinquishing to an embrace of metaphysical peace.

Free Enterprise is centered on armed insurrection, John Brown’s battle, and explicitly addresses the issue of the reproduction of violence in a revolutionary context. The discussion of this issue foregrounds implications that deepen the radical revisionism engaged by Cliff. It should be recalled that in the United States during the mid-nineteenth century, consensus over the abolition of slavery was growing at least

72 Ibid., 63.

73 Ibid., 64.

74 Ibid., 64.

as much as dissent about arming the slaves. It should also be considered that still today historical representations of abolitionism understate the role of armed insurrections or, at best, confine their relevance to the sole field of slave history, as if racism was not a complex matter entangled with economy and the possession of women. Cliff's transnational, comparative, and comprehensive perspective may be usefully employed to reconsider modernity at large, for example to understand democracy more fully.

Modernity traditionally casts the origin of democracy in the American Revolution (1765–83) and the French Revolution (1789–99) and the Treaty of Paris that sealed US independence (1783). A more complex picture is provided by coupling these events with the numerous Caribbean revolutions that slaves made during the 1790s, thus bringing the Caribbean into the world instead of casting it apart. A symbolic juxtaposition is provided by the fact that 1783 is not only the year of US independence but also the year when Grenada and Dominica were passed to Britain by France. The list of slave revolutions during the 1790s in the Caribbean is long: Toussaint Louverture's revolution in Santo Domingo-Haiti; Julien Fedon's rebellion that sought to make Grenada a Black Republic like Haiti; slave uprisings in Trinidad inspired by the rebellion in Grenada; the Second Maroon War in Jamaica in which rebels were exiled to Nova Scotia and then shipped to Sierra Leone; the Black Carib Wars against the British in St. Vincent; the "Guerre des Bois" in St. Lucia; the Colihault Uprising in Dominica; the slave rebellion, led by Tula, Mercier, and Karpata in Curacao; the slave insurrection in Demerara, Guyana; and the Coro slave uprising led by Black generals Jose Leonardo Chirino and Jose Caridad Gonzalez in Venezuela. To complete this map, we should not forget literary representations, such as the Black Carib War that inspired *The Drama of King Shotoway*, the first full-length play written and performed in 1823 by Blacks in the United States; *Hiroonia: A Historical Romance*, the first Caribbean epic poem by Vincentian Horatio Nelson Huggins (1830–1895) that was published in Trinidad in 1930.

Besides including the Caribbean, the map should also show that on the mainland of the United States John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859 was not isolated. This list too is substantial: a thousand enslaved blacksmiths in Virginia built their own swords and bullets to overthrow slavery but their revolt was quelled in 1800; Denmark Vesey, a freed African-Caribbean slave, planned an urban insurrection which was discovered and strangled in 1822; Nat Turner's armed rebellion in Virginia spread terror through the South and the rest of the country in 1831. Monica Hill observes that Vesey's insurrection sparked publication of the first Black newspapers, which openly called for Negro rights, slave rebellion, and the organization of the Underground Railroad. She relates too that in 1829 David Walker's pamphlet *An Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* called for armed insurrection to overthrow slavery and denounce the hypocrisy of Thomas Jefferson. She also highlights that in 1831 William Lloyd Garrison published the first White anti-slavery newspaper, *The*

Liberator. She finally reminds us that the speeches of Sojourner Truth made a fundamental contribution to the movement that led to the Civil War. Hill significantly uses the word “revolution” to refer to the anticipation of, and participation in the Civil War by an astonishing number of slaves.

This historical sketch shows that the history of democracy is marked from the beginning by an enduring tension between the radical and liberal positions. These many intertwined revolutions have nourished the process of democracy and by acknowledging major as well as minor episodes, we may contribute to the realization of a more inclusive and more just democracy in our present times. Lisa Lowe’s research on Atlantic slavery is exemplary in this respect because it includes Asia in the picture and shows the role of Chinese and Indian indentured labor within the abolition of African slavery. Cliff’s *Free Enterprise* addresses such inclusion. The reference to “Chinese slaves”⁷⁵ is explicit and the remark that “the trade was not monolithic”⁷⁶ unequivocal. Her narration reaches widely to fill all possible gaps in the telling. On the contrary, mainstream historiography has glorified some events and obscured others, while counter-historiography has broken the silence of the under-represented, as witnessed by the mainstream glorification of John Brown and the dismissal of Harriet Tubman.

Cliff underscores this neglect when she observes that “Harriet Tubman had been disregarded”⁷⁷. Tubman was evidently too good to be true and acknowledged. Her legendary life is indeed so unbelievable that it appears to be fictional. A fugitive slave, Tubman was long sought but never captured; she sided with Captain Brown and became one of the most successful conductors of the underground railway; she later sided with Susan B. Anthony and became one of the most active suffragists in New York state; heavily involved with the Methodist Church, she became an activist for the rights of the elderly and donated her money to the African Methodist Church Home to take care of the poor. Even the brain surgery she underwent in her later years has epic tones: she asked for it to be performed without anesthesia, allegedly only by biting a bullet. When she died, she was buried with semi-military honors and Booker T. Washington delivered the address. She is now listed in the Episcopal and Lutheran calendars of saints.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the glory is still granted mostly to John Brown.

Cliff’s narrative seeks to articulate the tensions between history and counter-history, like the tensions between liberal and radical democracy, in order to provide an alternative moral and political framing within which to understand the various events in their full complexity. *Free Enterprise* does not seek to claim “ownership of

75 Cliff, *Free Enterprise*, 101.

76 *Ibid.*, 109.

77 *Ibid.*, 100.

78 Humez, Jean M: *Harriet Tubman: The Life and the Life Stories*, Madison 2003.

history” through alternative narratives; rather, it challenges conventional historical narratives because “the official version is a cheat”⁷⁹. This perspective entails more than mere inclusion or juxtaposition. It requires employing imagination and fiction in the historical framing. Most importantly, it involves re-conceptualizing the very ideas of revolution and democracy. This revision is accomplished through a dialogical articulation of the issues at stake, through a narration that moves from story-circle to epistolary form, from lyric verses to symbols, in a relentless search for a language that does not force lives into predefined categories. Issues are presented by an I that speaks with a You and through their exchanges, confrontations, and agreements they examine the very core of the question of slavery and consider which participants in the abolitionist movement are truly prepared to consider the slaves fully human.

Cliff’s narrative adopts throughout a form of address that always brings the You into the story, thereby engaging a reshaping of the humanist subject. After taking us deeply into the dehumanized lives of the leprosarium, into an extreme subalternity that reduces people to mere digits, Cliff asks us not only to view colonial conquest from this subaltern perspective but also to experience the sharing of lived lives and ideas of the people cast apart by colonial power. In the process, she never invokes the word “revolution,” not even when she mentions Toussaint⁸⁰, John Brown⁸¹ and the Suffragettes⁸². The word “revolution” is uttered instead only by the militia that kills, beheads, and silences in order to oppose what they assume is a revolution. Rather, it is the word “peaceful” that is repeated to introduce those who, although “armed”⁸³, had managed the sharing of the cave. In this linguistic paradox, we are witnessing nonviolent militancy, as defined by Gandhi – i.e., as anarchism, disobedience, no-saying, non-normative practice, rejection of categorizations. Through a slow-paced narrative, Cliff shows us how to be common with others and speak an ordinary language, through conversation in Chapter One, story-circle in Chapter Two, and correspondence in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three begins with a letter written to Annie by Mary Ellen from Boston in 1874 about Joseph M. W. Turner’s 1840 painting *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On*. The letter takes us into the world of the abolitionist White ladies, their salons, their servants, and their company. Mary Ellen is invited to Alice Hooper’s house for the unveiling of the painting, but leaves distressed and in silence although she is invited to offer her witness. We understand her utter refusal to act as native informant within a liberal movement lead by Whites. Although she

79 Cliff, *Free Enterprise*, 137.

80 *Ibid.*, 6.

81 *Ibid.*, 16.

82 *Ibid.*, 22.

83 *Ibid.*, 63.

cannot find a way to ask her interlocutor the fundamental question, “Can you understand the constructive use of violence in the cause of liberation? [...] Can you accept, nay, believe in the deepest part of yourself, the full humanity of the African?”⁸⁴, she clearly draws the line that separates the two of them by marking their different interpretations of the painting: while Alice Hooper focuses on the whiteness of the storm at its center, comparing Turner with Coleridge and Melville,⁸⁵ Mary Ellen focuses on the foreground, on the chained brown leg of the drowning slave surrounded by fish.⁸⁶ She cannot tear her eyes from the foreground because, she offers, “It is who we are”⁸⁷.

Yet again Cliff insists that it is not enough to add other voices to the same framing; it is the framing itself that needs to be changed. We need a method that makes convergences and connections available, so that history is not simply told differently or in more voices, but told in ways that were previously unthinkable, unimaginable. As Lowe clearly puts it, we need to use a narrative tense of what could have been, a tense that symbolizes attention to what has been missing in history so far, a tense that breaks the silence about the obscure moments when “transformations have begun to take place” (175) so that they are no longer locked within paradigms and orders that foreclose their telling. Lowe urges us to employ “a past conditional temporality” that “suggests that there were other conditions of possibility that were vanquished by liberal political reason and its promises of freedom, and it suggests means to open those conditions to pursue what might have been”⁸⁸.

Chapter Three of *Free Enterprise* unquestionably pursues the “conditional temporality” of what might have been. Its first section about Turner’s *Slave Ship* is entitled “Provenance” and tells us about the official document that matches the painting at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. The document, Andrew Walker describes, lists Alice Sturgis Hooper (1841–1879) among the owners, states that she “placed the painting for the first three years on loan at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts” almost immediately after purchasing it in 1876, and comments about the “shift in perception from an image of color specks to an image of protest” caused by “a genteel band of socially active Bostonians [who] developed a moral interpretation [...] that would later be used for political purposes.” For the next ten years the painting returned to the Hoopers’ home; here, according to Walker, it “became a catalyst for political action.” The painting was then bought by the Museum in 1899 “and advertised not as a

84 Ibid., 79.

85 Ibid., 78.

86 Ibid., 79.

87 Ibid., 80.

88 Lowe, Lisa: *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, Durham 2015, 175.

picture with important historical content but as one of the artistic masterpieces of the nineteenth century”⁸⁹.

Cliff’s neo-slave narrative contrasts the document’s standard opposition between politics and aesthetics and the image of the museum as a stronghold of pure aseptic art. Instead, she presents the painting as one of multiple architects in the temporal, and hence political production of knowing. Turner’s *Slave Ship* is placed at the center of an exchange between liberal and radical democracy, respectively represented by Alice and Mary Ellen. Alice is blinded by the beautiful light at the center of the painting and cannot see the drowning body in the corner. Mary Ellen’s eyes are paralyzed by the shock at the sight of the human tragedy in the foreground. However, her attention cannot simply be added to Alice’s crippled reading – an appendix would only be a crutch and Mary Ellen is no crutch for the abolitionist liberal establishment. Rather, she is an outright radical abolitionist. Cliff’s narration shows what must change is the paradigm: in order to focus on the foreground, Alice must first agree that Africans are fully human. Gandhi would say that Alice must lessen herself and her culture, and *ahimsaically* touch the You that she wants to save, the drowning slave.⁹⁰ She must invest her body too in this action; the idea(l) is not enough. Radical democracy demands corporeal relations, bodies that are in common with other bodies. Butler likewise, as illustrated in her discussion about Fanon above, would say that Alice must reach for a bodily touch, feel the You in order to explain the You to herself. Abstract understanding is not enough. Radical abolitionism must seek a reciprocal relationship with the slaves, otherwise they will never be considered fully human and humanity will not be redefined, otherwise “man” alone will remain at the center of the human, and humanism entangled with colonialism.

Cliff’s narration is persistent and does not turn away from Alice because of her imperfection. It follows Alice in the relation with her cousin Clover, a photographer of the Civil War, “a spinster with artistic pretensions [...] dangerous, like Margaret Fuller”⁹¹. The historical Clover was the wife of the intellectual Henry Adams; she committed suicide in 1885. This relation is explored in the section bearing the Whitmanic title “Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking,” the 1859 song that creates a dream-like action. With the pace of a reverie, Cliff’s narrative shows the two women exchanging Sappho’s verses and allowing themselves the fantasy to go West, where “female couples, the most daring of pairs” were told to be “traveling with the wagon trains”⁹². The two women interact with a homeless, mixed blood woman

89 Walker, Andrew: From Private Sermon to Public Masterpiece: J.M.W. Turner’s *The Slave Ship* in Boston, 1876–1899. In: *Journal of the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston 6(1994) 6–7.

90 Gandhi, Utonal Life.

91 Cliff, *Free Enterprise*, 93.

92 *Ibid.*, 97.

with green eyes who reads poetry and talks about the human condition, about entering another realm through reading, about “being transported by words”⁹³ and becoming “the most unnatural being, the intellectual woman”⁹⁴. She says her name is Scheherazade, but the other slaves call her Sally⁹⁵ – she is a woman with two identities. Clover would like to take her picture. This leads to an important specification about the divide between “spectating life” like tourists and “becoming real, descending into it, striding through it with intent”⁹⁶. Clover never becomes real, because she never accepts herself fully as what she is – “no woman she”⁹⁷. Her fantasy of going West to live freely as a female couple abruptly ends and provides a tragic prelude to her suicide in later pages: “the reality of that existence was not for the likes of her”⁹⁸. Even when the fight is for themselves, the liberal ladies who fight for the ideal of freedom are cast apart from the radical women who struggle for the freedom of their own bodies – indeed, even after the abolition of slavery, there is still “free and free”⁹⁹.

The next section returns to Mary Ellen and her visit to her first home in Martha's Vineyard, where her mother had enrolled her as a four-year child in the free African school. It is 1874, fifteen years after her collaboration with John Brown, which has gone undetected. She has become a successful businesswoman by now, and Cliff indicatively gives a picture of San Francisco by singing a hymn to the prostitutes, “to their enterprising ways”, and stating that they deserve a monument, “to the women who serviced the men who opened the frontier”¹⁰⁰. This remark introduces the elucidation that Mary Ellen's enterprise was no bordello despite the rumors, that it was instead underground railway business. It should be noted that the moral glorification of the latter is not done at the expense of the former business – on the contrary. This too, I suggest, is a rhetorical renunciatory practice in tune with Gandhi's theory about becoming less in order to build communities.¹⁰¹ In these pages of the novel we meet both her father and her mother, a family of freedom fighters that leads us into Maroon communities in the Adirondacks, Canada, the Caribbean, and at Fort Mose, a fortress in Florida where Blacks fought for freedom, as well as to the Cage in Montego Bay, Jamaica, where runaway slaves were imprisoned. A lyrical telling searches through this past. It moves among impalpable items: inscriptions of cosmograms on the prison walls that only Africans (not Africans born in the New World) could

93 *Ibid.*, 93.

94 *Ibid.*, 93.

95 *Ibid.*, 92.

