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# The Perpetual Creation and Provocation of the Self

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Active, Joyous Composition:  
Reflections on the Thought of Gilles Deleuze

Reading Spinoza via Gilles Deleuze in Deleuze's book, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (2001) has affected my thoughts and the ways in which I view the world, offering a philosophy that has become a vehicle for my own constant reflection. As with the care of the self as figured by Michel Foucault and Virginia Woolf, I feel that I actively, genuinely engage this philosophy.

Reading Deleuze's lecture from January 24, 1978, which I accessed on the website *Les Cours de Gilles Deleuze*, clarified for me many of the concepts he discusses in *Practical Philosophy*; the more I am able to absorb such concepts, the more I hope to align my own thinking and way of life with them in an authentic manner. In this essay, I hope to incorporate the ways in which the music that I play and that I listen to corresponds to my present deliberations as a Spinozist, for, as Deleuze makes clear, "a plane of musical composition" can be visualized as "a plane of Nature" (*Spinoza* 126), "a composition of speeds and slownesses on a plane of immanence" (*Spinoza* 123), "constituting it as one and the same Individual" (*Spinoza* 124), "with parts that vary in an infinity of ways" (*Spinoza* 123). I have chosen to include not my favorite songs but those that pertain to the texts and that have evoked affections within me, both sad and joyful passions.

To begin, I would like to discuss one of the aspects of my life that speaks to the ways in which Spinoza's philosophy is asserted within my being, for I am but a spiritual automaton, and it is less me who has the ideas than the ideas which are affirmed in me (Deleuze). I play the baritone saxophone in an experimental rock band, The Ghost of Otis. The other members play guitar and drums, my brother and my cousin, respectively, and our good friend performs spoken word poetry. I have been involved in this band for going on seven years, it being a creative outlet through which I can engage in a constructive, unconventional milieu. I am always

listening to music, and the affections that it generates within me, along with the music itself, are in tune with Spinoza's philosophy. Yet I feel that being a musician and coming together with other musicians lends me an awesome sense of Spinozism.

For me, playing the saxophone is to create an intriguingly joyful composition; the bari sax is large and long, stretching from my chin to about my knees, and the fact that it connects to my mouth, that I fill it with breath from my lungs and attach my fingers to its keys makes the instrument a literal extension of my physical self. We become one body. I recently came across my admissions essay to URI, written during the summer of 2007, for which I wrote about my experience in the band. It seems that I was thinking about music-making in a Spinozian sense before ever having encountered this philosophy: "The bari sax feels like an extension of my physical self, a golden limb." But what joy, freedom, peace, and happiness come with the articulations of Deleuze's text. The text enhanced both the experience and my perception of the experience. I like to believe that the composition I form with my saxophone is also a joyous one for the instrument "because, as Spinoza says so well, each body has a soul" (Deleuze). The philosophy facilitates my playing and my thinking about playing, allowing me to form a more meaningful and rich relationship to music-making. My saxophone and I are able to produce effects that neither of us could produce alone. "I encounter a body which combines its relation with my own, my power of being affected is . . . fulfilled and my power of acting increases" (Deleuze). I use this quote to express both my and my saxophone's point of view.

Having been playing for about nine years, including the years I spent learning the instrument in a school setting, I have achieved a high level of cohesion with my instrument, and I can hear, play, and write music much better today than in the past. I can *feel* the connection, the mixture of our bodies, and I can entertain a clear notion of parallelism, as Deleuze discusses it in

*Practical Philosophy* (18), when I enter into this composition. Each time I play the saxophone, it is a different experience, since the conditions of my instrument differ, say, for example, if I have changed reeds, while my physical strength and spiritual energy also vary. Each time I play, I feel that I am experiencing novelty, for I always play my lines a bit differently, and the band often jams on riffs that have yet to be explored or structured. As a band, we aim to penetrate dimensions of thought and experience that have yet to be constructed, “to capture the power of the body beyond the given conditions of our knowledge, and to capture the power of the mind beyond the given conditions of our consciousness” (*Spinoza* 18). Noting often the ways in which we as musicians compose a body, in both a kinetic and a dynamic sense, while playing and while carousing, I am able to mobilize Spinoza’s philosophy in my life.

I enjoy that my pondering of Deleuze and Spinoza arrives at a time in my life during which I can relate such thoughts to my musical endeavors. I believe that, seeing as I already possess of my saxophone “the idea of an effect which benefits or favors my own characteristic relation” (Deleuze), it will be through this medium that I will attain common notions and progress past “the world of passion” to comprehend causes and to have adequate ideas. Deleuze explains, “The common notions are an Art, the art of the *Ethics* itself: organizing good encounters, composing actual relations, forming powers, experimenting” (*Spinoza* 119). I think it possible for me to enact this art of life in that it is possible to determine “the nature of the relation of the two bodies considered,” these being me and my sax, “and of the manner in which the relation of one of the bodies is combined with the relation of the other body” (Deleuze). I think that I could form common notions with regard to my band mates as well, for my brother and cousin are individuals with steadfast convictions that I trust to be fundamental relations of their body, essential attributes of their soul. Some of these convictions are also basic parts of

who I am, so I think that I might be able to ascertain that which is common to our bodies, “to the whole and to the part” (Deleuze). I am not yet sufficiently fluent in Spinoza’s thinking to be able to thoroughly discuss or achieve these ends, but I am trying to discover ways to evolve past the condition that seems to doom me to a life as a passive recipient of affects.

I now would like to discuss a few songs written and performed by The Ghost of