96 *Ibid.*, 97.

97 *Ibid.*, 168.

98 *Ibid.*, 97.

99 *Ibid.*, 91.

100 *Ibid.*, 102.

101 Gandhi, *The Common Cause*.

decipher¹⁰²; childhood memories – her father’s adventures over the seas to liberate slaves while pretending to participate in the Trade¹⁰³; her mother’s memories¹⁰⁴ of Africa and the Atlantic crossing – children at the bottom of the sea, helpless African gods, the powerless woman “on a chariot of *abeng*”¹⁰⁵. The sections on her father and on her mother are separated by the most poetic pages in the text. Cliff nourishes our imagination about the sounds and meanings of the languages spoken by the Arawaks with graphic signs¹⁰⁶, as if to underline that in order to accomplish a radical revision of kinship a linguistic revolution is also needed.

Mary Ellen’s mother was killed in a raid in 1825¹⁰⁷. Mary Ellen inherited her revolver. After Brown’s execution, during her escape, she met a group of White racist teens who threatened to capture and force her into slavery by taking her to Virginia. She killed and burned them, and then posted a sign on a tree, saying “These were some mean niggers. You owe me a favor. Signed, A Gentleman”¹⁰⁸. This wording is clearly another act of linguistic revolution, the lexical choice a double-saying like the signature. Even though the whole episode is told in the minimum number of words, less than a page, in matter-of-fact journalistic language, the incident is a crucial elaboration of the main theme of violence. Although *Free Enterprise* thematizes armed insurrection against slavery, no acts of violence perpetrated by the insurrectionists are included, except this one. This, however, is not a planned insurrectionist act. Rather, it is an extreme act of responsive violence by a woman when treated sexually like prey. This is no mimic reversal of the colonial paradigm, in Butler’s terms. On the contrary, it is a material action of personal survival and a rhetorical act of signifying.

The narrative at this point leaves her personal life to focus on Mary Ellen’s political relationship with John Brown. She defines him as “a splendid ally. No more, no less”¹⁰⁹, acknowledges their “differences”¹¹⁰, and admits that she “almost fell out [...] over his devotion to communism, his notion of an African state as a christo-utopia, a heaven on earth for colored folks”¹¹¹. This division is fundamental: she had “objected immediately” to his Christian romantic vision, which she immediately detected as a claim of ownership. She instantly understood that he was “caught in a revolution-

102 Cliff, *Free Enterprise*, 114.

103 *Ibid.*, 108–120.

104 *Ibid.*, 126–131.

105 *Ibid.*, 128.

106 *Ibid.*, 121–125.

107 *Ibid.*, 130f.

108 *Ibid.*, 140.

109 *Ibid.*, 141.

110 *Ibid.*, 142.

111 *Ibid.*, 143.

ary dreamtime"¹¹². She eloquently argues that this practice risks "pedestalizing the African" and is "as potentially degrading, and damaging, as enslavement"¹¹³. Instead, Mary Ellen positions herself like the Fanon who asks, "Was my freedom not given to me then in order to build the world of the *You*?"¹¹⁴. This way, Mary Ellen participates in a redefinition of humanism outside the colonial paradigm, as hoped for by Butler. Such uncompromisingly radical political positioning is further emphasized in her letter to Annie, where she directs at John Brown the same question she would have liked to ask Alice about Turner's painting: "Why not allow us to be human?"¹¹⁵. In these final pages, Cliff takes us to the heart of Butler's articulation about the grounding of humanism. Mary Ellen spots the liberal limitations of Captain Brown's romantic abolitionism when she challenges: "Are we to be made a shining example of the impossible? Or be treated as a group of living, breathing human beings?"¹¹⁶.

These questions are as potently political as they are vigorously epistemological. While John Brown envisions a utopian state that is like the Kingdom of God for the African people¹¹⁷, Mary Ellen points out that this would result in a theocracy, just like the missions along the Camino Real that have exterminated the Indians.¹¹⁸ She elaborates theoretically: "I dread the notion of suffering into redemption"¹¹⁹. This remark is crucial because it shows her effort to lift the victims from their state of victimhood and make them human. Defiantly Mary Ellen reminds the Captain that "we do not wish to enslave the enslavers"¹²⁰. This reversal of roles within the power system can only be avoided if the system itself is changed, if the fight is for eliminating power rather than taking it over. Only in this way may the revolution avoid replicating the violence it is opposing. If, on the contrary, power is figured as masculine and superhuman also by the revolutionary imaginary, as Butler argues, the enslaved can only picture their vindication in terms of an otherworldly people, triumphant in their redemption that originates in their suffering but confined within the Kingdom of God, and still excluded from the sharing of this world, the realm of the possible. Cliff articulates a counter-discourse to mainstream representations of the long-suffering enslaved, whose moral victory prevails over their just rage and rebellion, and whose superhuman dream silences their desire for ordinary humanity.

On the contrary, Mary Ellen's representation pursues lived lives, imperfectly, by fragments, with interruptions, through listening to different modes, tongues, po-

112 Ibid., 143.

113 Ibid., 143.

114 Qtd. in Butler, *Judith: Senses of the Subject*, New York 2015, 194.

115 Cliff, *Free Enterprise*, 147.

116 Ibid., 147.

117 Cliff, *Free Enterprise*, 148.

118 Ibid., 148.

119 Ibid., 148.

120 Ibid., 144.

sitions, and in search of affiliations. No single narrative nor homogeneous picture can contain the politics of her temporary location because it is defined by moral imperfection. As Gandhi underscores, perfection is the violent modality of dominant power, of totalitarianism and colonialism but also of liberalism within globalization, while moral imperfectionism leads towards nonviolent radical democracy.¹²¹ Perfection, Butler likewise underscores, is the single voice of masculinist power, only capable of replacing one “man” with another “man” instead of sharing the vision, imperfectly, interlocutorily, and worldly between an I and a You. Mary Ellen pursues such relational and reciprocal power to be shared with all by a collectivity of diversities irreducible to categories.

Right after the episode in which we witness that Mary Ellen is capable of perpetrating violence – she has killed “the sons of the South” and with cold calculation also concealed the murder¹²² – we are made to understand that she is a nonviolent fighter. Cliff’s narrative has taken us through a journey that has prepared us to accept surprising and incoherent turns – a journey through lived lives. The contradiction in the sequence of events is only apparent: we are prepared to understand why she dreads the pacification of her people because she knows that violence can take turns – she has experienced it herself, both as a victim and as a perpetrator. This is why she rejects a metaphysical vision of the abolitionist future, where the Africans either have a prime seat in paradise or return to Africa. Cliff is well aware that there is no Africa to return to for the Africans in the Americas. Mary Ellen does not subscribe to the realm of the impossible. Instead, she lays out a pragmatic plan for the here and now of human temporality: becoming common in order to build a community and sharing the property.¹²³ She is also saying yes to capital: “Dammit,” she declares with defiant irony, “our people knew capitalism intimately, historically”¹²⁴. Power in this world is capital and overturning power, Mary Ellen understands, does not mean eliminating power but sharing it – sharing capital too, here and now, us and them. The future of Africans is in the equal sharing by women and men of capital and positions of power within capitalistic society.¹²⁵ Mary Ellen’s last words as she closes her memories of the past are pronounced while she is holding a newspaper that announces the lynchings in her present time. The fight continues, with the awareness that the elimination of violence cannot always be peaceful. Nevertheless, this is not a sufficient reason to undertake armed battle in the name of justice.

Mary Ellen illustrates her political philosophy in letters to Annie. The letters contain words of deep affection for her, while she is wondering where her friend is: “You

121 Gandhi, *The Common Cause*; Gandhi: *Utonal Life*.

122 Cliff, *Free Enterprise*, 140.

123 *Ibid.*, 151.

124 *Ibid.*, 143.

125 *Ibid.*, 150.

are to me like an old lover"¹²⁶; "You are the closest thing I ever had to a daughter"¹²⁷. She fondly remembers Annie's "mannish overalls" and laments that their fight was defeated, that it is always "the winner" that "names the age"¹²⁸; she voices her apprehension when the defeat comes, her fear that she would be dead.¹²⁹ Mary Ellen's love for Annie is deeply affectionate, not sexual – it expresses her unselfish acceptance of her difference not of their sameness. However, Annie's masculine identity is not depicted as singularity in *Free Enterprise*, but rather as common. We meet lesbian couples in Maroon communities; we watch Clover's fragile desire for women; we hear the name of Mary Walker, a feminist abolitionist and the first female US Army surgeon who received the medal of honor in the Civil War. Walker strongly opposed women's long skirts and petticoats by arguing against their discomfort, their limitation to the mobility of women, and their not being hygienic. Pictures show her wearing men's clothes as well as the skirts over pants that she designed herself.

Annie's only letter to Mary Ellen comes a few pages before the closing of *Free Enterprise*. The year is 1898. The letter follows another episode where Annie and Rachel exchange personal stories and where Annie marks the difference between herself who withdrew and Mary Ellen whom she admires for having kept up the fight. She and Rachel (the couple providing another autobiographical reference to Cliff's life with Adrienne Rich) applaud their heroine Mary Ellen. In these final pages we learn that Annie, too, has killed: two White women. They were naked, bathing where she had gone to water her horse. She was dressed like a man, her skin was dark. At the sight of what the bathing women thought was a Black man they started screaming in terror. Annie shot them. Like the episode where Mary Ellen shoots the boys, this passage is worded as a scanty factual report. It happened a few days before Brown's defeat, when the Maroon camp in which Annie lived was raided, Indian and African women were killed before the eyes of the men, the men were chained together, Annie with them, until her sex was discovered.¹³⁰ Her chained body was then the target of violence by the chained men.¹³¹ While she was being raped all Annie could think of was Industry, the slave she could not save. Annie's letter concludes sharply, "This is the story I do not tell"¹³². Annie, the conductor of the story circle, can only share the telling of her own deepest suffering with Mary Ellen. Here too violence is not enacted within a simple good-versus-bad frame. Annie kills, we may say, for a translation mistake. The mainstream paradigm dictates that women are raped by men.

126 Ibid., 133.

127 Ibid., 137.

128 Ibid., 137.

129 Ibid., 139.

130 Cliff, *Free Enterprise*, 196f.

131 Ibid., 207.

132 Ibid., 208.

Annie is the victim of male violence as a woman. When she appears dressed like a man in front of vulnerable women, these read her as a threat. But there is an interference in the message in the intersection between racism and sexism: the women are White and she appears as a Black man. Outnumbered, she can only kill. Hers too is responsive violence although triggered by figurative, not literal understanding.

The closing pages return to Mary Ellen's voice, the memory of receiving her mom's gun and going to Free African School where books were memorized so that they would not die. This enables Cliff to fill the ending of *Free Enterprise* with poetry – slave poetry, the poetry written by the first African American woman in Colonial times, Phillis Wheatley. Perhaps only poetry can be uttered after Annie's suffering without transcending or displacing it. Perhaps only poetry can dive under the surface of the ocean, below the fish and the slave's leg in Turner's painting. Perhaps only poetry can let Mary Ellen see the bones in the sand and hear the silence at the bottom of the Black Atlantic¹³³ to honor the victims of the Trade. Perhaps only poetry can tell the paradox I do dare emphasize: *Free Enterprise* tells the story of two women who joined armed insurrection and killed and nevertheless embraced nonviolent revolution.

Mary Ellen remains a friend of John Brown and yet admires Annie's withdrawal. Both women practice a lessening of their own selves that shows how to fight violence within a nonviolent frame. Both embrace an ethics of passive resistance, within which Butler reminds us that vulnerability can be defiant agency, and within which Gandhi powerfully invokes a becoming common that disregards oneself and enables inclusive sociality.¹³⁴ Indeed, neither Mary Ellen nor Annie are raised to the status of heroine. As Annie explicitly puts it, "I am a uniquely ordinary human being"¹³⁵, to which Mary Ellen replies by silencing herself and letting Wheatley speak.

Cliff's *Free Enterprise* empowers non-violent revolution by putting the material economic sphere at the center of her critique. It foregrounds the connection between production and reproduction and the roles of racial domination and heteronormativity within capital. It sheds light on the interlocking relationship among different emancipatory struggles and the limitations of confining individual identities within the merely cultural. It places exclusion and lack of recognition at the center of the materiality of political economy. *Free Enterprise* presents us with an affective community, which Gandhi defines as being grounded on anticolonial, radical revolutionary thinking and on the politics of friendship, which is a politics of affiliations among singularities seeking inclusiveness, ethico-political, intra-subjective self-understanding, rather than transcendental morality.¹³⁶ The affective commu-

133 Ibid., 210.

134 Gandhi, *The Common Cause*, 152.

135 Cliff, *Free Enterprise*, 206.

136 Gandhi, *Affective Communities*.

nity displayed in this neo-slave narrative is made of people who are not fixed into abstract taxonomies but are rather pulled together by their relations, by their solidarity *for* their community, never against another, actively engaged in the making of radical democracy which can only be made, albeit imperfectly, of and by the people – all the people. To the question, “What kept them going?” referring to the enslaved, Cliff’s text answers: “People. Their own. That’s all they had”¹³⁷.

I have argued that Mary Ellen and Annie define “people” through their relational practice, with each other, with Alice, Clover, Rachel, and also with John Brown to express a Gandhian resistance and a Butlerian agency and recast subjectivity within a Braidottian posthuman frame that invites me to inflect vulnerability with mercy as a transformative proposition. Although both Mary Ellen and Annie have participated in the armed revolution and both have killed, their agential vulnerability, their becoming less in the relationships, and their self-ruination qualify their recourse to violence as responsive, not deliberate. They have never planned violence within their armed revolution and the guns they carry are a motherly legacy – only meant to be used defensively and contingently, only where there is a specific I and a You at play; they are not at the center of a masculinist replacing of a “man” with another “man.”

Stevenson’s call for just mercy, qualified as “most empowering, liberating, and transformative when it is directed at the undeserving”¹³⁸ compels us to face the question of justice from the opposite perspective and ask: “do we deserve to kill?” rather than “do they deserve to die?” *Free Enterprise* demonstrates that if we ask the right questions we find empowered “people” even under slavery, even in a leper colony, even among the most marginalized and disempowered.

I wish to conclude with another narration of merciful solidarity: Kaha Mohamed Aden’s *Dalmar. La disfavola degli elefanti* (2019), which may be translated as *Dalmar: The Elephants’ Unfable*, *disfavola* being a word created in Italian by the Somali author to underline the need for a new telling of both history and legends based on a social ethos characterized by a disposition towards others.¹³⁹ Aden uses the Italian language by adjusting lexicon and syntax to a new tune, a music that sings in two cultures, the Somali where Aden was born, the Italian in which she is living. Her fable is both utopic and dystopic and while it carries us into the 1990s ethnic massacres in Somalia as well into the present Italian racism and xenophobia, it also manages to look into a brighter future through the eyes of Dalmar, a young

137 Cliff, *Free Enterprise*, 118.

138 Stevenson, *Just Mercy*, 313.

139 Aden’s fable, in my opinion, deserves translation and wider circulation, as the critical appreciation by Simone Brioni who has also co-edited the video documentary *La quarta via* on Aden, makes clear. Her work not only should not be confined to the margins of Italian literature under the colonial label “migration literature” as is still common today, but should call central attention within the contemporary theoretical and political discourse on how to tackle the persisting tragic brutality of our civilization.

elephant. I value Aden's unfable not only for its telling of Somalian history and condemnation of Italian racism, but also for the epistemic change it offers on the discourse on war, on interculturality and in general on human society. Like Morrison who speaks about slavery to talk about humans not just slaves, like Cliff who represents homosexual affects to speak about human affects not identity politics, Aden speaks about elephants from the savannah and bears on an island in order to reflect upon shared practices and the meaning of revolution both in her torn-up Somalia and in the slashed relationships among immigrants and autochthonous people in Italy.

Aden's story compels us to revise our definitions of liberation, liberty, peace, and shared living and empowers us to imagine the future within a new frame. Relations are always foregrounded in this fable: those who do not relate are the rats devoted to arms traffic, to making war indirectly and producing arms for profit to the point that they neglect to see that the arms they produce destroy everything, including themselves. Likewise the cook Irina – a bear so focused on her own pontifications about the urge to get to work that she neglects to consider what the elephants invited to the banquet may wish to eat – displays an incapacity to relate that is a parody of hospitality reduced to assimilation. Bears are sedentary, they have lairs in which they spend winters and think they should live happily and undisturbed on their island. The elephants running away from the war who arrive on the island do not know about lairs and winter; they sleep very little and keep walking all the time. While the bears imagine themselves free, they are in fact ruled by a former general, now called the Barber who only cares about erasing the memory of the past, a Club of respectable stingy misers who only care about making money, and the Happy League that repeats its dictum, "the elephants must go back home." The island exposes the many imperfections of Italian democracy, especially in its erasure of colonial history: the bears avoid the forest peopled by the restless souls and by some survivors from the ethnic massacres. Among these is the snail Babalush who will inform Idman, the female elephant leader, about the cultural censorship that is crippling the bears' society. Idman is a democratic temporary leader eager to pass on her role to a younger elephant and return to her own life full of love for her beloved Doctor Dooli, one of the best educated people of the savannah, a descendant of the sea mice that navigated with Vasco de Gama but then became earth mice, because even in the savannah there are immigrants too! And nowhere is identity politics without faults and contradictions: rats are not all the same. Even elephants are not all impeccably democratic: Dalmar's grandfather loves tradition so much that his repetition of the old fables also translates into a form of erasure and distortion of memory.

The encounter between elephants and bears is not a simplistic dichotomy between the difference of democracy and oligarchy, but also unexpected encounters among the many differences within democracy and oligarchy. It is Bruna, the bear, who organizes a banquet to welcome the elephants, and in the end it is Idman and

Bruna, who are learning from their little ones to relate as common people, who will practice nonviolence as a common everyday strategy and figure out how to share the island: bears will give some of their furs to elephants to face the winter; elephants will build larger and warmer huts for the bears and for storing hay for themselves. The practice of sharing turns into a mutual advantage because merciful solidarity is a two-way road, not a grace handed down from above. Idman and Bruna will succeed because they act outside the impasse of the frame us versus them, war versus peace, by practicing hospitality and friendship temporarily, imperfectly, by inventing in the process a polysemic cohabitation which never forgets love. The meaning of their merciful solidarity is in the words of the song composed by Idman while leading her people away from the war: “if you wish to let them rest in peace, seek them. Unlearning indifference is possible.” Merciful solidarity is learning to unlearn indifference: love grounded on the practice of critical thinking rather than on an abstract ideal. Such practice enables them to navigate ambivalences and nourish the feelings and affects that are characterized by such ambivalences and also constitute them.

This takes us back to Dallmayr, on his insistence that social equality, collective solidarity, are not to be juxtaposed to individual liberty, and to return to Butler who underscores that if no political sovereignty establishes which subjects have more rights to life, then the relationality of life is constitutive of the interdependence among different humans.¹⁴⁰ More explicitly than in Morrison’s and Cliff’s narratives, Aden’s unfable foregrounds also the posthuman interdependence and coexistence invoked by Braidotti by showing a society in which bears and elephants with the help of rats, mice, snails and mostly bees practice nonviolent equality. Aden thus gives body to Butler’s argument about how to turn nonviolence into a practice: by observing that violence always operates as social inequality and is always nominal, that is interpreted, she claims that it is through thinking of nonviolence as equality that we may empower ourselves to achieve nonviolent resolutions of conflicts.

With the help of Aden, Cliff and Morrison I have argued for the crucial role of merciful solidarity to cast a hopeful look upon our future. To conclude, I wish to emphasize that the positive figuration of this alternative future is made possible by the creative imagination that literature and the arts provide us with – an imagination that is therefore vital to and never a mere embellishment of our lived lives. When Butler compares the resolution of conflicts to translation, referring to Benjamin,¹⁴¹ which acts upon both the target and the source language, she calls for the responsibility we all must share to take a stand and decide, for example, whether to translate *Gewalt* with violence, power, or force.¹⁴² The responsibility of the translator is rooted

140 Butler, Judith, *The Force of Nonviolence*, New York 2020, 203.

141 *Ibid.*, 122–141.

142 *Ibid.*, 135.

in the appreciation of the ambiguity of the literary, which opens the field to what might otherwise be, beyond grammatical control and towards the semantical multiplication of interpretations, in that space where relationships endlessly proliferate. Gandhi powerfully defends the role of the literary in the making of radical democracy,¹⁴³ because within the flux of the ongoing temporality of reading after reading we can nourish the hope, sometimes against all hopes, that things might be otherwise, that thinking may be shaped differently, because by paying literary attention to literariness, to the relationship between expression and meaning, we may give body to Butler's theory of performance as agency¹⁴⁴ and believe that it may be possible to ground human society on merciful solidarity, on the practice of cohabitation, equality and justice for all – humans, animals, and the whole planet.

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143 Gandhi, The Common Cause, 149–166.

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Solidarity: A Way Out of the “Ruin of Flesh and Stone”

Lisa Marchi

As diplomacy’s attempts to stop the war in Ukraine through the imposition of sanctions and as other alternatives to armed conflict are failing, I look retrospectively at some examples of contemporary anti-war poetry in US literature as a way to nourish hope in nonviolent actions. Drawing from Susan Sontag’s 2003 book-length essay *Regarding the Pain of Others*, I develop a reflection on the ways in which solidarity circulated in the past and still circulates today enabling the production of a common sense of “we,” which should never be taken for granted, as Sontag reminds us, especially when we regard the pain of others from a distance.¹ We are experiencing such distance between us and the pain of others in these weeks as we watch the war in Ukraine on television, read about it in newspapers, and witness it on social media or the Internet.

Considering Sontag’s argument in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, in this essay I contend that anti-war poetry is more effective than photography in creating bonds of solidarity and in circulating shared affects that stifle the war propaganda. Indeed, as Sontag writes, “photographs of the victims of war are themselves a species of rhetoric. They reiterate. They simplify. They agitate. They create the illusion of consensus”². This reflection pertains not only to the realm of photography and the historical context of the Spanish Civil War mentioned by Sontag in her book. As Rebecca L. Stein and Donatella Della Ratta argue with reference to the conflicts in Israel/Palestine and Syria in the digital age, propaganda videos and electronic activism shape contemporary warfare. The visual thus dominates the war scene today as photography did during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, although the visual media being used today have changed. Let me ask provocatively: Why, then, may poetry be a more appropriate tool to address war tragedies than photography, digital technologies, and social media? What do we as readers gain in terms of knowledge and understanding when we engage in the act of reading antiwar poems and what would get lost as we encounter visual representations of wars?

1 Cf. Sontag, Susan: *Regarding the Pain of Others*, London 2004, 6.

2 Ibid., 5.

In *The Impossible Revolution*, leftist Syrian dissident Yassin Al-Haj Saleh helps readers make sense of the Syrian revolution by offering a subjective, yet lucid account of the Syrian tragedy.³ Among others, Saleh's account offers insightful revelations on the ways in which Syria's democratic revolution metamorphosed into a bloody war. Both Saleh and Della Ratta are convinced that "a condition of hypervisibility connected to a condition of hyperviolence"⁴ may anesthetize viewers. This is an opinion that we also find articulated in Sontag's work, where she states: "For a long time some people believed that if the horror could be made vivid enough, most people would finally take in the outrageousness, the insanity of war"⁵. Unfortunately, the photographs of the Spanish Civil War have not stopped the vicious cycle of violence and the human atrocities committed during wars thus confirming Sontag skepticism about the real capacity of photography to act as a deterrent toward.

I argue in this essay that rather than reproducing, circulating, and amplifying violence as the numerous videos on social networking platforms do, antiwar poems break, interrupt, and suspend the "ruthless force" of war.⁶ They further contribute to stop, in the words of Arab American poet and Vietnam veteran Samuel Hazo, "the furious clamor of flags"⁷ and help readers imagine an alternative, nonviolent reality freed from the horrors of war. Poetry, in particular, does not simply reproduce the beating sounds and destructions produced by the war. It actively engages with the difficult task of "making peace," as Jewish poet Denise Levertov attempted to do, by providing readers with a "grammar of justice/syntax of mutual aid"⁸. With its capacity to activate affects and move the reader, anti-war poetry further effectively conveys the pain inflicted on others in terms that facilitate the reader's (always partial, provisional, and perhaps defective) understanding of war tragedies because they are clearly articulated and affectively communicated.

Offering a fascinating account on the radically new ways in which Palestinian artists, filmmakers, dancers, and activists have been revisiting the archive to imagine an alternative future for Palestine, Gil Z. Hochberg writes: "Finding, exposing, sharing the same information and the same facts, time and time again – the same atrocities, the same numbers (more or less), the same unveiling of open secrets – can

3 Saleh, Yassin al-Haj: *The Impossible Revolution: Making Sense of the Syrian Tragedy*, London 2017.

4 Della Ratta, Rebecca: *Shooting a Revolution: Visual Media and Warfare in Syria*, London 2018.

5 *Ibid.*, 12.

6 Cf. Whitman, Walt: *Beat! Beat! Drums!* In: *The Poetry Foundation*. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45469/beat-beat-drums>

7 Hazo, Samuel J: September 11, 2001. In: *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Sept. 11, 2011. Last Accessed Oct. 04, 2021.

8 Levertov, Denise: *Making Peace*. In: *Breathing the Water*, New York, 1984, 40.

be numbing. To fight this archival fatigue and make archives actually matter, we need to develop an altogether different approach – one that builds an imagination, future vision, playfulness, creativity, speculation, and *fabulation*, to borrow Saidiya Hartman's term⁹. I argue in this essay that this is precisely the approach that the chosen poets invite readers to embrace: to break out of the frame of the war and imagine a nonviolent future.

1. Denise Levertov's "An Interim"

Having served as a nurse during World War II, Levertov had had firsthand experience with the war, from which she would draw to write her antiwar poems. As other US poets who had been involved as ambulance drivers or as caregivers in the First World War, such as e. e. cummings and Ellen N. La Motte, Levertov developed intense anti-war sentiments, particularly during the US involvement in the Vietnam War in the 1960s. In 1967, Levertov founded the group Writers and Artists Protest against the War in Vietnam; she actively took part in several anti-war protests and was briefly jailed for her antiwar activism on more than one occasion (Denise Levertov – Poetry Foundation).

In "An Interim" (1968), Levertov expresses the weariness and despair produced by the war and the desire for a temporal suspension of the military confrontations between the two rival superpowers. The poem is divided into seven vignettes, each one focusing on a particular aspect of the war/peace divide: the fatigue that overwhelms antiwar activists; the erosion of language by effect of the war propaganda; the horror of spending the days confined in a solitary cell contrasted with the magnificence of the ocean; peace as an arduous enterprise and a splendid harmony. This last aspect is poignantly expressed in the following lines:

Peace as grandeur. Energy
serene and noble. The waves
break out on the packed sand,
butterflies take the cream o' the foam,
from time to time a palmtree lets fall
another day branch, calmly.

The restlessness
of the sound of waves
transforms itself in its persistence
to that deep rest.

...

9 Hochberg, Gil Z: *Becoming Palestine: Toward an Archival Imagination of the Future*. Durham, 2021, x.

Peace could be
that grandeur, that dwelling
in majestic presence, attuned
to the great pulse.¹⁰

The title of the poem clearly points to the necessity of temporarily suspending the military clashes and human atrocities that replicate themselves without interruption.

In vignette 2, a five-year-old boy is represented as manipulating the language at the expense of a little girl; the image of the unscrupulous child is juxtaposed to that of a US major publicly announcing that “it became necessary/to destroy the town to save it”¹¹. Levertov’s subsequent statement about the erosion of language at the hands of the war is particularly telling:

Language, coral island
accrued from human comprehensions,
human dreams,
you are eroded as war erodes us.¹²

In the following vignette, the desolate experience of fasting and solitary confinement of a very young war-resister – de Courcy Squire – is set side by side with the magnificence of the ocean in the attempt to highlight what war deprives us of: honesty, expansiveness, hospitality, warmth, an accommodating attitude, and in ultimate analysis a sense of wonder. Squire and other prisoners waiting for their trial in a Puerto Rican jail see the trial as a way “to confront the war-makers and, in the process, do something to wake up the by-standers”¹³. Outrage is the affect Levertov mobilizes in this poem: outrage against the war and against the necessity to have people ready to self-immolate so that the horrors of war become finally visible and acknowledged.

In “An Interim,” Levertov breaks the “war talk” and its vicious cycle of violence against others and against oneself by making space for peace so that it may again vibrate in harmony with the great pulse of the universe. Reflecting on the works of feminist writers such as Levertov and Lucille Clifton, in *Waging War on War*, Giorgio Mariani convincingly argues that “some texts do allow peace to speak in a voice that does not merely echo that of war”¹⁴. I believe that Levertov’s poem does that and this

10 Levertov, Denise: An Interim. In: Poetry 113 (1968), H.2, 69–77, 71f.

11 Ibid., 70.

12 Ibid., 70.

13 Ibid., 74.

14 Mariani, Giorgio: *Waging War on War: Peacefighting in American Literature*, Chicago 2015, 25.

is also what June Jordan would do many years after the Vietnam war, when the US was involved in another destructive and long-lasting war: The Iraq war.

2. June Jordan's "The Bombing of Baghdad"

Written during the first Iraq War in 1991, "The Bombing of Baghdad" draws a parallel between the lamentation of the Iraqi civilians under attack and the singing of Crazy Horse, who is outlined as dying at the hands of the white colonists. Jordan in this poem solidarizes with the people of Iraq and the indigenous people of the US, as the lines "And I am cheering for the arrows/and the braves"¹⁵ clearly demonstrate, while also drawing an interesting parallelism between General George Armstrong Custer's invasion of Sioux territory, which started a series of bloody battles, and what she conceives of as a (neo)imperial war in the Middle East.

Despite the poet's insistence on the destructive force of the war, as expressed through the repetition of the verb "we bombed," each time followed by a variety of military but also largely civilian targets, Jordan closes her poem by dedicating it to the survivors: "And here is my song for the living/who must sing against the dying/sing to join the living/with the dead." This is not the first time that Jordan expresses her solidarity with the innocent victims of war massacres occurring in the Middle East. In "Moving towards Home,"¹⁶ for instance, Jordan commemorates the killing of Palestinian refugees in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut during the Lebanese Civil War. Jordan in this poem also creatively shifts the reader's attention from the horrors of human slaughter to the need for a living room of planetary size where "the land is not bullied and beaten/into a tombstone/.../where the men/of my family between the ages of six and sixty-five/are not/marched into a roundup that leads to the grave"¹⁷.

The solidarity expressed by Hammad in the final lines "I was born a Black woman/and now/I am become a Palestinian" reinforces the long political alliance that has historically united African-Americans and Arab-Americans, as the works of Michelle Hartman *Breaking Broken English*¹⁸ and Alex Lubin *Geographies of Liberation*¹⁹

15 Jordan, June: The Bombing of Baghdad. In: poets.org. <https://poets.org/poem/bombing-baghdad>

16 Jordan, June: Moving toward Home. In: Heller Levi, Jan/Keller, Christoph (eds.): The Essential June Jordan, Port Townsend, WA 2021, 91–93.

17 Ibid., 93.

18 Hartman, Michelle: *Breaking Broken English: Black-Arab Literary Solidarities and the Politics of Language*, Syracuse 2019.

19 Lubin, Alex: *Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary*, Chapel Hill 2014.

show. And yet, as Carol Fadda-Conrey notes, the response of Arab-Americans to racial classification has not always been univocal. To quote Fadda-Conrey:

“The instability and ambiguity of Arab American racial classification has historically generated a variety of responses from within Arab-American communities, with these responses revolving around two opposing political demands. The first demand veers toward complete Arab-American integration into the US mainstream and the continuance of the white classification, while the second seeks the right for Arab-Americans to be granted minority status and to self-identify as ‘people of color’²⁰.

Despite this historical ambiguity, today we witness a resurgence of political and cultural solidarity between the African-American and the Arab-American group, as Hartman’s book *Breaking Broken English* clearly shows. Despite the long history of cultural and political interaction between the two groups, today’s linguistic and aesthetic influences are different from previous ones and so are also the political alliances and coalitions, which confront new challenges. To quote Hartman:

“Black-Arab political and cultural solidarity in the United States has become visible once again today. African-American and Arab-American activists and cultural workers have joined together with colleagues in the Arab region, especially in Palestine, to address social justice issues including liberation of the Palestinian people and the specific challenges facing Black communities in the United States, including police violence and murder²¹.

Solidarity, as I have attempted to show, has been the driving force that has guided the creative process of both Levertov and Jordan, as they were confronted with a brutal and sanguinary war carried out in their name and thus wanted to utter their dissent. In the next and final section, I will show what happens when solidarity fails, as Etel Adnan shows in the poem I am considering next.

3. Etel Adnan’s “To Be in a Time of War”

Born to a Syrian Muslim father – a high-ranking official in the Turkish army at the dusk of the Ottoman Empire – and a Greek Christian mother from Smyrna, a port city that had been burnt during the Greco-Turkish war (1919–1922) as an act of retaliation, Adnan had fled in 1923 with her parents to Beirut. The life of this poly-

20 Fadda-Conrey, Carol: *Contemporary Arab-American Literature: Transnational Reconfigurations of Citizenship and Belonging*, New York 2014, 15f.

21 Hartmann, *Breaking Broken English*, 1.

hedric and cosmopolitan artist is characterized by strings of solidarity that she contributed to knit since the early years of her artistic production. Her first novel *Sitt Marie Rose*²² (1978) was based on a true story that defied the logic of "the tribe" or "the clan," since the protagonist is a Maronite Christian working in a school for deaf children in a Palestinian refugee camp and who had been kidnapped and killed by the Phalangists for her "crime," that is showing solidarity with the supposed enemy. Palestinian refugees within Lebanon are not the only group with which Adnan has politically aligned herself. Out of solidarity with the anticolonial fighters in Algeria in the 1960s, Adnan stopped writing in French as an act of dissent and started to "paint in Arabic"²³ instead; she further composed poems in English lending her voice to a Vietcong at the height of US protests against the Vietnam War. Finally, in her long poem *The Arab Apocalypse*²⁴ (1989), Adnan commemorated the genocide of Native Americans while also rallying against the authoritarian regimes in the Arab world and the neocolonial wars being fought there by Western powers.

The first US war against Iraq (1990–1991) marks the beginning of a profoundly painful period for the Arab-American community, mainly for the sense of powerlessness and for the general indifference that a considerable part of the US and global public opinion were showing toward Iraq and its people. The poem "To Be in a Time of War" by Etel Adnan included in the collection *In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country* (2005) dramatically mirrors this traumatic moment in Arab-American history when solidarity clearly failed. This is how Adnan explains the genealogy of the poem:

I did this because I was brought up in the Middle East, in Lebanon, but when the Iraq war began, I was living in America. When you are not a native to a country, in time you can pretty much come to feel integrated. But when it comes to a crisis somewhere back home, or near home, then you realize that you lead a double life. You can carry on with your everyday routines, but something is hurting you that is totally without interest for other people.²⁵

The poem "To Be in a Time of War" thus reads as a frantic meditation on the suffering produced on the speaker by the indifference that the people surrounding her show towards the plight of Iraqis. The following passage, in particular, poignantly expresses the narrator's sense of frustration, impotence, and isolation:

22 Adnan, Etel: *Sitt Marie Rose*. Trans. Georgina Kleege, Sausalito, CA 1982.

23 Harrison, Olivia C: Etel Adnan's Transcolonial Mediterranean. In: elhariry, yasser/Edwige Tamalet Talbayev (eds.): *Critically Mediterranean: Temporalities, Aesthetics and Deployments of a Sea in Crisis*, London 2018, 189–215, 207f.

24 Adnan, Etel: *The Arab Apocalypse*, San Francisco 1989.

25 Adnan, Etel: An Artisan of Beauty and Truth: Etel Adnan in Conversation With David Hornsby and Jane Clark. In: *Beshara Magazine* 5 (Spring 2017) 1–10, 2.

To rise early, to hurry down to the driveway, to look for the paper, take it out from its yellow bag, to read on the front-page WAR, to notice that WAR takes half a page, to feel a shiver down the spine, to tell that that's it, to know that they dared, that they jumped the line, to read that Baghdad is being bombed, to envision a rain of fire, to hear the noise, to be heart-broken, to stare at the trees, to go up slowly while reading, to come back to the front-page, read WAR again, to look at the word as if it were a spider, to feel paralyzed, to look for help within oneself, to know helplessness, to pick up the phone, to give up, to get dressed, to look through the windows, to suffer from the day's beauty, to hate to death the authors of such crimes, to realize that it's useless to think, to pick up the purse, to go down the stairs, to see people smashed to a pulp, to say yes indeed the day is beautiful, not to know anything, to go on walking, to take notice of people's indifference towards each other.²⁶

Through the disturbing repetition of verbs in the infinitive form, the poetic voice expresses not only her anguish and disorientation but also her frenetic attempt to find some sort of relief. The hypnotic repetition of verbs in the infinitive, in particular, is reminiscent of the emotional intensity of *dhikr*, the mnemonic repetition of the ninety-nine names of Allah that Muslim mystics recite to reach a state of rest and a feeling of peace. The only difference here is that readers are faced with a list of customary quotidian actions rooted in everyday life, which are predominantly secular. This poetic strategy does not only encircle the poem with an unsacred halo but also contributes to firmly root the Iraqi war in the US context. Indeed, as Fadda-Conrey argues:

The mundane, everyday acts conveyed in these and other phrases in the section (such as preparing meals, eating, buying gas, taking out the garbage, listening to the radio, and reading the newspaper) ground the Iraq war in an immediate temporal and spatial US present. The war is not merely over there, disconnected from a US landscape, but is evoked in every act performed by the speaker, even the most mundane ones.²⁷

The war, in other words, has moved creepily from the elsewhere to the here. And yet, the speaker is the only one to feel the deafening sounds of the bombs that are being dropped on the cities of Iraq, while her fellow compatriots continue to look away.

26 Adnan, Etel: To Be in a Time of War. https://www.eteladnan.com/in_the_heart/in_the_heart_excerpt.pdf, 2.

27 Fadda-Conrey: Contemporary Arab-American Literature, 122.

4. Conclusion

In this essay, I have shown moments of solidarity, as negotiated by contemporary US women poets belonging to the Jewish-, African-, and Arab-American communities. These solidarities or the lack thereof were negotiated or denounced during two very ferocious and long wars that saw the US involved in the first place. I contend that these poets mobilize images, affects, grammars, and a syntax that not only defy the linguistic erosion produced by the war but also give readers an "imagination of peace"²⁸. This is not a minor detail, as Judith Butler explains in *Frames of War*: "Antiwar poetry produces new frames, a new kind of content, and a new language together with new affects."²⁹ Solidarity, in particular, is the affect that these poets activate in readers, an affect that pushes readers to see the planet as being held together by interconnecting threads, one in which the precarity that marks our living together requires mutual care and responsibility but also a disposition to look at the world and at humanity from a certain perspective, a receptive one. To quote Butler again: "Our affect is never merely our own: affect is, from the start, communicated from elsewhere. It disposes us to perceive the world in a certain way, to let certain dimensions of the world in and to resist others"³⁰. Solidarity in this case does not simply represent a strategy that one performs to shield oneself from the pain of others but rather an active initiative embraced with the intention of being sympathetic and of putting the suffering and killing of others to an end. In other words, a poetry that concretely makes peace and circulates solidarity appears to be the only way out of the "ruin of flesh and stone"³¹ lamented by Sontag and all the poets discussed. Indeed, as Sontag makes patently clear: "War tears, rends. War rips open, eviscerates. War scorches. War dismembers. War ruins"³². Affects such as hope, solidarity, and moderation, which are the opposite of the ones mobilized by the war propaganda, surface these poems. Since they stress solidarity over fear, hatred, and mutual distrust, all the poems included in this essay require on the part of readers a daring act of the imagination, one that is participative, moves beyond grief, and is ultimately responsive. Indeed, as Marianne Hirsch explains in "What We Need Right Now Is to Imagine the Real" with reference to Grace Paley's antiwar writing: "Sometimes, Paley shows us, we stop and look at each other, we listen, and sometimes we even respond. And this is the first burst of imagination, the first antiwar act"³³. By pushing

28 Levertov: *Making Peace*, 40.

29 Butler, Judith: *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* London 2009, 50.

30 *Ibid.*, 50.

31 Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 4.

32 *Ibid.*, 7, emphasis in the original.

33 Hirsch, Marianne: 'What We Need Right Now Is to Imagine the Real': Grace Paley Writing Against War. In: *PMLA* 124 (2009), H.5, 1768–1777, 1776.

readers to pause and to look at each other, I suggest, these women poets perform an antiwar act that may have a lasting impact and whose vibration may reach us, as we are being faced today with the tangible threat of yet another long lasting and bloody war.

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Solidarity in the Digital Commons

Andreas Wittel & Götz Bachmann

We have lost the pleasure of being together. Thirty years of precariousness and competition have destroyed social solidarity. Media virtualization has destroyed empathy among bodies, the pleasure of touching each other, and the pleasure of living in urban spaces. We have lost the pleasure of love.

Franco Berardi and Geert Lovink (2011)

While the question of solidarity is back with a vengeance, be it in public or in academic discourse, it comes as a bit of a surprise that it has drawn much less attention in the world of scholars studying digital media. There is only one book that addresses the question head on. In a small volume on “Digital Solidarity”¹, Swiss media theorist Felix Stalder sets himself up to explore “new forms of solidarity which are emerging in the digital realm” by coming up with an “inventory of forms, reduced to four basic types: commons, assemblies, swarms and weak networks”². In covering such a large territory, Stalder never defines what he means by solidarity, nor does he tell us why he does not do so. A possible motive might be that he wants to prevent the exclusion of newly emerging meanings by definitions a priori. But this leads him into a very broad analysis, and does not allow for much more than a vague diagnosis that in digital media, after the end of McLuhan’s Gutenberg Galaxy, a “reformulation of solidarity”³ might develop in conjunction with new forms of autonomy and community, and this might one day “enable us to fill the void created by the waning

1 Stalder, Felix: *Digital Solidarity*, London and Lüneburg 2013.
<https://www.metamute.org/sites/www.metamute.org/files/u1/Digital-Solidarity-Felix-Stalder-9781906496920-web-fullbook.pdf>

2 *Ibid.*, 15.

3 *Ibid.*, 10.

of the culture and the institutions of the Gutenberg Galaxy⁴. We sympathise with this hope, yet we question its validity.

In the following paper we take a narrower approach, which sadly will lead us to a more pessimistic result. On the one hand, we limit our inquiry to the digital commons, which provide, according to Stalder's mapping, "the most comprehensive new formations for organising solidarity"⁵ in the digital realm. On the other hand, we harden our criteria for solidarity. While we are hesitant to police solidarity's meanings, we note that in times of multiple severe attacks against democracy there is a danger in seeing solidarity everywhere.

To tackle solidarity's manifold and ambivalent meanings, we identify five different versions of solidarity: of cohesion, of care for the weak, of power, of struggle, and of concern. This approach results in the following overall structure: After some initial remarks on (1) the commons and (2) the digital commons, we look specifically into two flagship projects of the digital commons: (3) the software commons, as it can be found in the free and open-source software movement, and the (4) knowledge commons, which underlies, for example, Wikipedia. In these two examples we do not rely on our own first-hand research but on ethnographies by others, and on statements by prominent proponents of the respective movements. We then (5) explicate the aforementioned five different meanings of solidarity to ask (6) what kinds of solidarity are at stake in the digital commons. This analysis leads to a rather pessimistic conclusion. We end our chapter with (7) suggestions as to why the digital commons is so seldomly instigating solidarity.

1. The Commons

Conceptualisations of the commons vary, but there is broad agreement that the commons refer to natural and cultural resources that are shared by a community of commoners. These resources are not privately owned but are owned, maintained, and administered by a community of commoners. They can be different things such as land, language, music, values, knowledge or software. Commons exist in different forms and shapes. Commons such as community forests, grasslands, fisheries, food communities, self-organised clinics, cooperatives, farmer-consumer networks, microcredit networks, landless movements, squatter communities, autonomous universities, community drink water fountains and wells, and water associations, to name a few, have different internal structures and different forms of governance. Commons are also a central property of some of the most interesting corners of dig-

4 Ibid., 44.

5 Ibid., 31.

ital cultures – with the knowledge commons and the software commons as two of the most prominent forms (and we will come back to these later in more detail).

The starting point for the literature on the commons is Hardin's classic argument concerning the inevitable "Tragedy of the Commons."⁶ Hardin presents us with a timeless picture of a piece of common land: He begins by asking the reader to "picture a pasture open to all"⁷. For a while, this timeless pasture is able to sustain all the cattle that graze there, but eventually, the pasture's capacity for cattle-grazing is reached. If any more cattle are put on the pasture, the pasture will be over-grazed. It will not be able to reproduce and will face long-term decline. Now the tragedy begins. Hardin has a nice way of telling us what we feel we already know: although it might be bad for the overall pasture to bring extra cattle onto the pasture to graze, the individual herdsman (sic) thinks that it is fine to sneak on a few extra cattle. After all, it will really benefit him and will only lead to the slightest decline in the overall well-being of the pasture. And so, he sneaks a few extra cattle onto the pasture.

Yet multiple individual herdsmen have the same thought process, and thus the tragedy plays out, and the commons pasture is ruined. It does not take much to see that Hardin's tale is not supported by empirical evidence and is theoretically simplistic and free of any context.

Hardin naturalises the herdsman's individual competitive self-interest. He presents it as timeless, so obvious as to be taken as a given, without the need for explanation. Ultimately his tale reveals more about the dominant social relation of capitalism, which is indeed based on competitive self-interest. The fact that Hardin is wrong about his diagnosed inevitability of a commons to work and to work successfully does not mean that commons are not in permanent danger of being enclosed by capital. This threat of enclosure is very real indeed. In turn, this also means that a commons that ceases to be built on solidarity ceases to be a commons.

Led by Nobel prize-winner Elinor Ostrom, a group of scholars have critiqued Hardin from within the tradition of liberal philosophy. This scholarship has examined a range of cases in which commoners have been able to sustain commons. It has also pointed to governance principles and qualities of resources that best allow commons to be maintained.⁸ The focus in this tradition of liberal scholarship is on the resources that are being shared. More recently a number of radical theorists have developed analyses that focus less on the shared resources and more on the social practice of commoning.⁹ Once we switch our focus from the commons as separate

6 Hardin, Garrett: The Tragedy of the Commons. In: *Science* 162 (1968) 1243–1248. DOI: <http://www.doi.org/10.1126/science.162.3859.1243>

7 *Ibid.*, 1244.

8 Cf. Ostrom, Elinor: *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Vol. *The Political economy of institutions and decisions*, New York 1990.

9 Cf. Barbagallo, Camille/Beuret, Nicholas/Harvie, David: *Commoning with George Caffentzis and Silvia Federici*, London 2019; Bollier, David: *Silent Theft: The Private Plunder of our*

spaces to commoning as practice(s), these can be found – and extended – in everyday life as well as in multiple institutions. De Angelis explicitly considers commoning as part of a collective path towards an exit from capitalist production:

I believe there is a social revolution in the making that, if recognised and able to attract more energies from people around the world, could give us a chance to embark on a process of transformation towards post-capitalist society [...] Commons are not just resources held in common, or commonwealth, but social systems whose elements are commonwealth, a community of commoners, and the ongoing interactions, phases of decision-making and communal labour process that together are called commoning.¹⁰

While a commons is not a happy space, and commoning is not without its own power dynamics, both create autonomous spaces and practices from which challenges against the capitalist order can be mounted.¹¹ Commoning is inherently based on collaboration rather than on competition. Many commoners live by values such as mutual aid, loyalty, trust, and conviviality. And a commons cannot exist without bonds among the commoners, without a form of solidarity that builds community, that holds the commons together. Commons need to be understood as small islands surrounded by a capitalist sea. For these islands of commoning to survive, commoners need to actively prevent a takeover of these islands by capital. As such, commons and commoning provide us with powerful narratives, spaces and practices against the totality of capitalist enclosure.

Common Wealth, New York 2003; Bollier, David: *Think Like a Commoner*, Gabriola Island 2014; Bollier, David/Helfrich, Silke: *The Wealth of the Commons: A World Beyond Market and State*, Amherst 2012; Bollier, David/Helfrich, Silke: *Free, Fair and Alive. the Insurgent Power of the Commons*, Gabriola Island 2019; Caffentzsis, George: *In Letters of Blood and Fire: Work, Machines, and Value*, Oakland 2013; Dardot, Pierre/Laval, Christian: *Common: On Revolution in the 21st Century*. London and New York 2019; De Angelis, Massimo: *Omnia Sunt Communia: On the Commons and the Transformation to Postcapitalism*, London 2017; Federici, Silvia: *Re-Enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, Oakland 2018; Hardt, Michael/Negri, Antonio: *Commonwealth*, Harvard 2009; Harvie, David: *Commons and Community in the University: Some Notes and some Examples*. In: *The Commoner* (2004). <http://www.commoner.org.uk>; Holloway, John: *Crack Capitalism*. London: Pluto Press, 2010; Linebaugh, Peter: *The Magna Carta Manifesto*, Berkeley 2008; Linebaugh, Peter: *Stop, Thief: The Commons, Enclosures, and Resistance*, Oakland 2014.

10 De Angelis, *Omnia Sunt Communia*, 11.

11 Cf. Federici, *Re-Enchanting the World*.

2. The Digital Commons

The digital commons is an Internet repository of code, information, knowledge, and culture that is collectively produced and freely available to everybody who wants to use or modify these resources. While the digital commons is often associated with the rise of the social web since the early 2000s, questions of the digital commons started to be negotiated three decades earlier, in the 1970s. And this moment, when the digital commons started to become a question has a backstory, too. Since its earliest iterations in the 1950s, most software was freely shared. For a long time, the main limit to sharing software was not that it had to be bought, but that it was often tied to specific hardware, such as a specific model of an IBM system. Beyond this limitation, software was a commons, albeit a self-evident and thus not discussed commons, not yet identified as such. Since the late 1960s, two processes started to change this. On the one hand, software became increasingly independent of specific hardware. Due to the emergence of the virtual machines it could run on many different physical platforms. On the other hand, it started to be commodified. It became a product, and as such it needed to be licensed and to be protected against copying and sharing. By the 1980s, the original commons of software was in danger.

In this process, a counter movement developed that aimed to protect the older ways of working, mostly driven by engineers. This movement gained different names over the course of its existence, which all have slightly different meanings: Free Software, Open Source, and Free/Libre Open Source Software (FLOSS) might be the most prominent. In different versions, this movement aims to protect what it frames as the “freedom” of software: the ability to read, copy and share software, to assemble systems in ways not limited by proprietary restrictions, and to explore software, unrestrained by artificial inaccessibility. This movement has widened and accelerated on an astonishing scale. It has spread from the peer production of software and code to text, sound, images, and moving images, with Wikipedia, WikiLeaks, Pirate Bay, Libgen and the Creative Commons as some of its iconic websites.

The digital commons consist of a multitude of Internet-based commons such as the software commons, news commons, information commons, knowledge commons, art commons, and entertainment commons. The digital commons is defined by the fact that the repository that has been created is not a commodity. It is freely available to those who access the repository. Over the last two decades, the digital commons has played an important role for those who believed in the possibility to create alternatives to a capitalist economy and to our dominant social structures and institutions. There was a belief that a growing digital commons could eventually be expanded to the material realm. However, this hope has never materialised, and the digital commons has not grown over the last 15 years. In fact, it has become smaller.

At its height, the notion of the digital commons has generated a plethora of enthusiastic theoretical musings. One example comes from Yochai Benkler¹², who originated the term “commons-based peer production” and is perhaps the most influential theorist of the digital commons. Commons-based peer production is the production of this repository by (digital) commoners. Benkler recognised the non-proprietary possibilities of the networked information economy. For him, these are driven most of all by new forms of large-scale cooperation. As the material barrier to cooperation is removed, digital commoners can cooperate at a distance and without centralised organisation. This non-market production would transform markets and freedom. It would also have beneficial effects on democracy. Benkler is firmly rooted in liberal theory. He does not see proprietary structures and capitalism as a problem. He merely thinks that non-market production could outperform markets in the field of non-material production such as art, knowledge, information, news, culture, education, and political debate. It is safe to say that these hopes have not materialised. The digital commons is largely reduced to knowledge production and information production.

As different as all of these spheres of the digital commons are, they also share certain properties: The large-scale cooperative networks of commons-based peer production create a rather specific form of social relationships amongst digital commoners. First of all, the digital commons is a non-commodified space. Secondly, contributions and cooperations by digital commoners are voluntary and driven by intrinsic motivations. While hierarchies do exist, they are often based, at least in the views of the actors, on a value-rational form of authority (O’Neil 2011), where authority is accepted, if it is based on expertise and on personal investment. Thirdly, a large majority of the social relationships are non-local and anonymous. Some of these traits can pose significant obstacles to solidarity, at least certain forms of solidarity. However, before we go deeper into the question whether the digital commons might allow for old and new forms of solidarity, we want to go a little deeper into two subfields of the digital commons. What follows are two short literature reviews that look for moments where analysts have used the term solidarity to understand, on the one hand, the software commons, as it can be found in the free and open-source software movement, and, on the other hand, the knowledge commons, as we can observe it in the example of Wikipedia.

12 Cf. Benkler, Yochai: *The Wealth of Networks. How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*, New Haven and London 2006.

3. The Software Commons

Given the fact that the digital commons emerged in the software commons, it makes sense to start our enquiry with its most important proponent, who also functions as its most influential theorist: Richard Stallman is a software engineer, who has not only developed crucial protocols (rules that drive free software) and written important code, but has also developed the ideas of free software in a series of classical essays. And indeed, solidarity is part of his analysis. In his “GNU Manifesto” (first 1985, here 2010), Stallman answers his self-posed question “Why I must write GNU” by stating that “the golden rule requires that if I like a program I must share it with other people who like it” and supports this rule directly with the following sentence: “Software sellers want to divide the users and conquer them, making each user agree not to share with others. I refuse to break solidarity with other users in this way.”¹³ Solidarity here is an act of refusing an artificial break imposed by others, the “software sellers.” This break is not the break between programmers and non-programming users (as in consumers of software), but a break between one programmer, who might want to use the program of another programmer, and vice versa. GNU as one particularly legendary piece of free software (an early operating system, and as such a precursor of LINUX, which provides up until today an important Free Software alternative to proprietary operating systems such as Microsoft Windows) is thus a means of solidarity inside of the programming community against the attacks by another community, the software sellers. What is at stake is an example of what we might view as a specific form of professional solidarity that makes the job of this profession easier to execute, as well as a defence against the attack on such practices.

This, however, is not the only moment where Stallman uses the term solidarity in his writings. In a later paper, where the socialist Richard Stallman argues against Open Source – in his view a commercialised, trivialised, dismantled and thus falsified version of his original ideas – the freedoms of free software “are vitally important. They are essential, not just for the individual users’ sake, but for society as a whole because they promote social solidarity – that is, sharing and cooperation”¹⁴. In this short remark, Stallman develops a slightly bigger idea of solidarity: Free Software promotes “sharing and cooperation” not only inside programmers’ circles. It also provides a model of social solidarity. At least implicitly he might also hint towards the role of Free Software: It is so important because it provides the infrastructure that is crucial for holding society together. Sharing and collaboration as central practices in one of society’s most important infrastructural realms lead to a model

13 Stallman, Richard: *Free Software, Free Society. Selected Essays*. 2nd Edition, Boston 2010, 40.

14 *Ibid.*, 95.

that has the power to “promote” solidarity in society as a whole. This is the most ambitious articulation of a model of solidarity that we have found in the discourse of leading proponents of the software commons. It is also an idea that stands alone. At least in our relatively quick screening of the writing of veterans of the free software movement, this statement is not mirrored elsewhere. In a collection of essays by more than a dozen programmers and software commons advocates¹⁵, no one except Richard Stallmann mentions solidarity, nor do other classical accounts that are part of or sympathetic to the movement (Levy 1984).¹⁶

There is one group, however, that took up Stallman's claims: ethnographers of free software. Gabriella Coleman, for example, sees solidarity as an important addition to the overall dominance of another concept, freedom: “While developers enunciate a sophisticated language of freedom that makes individual experiences of creation intelligible, their language also elaborates on ideals that are more collectivist and populist in their orientation – such as cooperation, community, and solidarity”¹⁷. According to Coleman, such language and sentiments need “a process of ritual condensation and emotional celebration.” Interestingly, programmers find this in physical gatherings: “cons cement group solidarity”¹⁸ insofar as “the conference works to perform and thus confirm what are otherwise more frequent, though more prosaic forms of virtual sociality” (2010, 47). In such conferences, programmers feel their solidarity with each other, a solidarity that would otherwise only be based on loose collaboration. *Feeling* solidarity with each other is crucial. Here is another account, this time referring to UNIX (another operating system that provided free software even before it was formulated as such), which served, according to Dafermos, “to strengthen the feeling of solidarity among the growing number of users at American universities, turning thus the development of Unix into a truly collaborative enterprise” (2012, 13).

Based on these examples, it might seem as if the ethnographic literature on Free Software is littered with references to solidarity. But nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, most of the other significant analyses of free software operate without mentioning the term even once (Siefkes 2007, Kelty 2008, Söderberg

15 Cf., DiBona, Chris/Ockman, Sam: *Open Sources: Voices from the Open Source Revolution*, Newton 1999.

16 Cf., Levy, Steven: *Hackers: Heroes of the Computer Revolution*, New York 1984; Raymond, Eric: *The Cathedral and the Bazaar. Musings on Linux and Open Source by an Accidental Revolutionary*, Newton 2001.

17 Coleman, Gabriella: *Coding Freedom: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Hacking*, Princeton 2013, 44.

18 *Ibid.*, 71.

2008).¹⁹ Beyond the arguments we have just referred to, solidarity plays a role only in adjacent bodies of literature. One such body of literature is the writing on the conjuncture of digital discourses and corporate and neoliberal logics. Unsurprisingly, the results are sobering. Lilly Irani, for example, warns us that methodologies such as design thinking seem “on their face, compatible with political debate, dissent, and solidarity building through collaboration”²⁰, but her analysis shows that here, “empathy functions not as an orientation toward compassionate solidarity but rather as the mining of intimacies for projects of value creation”²¹. Indeed, such forms of entrepreneurial solidarity “occlude the possibility of solidarity building, oppositional politics, or even politics that destroy value”²². A second body of literature looks at corporate programmers. Here, solidarity is situated among colleagues in a particular version of the capitalist labour process. Programmers are, after all, cognitive workers. As such, their position can produce worker solidarity. According to Sareeta Amrute, who draws extensively on the literature of operaismo, the programmer’s “creative capacity can sow seeds of solidarity among different sorts of workers who may recognize the shared inhumanity of their labor and the shared potential of creative activity undertaken in common and for the common good.”²³ But this solidarity has limits. Amrute gives us striking examples where it fails. And Trebor Scholz laments the absence of “converging various forms of solidarity worldwide,” asking almost desperately, “Why couldn’t American and Indian workers connect online and stand united as they face Amazon’s CEO, Jeff Bezos?”²⁴.

4. The Knowledge Commons

We now want to shift our attention to another realm of the digital commons: the knowledge commons, as exemplified by Wikipedia. For this section, we use the monographs of Dan O’Sullivan (2010), Joseph Reagle (2010), Darius Jemielniak (2014), Nathaniel Tkacz (2015), and Arvid Lund (2017). We also use edited books

19 Cf. Siefkes, Christian: *From Exchange to Contributions: Generalizing Peer Production into the Physical World*, Berlin 2007; Kelty, Chris: *Two Bits. The Cultural Significance of Free Software*, Durham 2008;

20 Irani, Lilly: *Chasing Innovation Making Entrepreneurial Citizens in Modern India*, Princeton 2019, 17.

21 *Ibid.*, 145.

22 *Ibid.*, 219.

23 Amrute, Sareeta: *Encoding Race, Encoding Class. Indian IT Workers in Berlin*, Durham 2016, 5.

24 Scholz, Trebor: *Think outside the Boss. Cooperative Alternatives for the Post-Internet Age*. In: Barney, Darin et. al. (eds.): *In The Participatory Condition in the Digital Age*, Minneapolis 2016, 59–79, 68.

by Geert Lovink and Nathaniel Tkacz (2011) and Joseph Reagle and Jackie Koerner (2020). This literature reflects a trend that can be seen in all literature on digital media in the last two decades: the movement from a hopeful exploration of possibilities to a more sober and more critical analysis of digital media. The most important conclusion of our literature review is, once more, that solidarity is not much of a topic in either the early work or in the work that has been published more recently. The literature we use is mostly focused on the governance of Wikipedia, on its economics or its business model, on framings of truth and knowledge, and on social processes or processes of collaboration. However, these processes of social practice focus predominantly on conflict and forms of conflict resolution. Theoretically, there is no contradiction between solidarity and conflict as conflict is part and parcel of all solidaristic relationships. These processes also focus on practices and structures of exclusion, uneven distributions of power among Wikipedians, uneven geographies and uneven demographics of Wikipedians (who are predominantly male, young, and educated). Considering that solidarity has a total mention of 14 in the literature we used, it is fair to say that this body of work does not treat it as a relevant topic.

To highlight this rather surprising outcome even more, most of the mentions of the term “solidarity” that came up in our search stretch the meaning of solidarity to a level where it becomes synonymous with “taking sides” in a conflict between Wikipedians. Wikipedians are all those who contribute to the building of the knowledge commons. To give an example, Jemielniak writes, “Possibly to show solidarity with this singled-out Wikipedian, on February 23, 2007, Wales nominated Essay to the Arbitration Committee, a highly prestigious body that is responsible for resolving conflicts and disputes in the community and has high decision powers.”²⁵

It is worth remembering that Wikipedia started as a project with a different idea of solidarity. It was conceived in solidarity with and in support of those parts of humanity that are excluded from access to information and access to knowledge. We can see this ambition of the Wikipedia project clearly expressed in a 2004 letter by co-founder Jimmy Wales (qtd. in Reagle, Joseph: Good Faith Collaboration).

Our mission is to give freely the sum of the world's knowledge to every single person on the planet in the language of their choice, under a free license, so that they can modify, adapt, reuse, or redistribute it, at will. And, by “every single person on the planet,” I mean exactly that, so we have to remember that much of our target audience is not yet able to access the Internet reliably, if at all. Our community already comes from a huge variety of backgrounds, and over time the variety will only increase. The only way we can coordinate our efforts

25 Jemielniak, Dariusz: *Common Knowledge? An Ethnography of Wikipedia*, Redwood 2014, 111.

in an efficient manner to achieve the goals we have set for ourselves, is to love our work and to love each other, even when we disagree. Mutual respect and a reasonable approach to disagreement are essential on this incredible ridiculous crazy fun project to change the world.²⁶

Needless to say, Wales' expression of solidarity with those excluded from access to information was a dream, a possibility and not a reality. Twenty years after the foundation of Wikipedia, this dream is still alive, but it is now coupled with a realisation that the fulfilment of this dream is as distant as it always was. In "Wikipedia @20: stories of an incomplete revolution" Vrana et al (2020: 244) provide a rather grave assessment of the direction Wikipedia has taken: "Everyone is, or can be, an ally to someone else. We can build a better Wikipedia in solidarity with each other. But the first step is to recognize the myths that are keeping us from working together in productive ways – and then to build new, welcoming, and inclusive practices that will make this happen." In the final subchapters, we will explain why the hope that Wikipedians will find better ways of working together might not be easy to achieve as it faces structural and inherent obstacles.

5. A Few Words on Solidarity

Before we ask whether solidarity is a property of the digital commons, or, more precisely, what forms of solidarity are at stake here, we need to say a few words about what we mean by solidarity. This is a book about solidarity. Words such as solidarity come in and out of fashion. The way they become fashionable or unfashionable can tell us a lot about the zeitgeist, about a particular moral and intellectual mood of an era. Since the financial crisis of 2008, which is not really a financial crisis but a crisis of capitalism, and in a period in which questions of climate justice, racism, pandemics, and the fight against authoritarian politics dominate our attention, it is safe to assume that the term solidarity is back. In such times academics feel the need to frame the meanings of words. On the one hand, such attempts to define a term are necessary for clarification; on the other hand, they are always contestable, in danger of missing newly emerging meanings, or in danger of covering too much ground and therefore losing their meaning. We therefore need to clarify what we mean when we say solidarity.

Solidarity is tricky because it can have many distinct meanings. We propose to differentiate five meanings, while acknowledging right from the start that the strength of the term can often lie in mixing these and in hiding one of its meanings

26 Reagle, Joseph: Good Faith Collaboration: The Culture of Wikipedia, Cambridge, Mass 2010, 4.

behind another. In its first meaning, solidarity is a word for that which holds societies together. Such an understanding of solidarity is expressed, for example, in Durkheim's use of the term (if we abstract from his problematic distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity). Here, solidarity describes traits, practices, affects, beliefs and institutions that enable a society to not fall apart. We propose to call this form "solidarity as cohesion." A second understanding of solidarity is based in an ethical commitment for the well-being of those who are perceived to be weak or in danger. In popular discourse we have recently encountered this understanding of solidarity in the appeals to be solidaric by wearing masks during the pandemic. As such we are not only asked to protect our society and its members in general (first form of solidarity), but especially those in danger (second form of solidarity). We can thus see that different forms of solidarity often overlap, but they are still distinct enough to name the second form "solidarity as care for the weak." Often overlooked, there is also the solidarity of the strong: the solidarity of the rich, of elites, of police, of masculinity, of whiteness: in short, the "solidarity of power" (which does not need the challenge of solidarity as struggle, which we will introduce in the next paragraph, to occur). This is the third form of solidarity. Academics interested in forms of solidarity that foster resistance and emancipatory practices to fight against injustice are often uncomfortable with these first three forms. But they are clearly part of the semantic field of the term.

The fourth and fifth forms of solidarity are more political. The fourth form of solidarity takes its paradigmatic form in the workers' movement. Here, solidarity "unites" people who find themselves in similar conditions of oppression, while at the same time directing them against an antagonist in a position of power. This understanding of solidarity can not only be found in the workers' movement, but also in movements such as Me Too or Black Lives Matter. In all these cases, solidarity is never simply given: After all, people in similar situations are often in competition with each other. Such solidarity has to be built, to be worked for, to be organised, partially by a process of "Köpfe zusammenrotten,"²⁷ as Marx famously put it, but also by practices, commitments, relations, local structures of feelings, (always also invented) traditions, conditions, social structures, institutions and so on. We call this form of solidarity "solidarity of struggle." The fifth and last form of solidarity occurs when one is "in solidarity" with a movement, even though this person seems to not be directly affected, at least not at first sight. Such forms of solidarity can look like the second form, solidarity with the weak. But, at least sometimes, there is more at stake. Julia Eckert has coined the interesting term "solidarity of concern"²⁸ (and we keep this term) to describe this important alternative to a solidarity with the

27 Marx, Karl: *Das Kapital*, Band 1, Berlin 1962, 320.

28 Eckert, Julia: The Solidarity of Concern. In: *Anthropological Theory Commons*, December 17 (2019). <http://www.at-commons.com/2019/12/17/the-solidarity-of-concern/>.

weak: Starting from the observation that we are all always entangled, one can, for example, be in solidarity with Black Lives Matter, even if one is white, because one understands that whiteness makes one part of the problem. The same can be said about solidarity with refugees, once framed in a postcolonial framework: Everyone is part of the relations that are at stake, as lifeworlds in the so-called West are deeply entangled in global colonialism and capitalism. Hence, such solidarity simply acknowledges the relations (and debts) that have been there all along. Once more, the fourth and fifth form of solidarity often overlap, such as in the idea of “international solidarity.” They aim to enable the fight for social justice.

6. Solidarity in the Digital Commons

With these five different forms of solidarity in mind, we now want to go back to our question: What kinds of solidarity are at stake in the digital commons? Let’s start with the most prominent example: Richard Stallman’s solidarity by free software programmers against “software sellers.” This has clear properties of a solidarity of struggle. Indeed, it has traits of class struggle²⁹: While they are not conflicts between capital and labour, they are conflicts where programmers oppose a particular version of capitalist logic.

The reason for these conflicts is not value extraction, nor exploitation, nor the disciplinary regimes of the labour process. The reason is a desire to establish the best possible working conditions. Working conditions focus here not on the well-being of the workers, but on the possibility of creating the best possible product and having the largest freedom possible to do so. Software sellers, on the other hand, are constructed as outsiders, who “divide and conquer.” So yes, this is a solidarity of (class) struggle, built into protocols, thus partially automated, creating a peculiar mix of practices and structures of feelings on the one hand, and technical automation and legal frameworks on the other hand. Yet, at the same time, we can also see a second form of solidarity looming in the background: This is also the solidarity of a particular profession, which aims to protect its own work culture and does not want to be conquered. Programmers aim to protect an environment best suited for a particular version of their own way of working. They happily do so at the expense of other groups: Free software projects are notoriously inaccessible to people with little knowledge of programming. If the battle cry of “program or be programmed” has only a grain of truth, the software commons in practice is also a way of protecting the special status of those who do the programming. It is not only a solidarity of struggle. It is a solidarity of power, too.

29 Cf. Dafermos, George/Söderberg, Johan: The hacker movement as a continuation of labour struggle. In: *Capital and Class* 97 (2009) 53–73.

Furthermore, we can find in Stallman's theorisation of free software some elements of a solidarity of integration: At least indirectly he hints that free software could be a model for a society that is based on "sharing and cooperation": a specific, and one might argue, rather sanitised version of a solidarity of cohesion. Jimmy Wales, too, argues for a society where everyone has access to the world's knowledge. Once more this vision has more than a whiff of an idea of a society integrated by knowledge, achieved by accessibility and agreement through the techno-social processes that made Wikipedia famous. Unsurprisingly this vision of a solidarity of cohesion remains lofty, and behind it lurk, once more, other solidarities. It has at least elements of a serious form of solidarity of concern: By understanding that those who have knowledge and power are at the same time entangled with less powerful groups it has an element of paying one's debt to the other side of the equation. Yet the use of the term solidarity in the context of the editing wars in Wikipedia points us toward the probably inevitable power struggles that come with such an approach. Here, solidarity can mean many things: A solidarity with the weak, a solidarity of power, and maybe sometimes even a solidarity of struggle (where a group of Wikipedians might rally along a certain interest). Solidarity's charm often lies in exactly this ambivalence.

The knowledge commons and the software commons are not the only forms of the digital commons, and the digital commons only describe parts of what plays out in digital cultures. If we look for solidarity in other digital contexts, we surely would find other examples of solidarity. One obvious example would be the Me Too Movement, which is directly named after a gesture of solidarity of struggle: "Me, too." Anonymous, where anonymous participants unite under an image and name owned by no one to organise digital campaigns and all sorts of mischief, is another example: Its "DDoS campaign solidified the alliance through a spectacular display of solidarity and support,"³⁰ writes Biella Coleman. To her, Anonymous "manages to leave us with a striking vision of solidarity – e pluribus unum."³¹ Both Anonymous and Twitter-hashtag-movements have some properties of a digital commons, too: They are not only not centralised, but their names, which hold them together, belong to no one. Yet these names need to be cared for by everyone who is part of the movement, otherwise they cease to exist, be it due to loss of energy, or due to misuse. As such they can be a powerful antidote against self-promotion: "Anonymous, in discouraging and criticising fame seeking and social peacocking, enacts a critical practice of egalitarianism and solidarity"³². In short, there are, indeed, further examples of

30 Coleman, Gabriella: *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous*, London 2014, 121.

31 *Ibid.*, 399.

32 Coleman, Gabriella: *From Internet Farming to Weapons of the Geek*. In: *Current Anthropology* 58 (2017), 15, 91–102, 98.

interesting conjunctions of commons and commoning and solidarity practices and social forms in the digital realm,³³ and Felix Stalder's quest for "new forms of solidarity" is far from exhaustively answered by our exploration of some examples of the digital commons. However, one result can not be overlooked: While we found some examples of solidarity in the digital knowledge and software commons, they remain very rare. This result is especially striking if we take into account that only a decade ago, many scholars of digital media were hopeful that the possibilities of digital technologies could bring about positive transformations. The question that we therefore need to answer is this: Why are practices of solidarity in the digital commons so hard to find?

7. Explaining a Puzzling Absence

We have started our analysis with the claim that every material or natural commons fundamentally relies on solidarity for the commons to work. As we have now seen, solidarity in the digital commons seems to be more ambiguous, and the digital commons seems to be less based on solidarity. For our first explanation, we look at digital media in general. Digital media have not only co-evolved with business models such as surveillance capitalism and with techno-entrepreneurship and precarity – in the motto at the beginning of this essay, Berardi and Lovink give us one version of this inextricable knot – but also with neoliberal forms of sociality and subjectivity in general. Indeed, digital media can be analysed as neoliberal individualism cast in hard- and software, in digital infrastructures and platforms: Since the introduction of personal computers, digital media's user-facing hardware has been made for individuals. Screen-based interfaces afford a virtual user without a body. The Internet evokes sociality in networked forms, and social media platforms have translated this into offerings driven by profit. In short, the technical, social and economic properties of digital media are deeply influenced by neoliberal capitalism. This does not have to be the case. There is a long tradition of alternative visions for digital media that entail other ideas of togetherness. But in the digital environments that we have come to take as self-evident, solidarities might have to work uphill against digital media's most basic affordances, especially solidarities of struggle. It is thus no surprise when Coleman reports that free software programmers meet in person when they want to "feel solidarity."

The second difference between digital and material commoners lies in their ways of working together. Using FLOSS and Wikipedia as primary examples, a body of

33 For a further example, see Staiou, ER: Digital Solidarity in Times of Crisis: The Case of Greece. In: Jones, John/Trice, Michael (eds.): *In Platforms, Protests, and the Challenge of Networked Democracy*, New York 2020, 237–251.

academic literature emerged with the arrival of the social web that was full of praise for new ways of mass collaboration (Ghosh 2005; von Hippel 2005; Benkler 2006; Tapscott and Williams 2006; Shirky 2008 and 2010). Analysing this literature Tkacz³⁴ argues that this discourse uses the notion of collaboration in a way that is not only devoid of substance, but positions these projects of collaboration as somehow post-political. He contrasts this post-political understanding of collaboration with two examples from his ethnographic research that highlight the fact that collaboration between Wikipedians often ends in so-called edit-wars, where two or more contributors fight against each other for their version of the correct or truthful understanding of an entry. According to Tkacz, such collaboration is deeply embedded in neoliberal ideology as it produces winners and losers. We can see similar difficulties with working together in the open-source software movement, where programmers who disagree on the process can fork: They can continue on different paths and follow their own chosen direction of programming. If we imagine such practices of forking in a material commons we can immediately see that this would destroy the commons. Rather than sharing a piece of grassland with other herders and sheep, forking herders would bring about a partition of the grassland. Ultimately edit-wars and forking are social practices that do not provide a fertile ground for solidarity.

Finally we want to point to a rather weird understanding of the “gift-economy” in techno-utopian discourse. For this we want to take a quick look at another influential autochthon theorist of the software commons: Eric Raymond. Unlike Stallman, Raymond is a techno-libertarian, which includes, in his case, a passion for guns and chauvinistic one-liners. In one of his most widely read essays, “Noosphere” (2001), Raymond develops a transactional reading of Marcel Mauss’ famous essay on the gift: Starting from the assumption that “human beings have an innate drive to compete for social status” that is “wired in by our evolutionary history”³⁵, Raymond describes the digital commons as a “gift economy [...], where value circulates via different proxy currencies, such as reputation, status, or authorial creativity”³⁶. While Mauss was writing his essay on the gift partially to develop a new idea of solidarity in the footsteps of Durkheim, Raymond’s version of the “gift economy” is just a libertarian marketplace with other goods and slightly different forms of exchange. Sadly, such a trivialised reading of Mauss is widespread and influential³⁷ in the dig-

34 Cf. Tkacz, Nathaniel: Wikipedia and the Politics of Mass Collaboration. In: Platform: Journal of Media and Communication 2(2010), 2, 40–53; Tkacz, Nathaniel: Wikipedia and the Politics of Openness, Chicago 2015.

35 Raymond, Eric: The Cathedral and the Bazaar. Musings on Linux and Open Source by an Accidental Revolutionary, Newton 2001, 80.

36 Kelty, Chris: HAU to do things with Words, 2002.
<https://www.kelty.org/or/papers/unpublishable/Kelty.Hautodothings.2002.pdf>, 51.

37 For a critique of how this translates into technical platforms, see Lund, Arwid: Wikipedia, Work and Capitalism: A Realm of Freedom? London 2017.

ital commons, and it surely does not sit easily with solidarity. It pains us to say it, but it is deceptively plausible to understand the digital commons as a libertarian gift economy, because it is, as it happens, influenced by these concepts. Exactly this plausibility might stand in the way of more interesting forms of solidarity. The digital commons might have become a neoliberal project.

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Granny Midwives' Epistemic and Embodied Care¹

Helen A. Gibson

The brilliance of a granny midwife in terms of keeping our people alive during a system where your body is an object – that your body is cattle, that your child is someone else's property, even though you see an umbilical cord connecting you to your child, even if you have a child that looks like the person who is oppressing you, and owning you – that that granny midwife was able to restore and maintain your humanity, and the humanity of the community, and the humanity of that child, and figure out how to be the purveyor of the gate between being property and a human being, and maintaining community. And that is the responsibility of a doula.

– M. Carmen Lane in conversation with Dr. Alicia Bonaparte²

Mai'a Williams writes in her co-edited 2016 book *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines* of “midwives, who had for generations saved the community.”³ Referring to generations of midwives practicing birthwork from slavery through the mid-

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- 1 I am especially grateful to Briana Edmonds, Camalo Gaskin, and Gem Kocher for introducing me to their practices of radical birthwork, and to K. Bailey Thomas, Anwar Uhuru, Michelle Lanier, crystal am nelson, and SaraEllen Strongman for questions and feedback at the second annual *Roundtable for Black Feminist and Womanist Theory* from Nov. 4–6, 2021. Profound gratitude to Melina Morr de Pérez, Robel Afeworki Abay, Caleb Ward, Daniela Rosner, M. J. Packo, Felix Krämer, Jürgen Martschukat, and colleagues in both the Collaborative Research Centre 294 TRR “Structural Change of Property” and the North American history department at the University of Erfurt for reading various iterations of this paper and providing critique. Thank you to the students in my seminar on Black midwifery and a history of science for sharing insights in class and in term papers, and to Jasper Verlinden for introducing me to the book *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines*. Research for this paper was funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) –SFB TRR 294/1-424638267.
 - 2 Lane, M. Carmen/Bonaparte, Alicia: Decolonizing at the Root: Settler Colonialism, Granny Midwives, and the Mayhem of Intersectionality within Birthwork (In Loving Memory of Erica Garner). Panel discussion, *Born Into This* conference, Austin, TX, July 12 and 13, 2018. Video of panel discussion, <https://wearedti.podia.com/decolonizing-at-the-root>.
 - 3 Williams, Mai'a: Introduction. In: Gumbs, Alexis Pauline/Martens, China/Williams, Mai'a (eds.): *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines*, Oakland 2016, 147–149, 147.

twentieth century, Williams elucidates, “They let birth be intimate, by being intimate with mamas. They let birth be spiritual, by calling on the spirit.”⁴ Midwives, as underlined by Williams’ allusions to loving the Folk and the Spirit, are quintessential Womanists, steeped in understandings of spirituality and “Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female,” as Alice Walker, the matriarch of Womanist theory, wrote in 1983.⁵

This essay, like much recent Black feminist and Womanist theorization, is about traditions of care as solidarity. I contextualize the significance of enslaved midwives’ *saving the community* as a disruption of racial capitalism.⁶ I suggest that ‘granny’ or ‘grand’ midwives, as they are more accurately known – women, men, and non-men – created significant gendered realities for the people whose lives they affirmed and nurtured in the arena of birth. Operating at the intersection of the metaphysical violence explicated by the past thirty years of Black feminist theory and the genocide addressed in the Womanist arena of the Reproductive Justice movement, granny midwives, I posit obviated the Marxist general strike in favor of conjuring alternative cosmologies.⁷ Granny midwives refused the frame of economic rationality, and they superseded the violent logic of blackness as a fungible commodity in their explicit acknowledgement of Spirit.⁸

This paper discusses the practice of midwifery during enslavement as part of a Black radical tradition that complicates dialectical understandings of Black Marxism. As Saidiya Hartman, Jennifer Morgan, Hortense Spillers, and myriad doulas attest, the history of blackness in the colonial Americas is a history of women’s re-

4 Ibid; Walker, Alice: *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Womanist Prose*, New York 1983, xi.

5 Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*, xii.

6 See: Robinson, Cedric J.: *Black Marxism: the Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (1983), Chapel Hill 2000.

7 See: Spillers, Hortense J.: Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book. In: *Diacritics* 17(1987), 2, 65–81; Ross, Loretta J./Solinger, Rickie: *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction*, Oakland 2017; Warren, Calvin L.: *Ontological Terror: Blackness, Nihilism, and Emancipation*, Durham 2018; Warren, Black Care. In: *liquid blackness: Black Ontology and the Love of Blackness* 3(Dec. 2016), 6, 35–47, 45. Loretta J. Ross writes, “Reproductive Justice theory was developed by African American feminists in 1994 and subsequently popularized by many women of color through the leadership of the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective. [...] Said most simply, Reproductive Justice is (1) The human right to not have a child; (2) The human right to have a child; and (3) The human right to parent in safe and healthy environments,” Ross: Preface. In: Gumbs, Alexis Pauline/Martens, China/Williams, Mai’a (eds.): *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines*, Oakland 2016, xiii–xviii, xvi.

8 See: Judy, R. A.: The Unfungible Flow of Liquid Blackness. In: *liquid blackness* 5(April 2021), 1, 28–36.; Moten, Fred: *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, Minneapolis 2003; Crawley, Ashon T.: *Blackpentacostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility*, New York 2016.

productive lives and labors.⁹ This is primarily because, as Jennifer Morgan argues, Atlantic slavery depended on the commodification of Black women's wombs. A Virginia act in 1662 made *partus sequitur ventrem*, or "offspring follows belly," the logic of human commodification under chattel slavery.¹⁰ This logic ossified associations of gender and race via the abject – propertization. "The 1662 statute," Morgan writes, "solidified a presumption long acted on by Atlantic settler colonialists, slave traders, and slaveowners, namely, that the physiognomy of subjection was not only heritable but was so indelibly rooted in black women's bodies that it could not be dislodged."¹¹ What methodologies beyond a romanticized historical materialism, Saidiya Hartman asks in her essay "Venus in Two Acts," will untether contemporary historians from the abjection of ledger books and disinterested, terrorizing records of death and rape?¹²

The subject of midwifery is uniquely poised to address both epistemic and embodied care. Midwifery speaks not only to cultural practices of historical, gendered subject positions for Black women, but also to the continued relationships of Black women and non-men in the United States to medical communities at large.¹³ Historian Tanya Hart writes that Black women delivered most babies in the antebellum South.¹⁴ Yet granny midwifery in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries is a subject that has received relatively little historical attention.¹⁵ How and

9 A doula is a contemporary name for an emotional support guide for birth. Hartman, Saidiya: *The Belly of the World: A Note on Black Women's Labors*. In: *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society* 18(2016), 1, 166–73. DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.1080/10999949.2016.1162596>; Morgan, Jennifer L.: *Partus sequitur ventrem: Law, Race, and Reproduction in Colonial Slavery*. In: *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 22(2018), 1, 1–17. [m use.jhu.edu/article/689365](https://www.jhu.edu/article/689365); Morgan, Jennifer L.: *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*, Philadelphia 2004.

10 Morgan, "Partus sequitur ventrem," 4.

11 Ibid., 16.

12 Saidiya Hartman, Saidiya: *Venus in Two Acts*. In: *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 12(2008), 2, 1–14. DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.1215/12-2-1>; See also: Farmer, Ashley D.: In Search of the Black Women's History Archive. In: *Modern American History* 1(2018), 2, 289–93. DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.1017/mah.2018.4>.

13 Chidi, Erica/Cahill, Erica P., M.D.: *Protecting Your Birth: A Guide for Black Mothers: How Racism Can Impact Your Pre- and Postnatal Care—And Advice for Speaking to Your Ob-Gyn About It*. In: *New York Times*, Oct. 22, 2020; Cooper Owens, Deirdre/Fett, Sharla M.: *Black Maternal and Infant Health: Historical Legacies of Slavery*. *American Journal of Public Health* 109(2019), 10, 1342–1345. DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2019.305243>; Bonhomme, Edna: *Covid Threatens to Worsen Disparities in Maternal and Reproductive Care*. In: *The Nation*, Oct. 1, 2020.

14 Hart, Tanya: *Health in the City: Race, Poverty, and the Negotiation of Women's Health in New York City, 1915–1930*, New York 2015, 203.

15 See: Morgan, Jennifer L.: *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic*, Durham 2021; Morgan, *Laboring Women*; Morgan, "Partus sequitur ventrem";

under what circumstances did these midwives work?¹⁶ What means of affirming Black life and confronting pain did midwives offer? This essay will provide a short introduction to the significance of Black feminist and Womanist theory – two different modes of theorization developed by Hortense Spillers and Alice Walker, respectively – for a history of midwifery before turning to a brief discussion of the significance of the Black radical tradition from a gendered perspective.

1. Black Feminist and Womanist Theory and Midwifery

Grand midwives are commonly acknowledged in contemporary birthwork settings and Reproductive Justice scholarship as having sustained entire communities. This is vital in a historical context in which people were rendered property and situated close to death. Ruth Hays writes, “Finally, and most importantly, granny midwives played an important role in linking generations of enslaved people. Their rituals, knowledge, and support were paramount to enslaved people’s collective emotional and psychological survival.”¹⁷ This tradition of care is a profound act of solidarity with the spirits of the formerly enslaved in refusing settler-colonial logics. Drawing on Kristie Dotson’s concept of “orienting stories” as epistemic solidarity, Lindsey Stewart writes, “‘Orienting’ stories are contrasted to ‘originating stories,’ which justify the erection of settler-colonial states by erasing their past and present violence toward oppressed peoples, producing ‘colonial unknowing.’”¹⁸

Stewart, Lindsey: ‘An Inside Thing to Live By’: Refusal, Conjure, and Black Feminist Imaginaries among Granny Midwives. In: *Hypatia* (2021) 1–23. DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.1017/hyp.2021.40>; Cooper Owens, Deirdre: *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology*, Athens, 2017; Fett, Sharla M.: *Consciousness and Calling: African American Midwives at Work in the Antebellum South*. In: Baptist, Edward E./Camp, Stephanie M. H.: *New Studies in the History of American Slavery*, Athens 2006, 65–86.; Fett, Sharla M.: *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations*. Chapel Hill, 2002; Robinson, Sharon A.: *A Historical Development of Midwifery in the Black Community: 1600–1940*. In: *Journal of Nurse-Midwifery* 29(1984), 4, 247–50.

16 This research question guides part of my larger Habilitation project.

17 Hays, Ruth: *Birthing Freedom: Black American Midwifery and Liberation Struggles*. In: Bonaparte, Alicia D./Oparah, Julia Chinyere (eds.): *Birthing Justice: Black Women, Pregnancy, and Childbirth*, New York 2016, 166–75, 169.

18 Stewart, Lindsey: ‘An Inside Thing to Live By’: Refusal, Conjure, and Black Feminist Imaginaries among Granny Midwives. In: *Hypatia* (2021) 1–23. DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.1017/hyp.2021.40>, 2–3; Dotson, Kristie: *On the way to decolonization in a settler colony: Re-introducing Black feminist identity politics*. In: *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 14(2018), 3, 190–99. DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.1177/1177180118783301>.

Stewart posits that “the figure of the midwife itself is an ‘orienting story’ within black feminist thought.”¹⁹ This orienting story obviates the origins story of people as property, allowing for more expansive analysis of ways of knowing in the context of care. This is not only relevant to questions of redress for slavery, but, crucially, reading granny midwives’ practices as orienting stories renders obsolete the white academic practice of what Hortense Spillers has described as “black people being treated as a kind of raw material.”²⁰ Recognizing granny midwives as orienting stories promises a repudiation of white historiography in explicit solidarity with the spirits of the formerly enslaved and their descendants.

Analyzing the intersection of these theoretical traditions within the context of birthwork and m/othering (a phrase by Alexis Pauline Gumbs), Jennifer Nash writes in *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality*, “Black feminist theory has become newly and emphatically preoccupied with care.”²¹ Nash elucidates two prominent strands of contemporary Womanist and Black feminist theory: “self-care as Black feminism’s primary agenda for survival” and “care as a practice of black life in the face of black death.”²² Midwifery allows for these two important strands of thought to be brought together in conversation.

Beyond a commitment to survival, itself a powerful negation of the historical force of Atlantic slavery, midwifery is an important historical example of Black care, a practice theorized by Calvin Warren.²³ Warren, in analyzing the theorization of Hortense Spillers and Christina Sharpe, as well as cinematic evidence of Black care such as the 1998 adaptation of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, writes, “Captivity is precisely the experience in which ‘a spirit, a soul, a psyche’ is violated without end, and captives found a way to endure the incessant violation.” He continues, “Black care is an essential practice of attentiveness. [...] These forms of expression enable us to endure the burdensome and bear what seems unbearable.”²⁴ This conversation reverberates notably in Christina Sharpe’s theorization of “wake work” in the context of proximity

19 Stewart, ‘An Inside Thing to Live By,’ 3.

20 Spillers, Hortense/Hartman, Saidiya/Griffin, Farah Jasmine/Eversley, Shelly/Morgan, Jennifer L.: ‘Whatcha Gonna Do?: Revisiting ‘Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book: A Conversation with Hortense Spillers, Saidiya Hartman, Farah Jasmine Griffin, Shelly Eversley, & Jennifer L. Morgan. *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 35(2007), 1/2, 299–309, 300.

21 Nash, Jennifer C.: *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality*, Durham 2019, 78; Gumbs, Alexis Pauline: “m/other ourselves: a Black queer feminist genealogy for radical mothering.” In: Gumbs, Alexis Pauline/Martens, China/Williams, Mai’a (eds.): *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines*, Oakland 2016, 19–31, 22.

22 Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined*, 78.

23 Warren, “Black Care,” 46.

24 Ibid., 46.

to death.²⁵ These understandings of care bring together related practices of survival and endurance that analysis of midwifery is uniquely poised to elucidate.

Calvin Warren is writing within Black feminist traditions, such as that of Hortense Spillers, which distinguish between the social “body” not available to enslaved women and the “flesh” that they were arguably rendered.²⁶ Warren is also writing on the margins of work on Black mysticism by Fred Moten, including Moten’s elucidation of moments of transcendence.²⁷ While philosophers writing in the Black feminist tradition of Hortense Spillers have been largely reluctant to fully embrace analysis of mysticism, this analytical perspective is, arguably, becoming more pronounced.²⁸

This tradition of Black feminist thought is intimately related to, but rarely dovetails with, the explicitly spiritually-oriented and emphatically embodied Womanist theorization within the Reproductive Justice movement. Bringing together these profoundly important perspectives on Black care as an affect of attentiveness that nourishes ‘a spirit, a soul, a psyche’ in the face of indefinite violation and ‘survival as

25 “Living in the wake means living the history and present of terror, from slavery to the present, as the ground of our everyday Black existence; living the historically and geographically dis/continuous but always present and endlessly reinvigorated brutality in, and on, our bodies while even as that terror is visited on our bodies the realities of that terror are erased. Put another way, living in the wake means living in and with terror in that in much of what passes for public discourse about terror we, Black people, become the carriers of terror, terror’s embodiment, and not the primary objects of terror’s multiple enactments; the ground of terror’s possibility globally,” Sharpe, Christina: *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, Durham 2016, 15.

26 Spillers, Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe.

27 Warren, Calvin L.: Black Mysticism: Fred Moten’s Phenomenology of (Black) Spirit. In: *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 65(2017), 2, 219–229. DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.1515/zaa-2017-0022>; Moten, Fred: *Black and Blur: consent not to be a single being*, Durham 2017; Moten, Fred: Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh) In: *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112(2013), 4, 737–780. DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.1215/00382876-2345261>; Moten, Fred: The Case of Blackness. In: *Criticism* 50(2008), 2, 177–218; Moten, *In the Break*.

28 See: Uhuru, Anwar: Textual Mysticism: Reading the Sublime in Philosophical Mysticism. In: *Philosophy and the Black Experience* 19(2020), 2, 3–5. PhilArchive copy v1: <https://philarchive.org/archive/UHUTMRv1>; Crawley, *Blackpentacostal Breath*. Warren, explicitly engaging Ashon Crawley’s argumentation in *Blackpentacostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility*, has written, for example, that “for black thinking, spiritual breath and thinking are ‘identical’”; Warren, Calvin L.: *Ontological Terror: Blackness, Nihilism, and Emancipation*, Durham 2018, 171. In her most recent book, *Unpayable Debt*, Denise Ferreira da Silva suggests that “the shattering of transparency” disrupts logics of racialized appropriation; Ferreira da Silva, Denise: *Unpayable Debt*, London 2022, 143. This is reminiscent of Tiffany Lethabo King’s reference in *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*, Durham 2019. to Édouard Glissant’s “demand”—for ‘the right to opacity,’ 7; Glissant, Édouard: *Poetics of Relation*, translated by Betsy Wing, Ann Arbor: 1997, 189.

a form of self-love' in the context of ongoing genocide, midwifery as a Black feminist practice of care and a Womanist practice of "divinely inspired knowledge" is an important tradition to investigate.²⁹

Writing within the Womanist framework of Reproductive Justice, Loretta Ross analyzes what Warren refers to as ontological terror as genocide. She ends her 2014 introduction to *Revolutionary Mothering* by writing, "Our mere existence is a subversive act." She continues, "Rethinking mothering from a radical point of view leads to considering survival as a form of self-love, and as a service and gift to others whose lives would be incalculably diminished without us."³⁰ Ross's analysis entails an understanding of care as *more than* love of self and love of community. In her most recent book, *Birthing Black Mothers*, Jennifer Nash juxtaposes the weight of the violence identified by Warren with ways in which contemporary Black mothers defy relegation to the symbolic realm.³¹ This is both the realm against which Hortense Spillers writes in her essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book" and the realm to which Black (female) subjects are relegated in nihilistic and pessimistic analytical traditions. Nash's distinction is relevant to the contemporary conflux of Black feminist and Womanist theory, and to the ways in which granny midwives' epistemic and embodied care embraces a means of relationality that, in the words of R. A. Judy, "simply has nothing to do with ontology."³²

Alexis Pauline Gumbs writes in an essay titled "m/other ourselves: a Black queer feminist genealogy for radical mothering," "What if mothering is about the how of it?" Gumbs distinguishes between "motherHOOD" as a white, cis-gendered, heteropatriarchal construct analyzed by Hortense Spillers, and "MotherING" as

another matter, a possible action, the name for that nurturing work, that survival dance, worked by enslaved women who were forced to breastfeed the children of the status mothers while having no control over whether their birth or chosen children were sold away.³³

29 Brewer, Rose M: Black Feminism and Womanism. In: Naples, Nancy A.: *Companion to Feminist Studies*, Hoboken 2020, 91–104, 98.

30 Ross, Preface. In: *Revolutionary Mothering*, xviii.

31 Nash, Jennifer C: *Birthing Black Mothers*, Durham 2021, 6. Nash foregrounds the significance of birthwork, writing that "doulas have made a case for their own urgency, for their necessity in creating a birthing space marked by (counter)ethics of togetherness, intimacy, and deep patience with the temporality and spiritual components of birth," Nash, *Birthing Black Mothers*, 83.

32 Judy, R. A: *Sentient Flesh: Thinking in Disorder, Poiēsis in Black*, Durham 2020, xvi.

33 Gumbs, "m/other ourselves" *Revolutionary Mothering*, eds. Gumbs, Martens, and Williams, 22.

Like Loretta Ross and Jennifer Nash, Alexis Pauline Gumbs emphasizes the how of conjuring realities beyond racial capitalism. For Gumbs, this conjuring includes “motherful” futures such as those brought about by the queer, collectivist work of the Sisterhood of Black Single Mothers in the 1970s and 1980s in Brooklyn, New York.³⁴ This is in keeping with Spillers’ emphasis in “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe” on “gaining the *insurgent* ground as a female subject” and rewriting a “radically different text for a female empowerment.”³⁵

2. Gendering the Black Radical Tradition

Granny midwives invoke a radical fusion of what Calvin Warren terms “spiritual breath and thinking” that disrupts both teleology and eschatology.³⁶ Taking up Spillers’ line of inquiry, Saidiya Hartman writes in her 2016 essay, “The Belly of the World: A Note on Black Women’s Labors,”

Certainly we know that enslaved women fled the plantation, albeit not in as great numbers as men; poisoned slaveholders; plotted resistance; dreamed of destroying the master and his house; utilized abortifacients rather than reproduce slaves; practiced infanticide rather than sentence their children to social death, the auction block, and the master’s bed; exercised autonomy in suicidal acts; gave birth to children as testament to an abiding knowledge of freedom contrary to every empirical index of the plantation; and yearned for radically different ways of being in the world. So where exactly does the sex drudge, recalcitrant domestic, broken mother, or sullen wet-nurse fit into the scheme of the general strike?³⁷

Hartman’s emphasis on “giving birth to children as testament to an abiding knowledge of freedom contrary to every empirical index of the plantation” is an impor-

34 Ibid., 30.

35 Spillers, *Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe*, 80.

36 Warren, *Ontological Terror*, 172; Crawley, *Blackpentacostal Breath*. Explicit reference to granny midwives’ historical and contemporary potency was made in in the discussion following a reading from Denise Ferreira da Silva’s latest book, *Unpayable Debt*; Denise Ferreira da Silva in conversation with Edna Bonhomme, “Future Perfect: Encounters in Three Acts,” *Savvy Contemporary*, Berlin, June 25, 2022. Ferreira da Silva writes, further, that “[...] a figuring of the political is needed that does not rewrite the text as relations in the form of a dialectic, which is but the unfolding of necessity—teleological (Hegel) and eschatological (Marx)—in/as time,” *Unpayable Debt*, 144.

37 Hartman, Saidiya: *The Belly of the World: A Note on Black Women’s Labors*. In: *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society* 18(2016), 1, 166–73. DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.1080/10999949.2016.1162596>, 167.

tant reference to the cosmological significance of midwifery. Her questioning of the general strike, the Marxist means of realization of a new world which is consistently construed in the work of both W. E. B. Du Bois and Cedric Robinson as liberatory, is a crucial intervention into an important arena of Black imagining.³⁸ Hartman's analysis aligns with theorization that refuses or disrupts recognition of political ontology.³⁹

Alys Weinbaum takes up Hartman's analysis in her work on *The Afterlife of Reproductive Slavery*, writing of "a feminist black Marxism focused on sex and reproduction."⁴⁰ Weinbaum elucidates,

When we view slavery from the vantage of enslaved women, we learn that the work performed by the black worker was not only agricultural and domestic but also sexual and reproductive, and that the general strike against the conditional of labor took an array of forms – not only those unanticipated by Marx or Engels but also those that were never fully acknowledged by Du Bois or the scholars of the black radical tradition that have influentially reclaimed Du Bois's work in constructing a genealogy of black Marxism.⁴¹

Weinbaum's astute analysis of a dynamic theorized elsewhere by Saidiya Hartman and Jennifer Morgan, among other historians, is distinctive in its focus on surrogacy. Yet while analysis of surrogacy draws attention to particular forms of expropriation in reproductive labor, Weinbaum does not center the tradition of granny midwifery. She critiques W. E. B. Du Bois's and Cedric Robinson's accounts of the Black radical tradition receiving much of their theoretical thrust from their framing within the dramatic upheavals of the U.S. Civil War and the Haitian Revolution, respectively.

Black Marxism in the tradition of Du Bois and Robinson uses analysis of historical revolution to make visible the political coherency of Black men as recognizably sovereign subjects. Jennifer Nash, writing in a Womanist tradition, critiques this

38 See: Du Bois, W. E. B.: *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880*, New York 1935; Robinson, *Black Marxism*.

39 Embracing the work of Audra Simpson on "feeling citizenships," Lindsey Stewart offers an alternative epistemological frame, writing: "For some Indigenous peoples of North America, such political recognition is 'politically untenable' and 'normatively should be refused' (Simpson 2014, 22), for the terms of that recognition involve accepting the legitimacy of a state that has sought to destroy their people (or assenting to what Dotson calls 'originating stories')." Stewart, "An Inside Thing to Live by," 4; Simpson, Audra: *Mohawk Interrupts: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States*, Durham 2014.

40 Weinbaum, Alys: *The Afterlife of Reproductive Slavery: Biocapitalism and Black Feminism's Philosophy of History*, Durham 2019, 62.

41 *Ibid.*, 79.

emphasis on the “temporality of crisis” and an “insistence on [Black women’s] bodies as out of place and out of time.”⁴² This critique resonates with Saidiya Hartman’s conclusion in her essay “The Belly of the World” that “The forms of care, intimacy, and sustenance exploited by racial capitalism, most importantly, are not reducible to or exhausted by it.”⁴³ Hartman ends her essay with an emphasis on both fugitivity and survival, writing, “This care, which is coerced and freely given, is the black heart of our social poesis, of making and relation.”⁴⁴

Nineteenth-century granny midwives have both a direct legacy and a contemporary corollary in the ‘radical doula,’ an emotional support guide for primarily Black and brown birthing people who understands their work as profoundly cosmological.⁴⁵ Using their divinely-inspired knowledge of birthwork for the process of making and relation, granny midwives have always birthed worlds ‘committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people.’ In recognizing Spirit, granny midwives have always planted the seeds of love of self and of community.⁴⁶

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42 Nash, *Birthing Black Mothers*, 16.

43 Hartman, “The Belly of the World,” 171.

44 Ibid.

45 Emma Morgan-Bennett writes in her thesis of 2020 that “Radical Doula work [...] imagines (and manifests) new worlds beyond the framework of white supremacy”; Emma Morgan-Bennett, “Revolutionary Mamas: Radical Doulas and the Black Maternal Mortality Crisis,” (B.A. thesis, Swarthmore, 2020); Stewart, “An Inside Thing,” 20; Toni Morrison, “Rootedness: The ancestor as foundation,” in *Black Women Writers (1950–1980): A Critical Evaluation*, ed. Mari Evans (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 339–45; Dána-Ain Davis, *Reproductive Injustice: Racism, Pregnancy, and Premature Birth* (New York: New York University Press, 2019). Obstetricians and nurses, in addition to radical doulas, have largely replaced midwives in historically Black communities.

46 This may be nonduality, or what Thích Nhất Hạnh calls “interbeing”; bell hooks and Thích Nhất Hạnh, “Building a Community of Love: bell hooks and Thich Nhat Hanh,” *Lion’s Roar: Buddhist Wisdom for Our Time*, March 24, 2017.

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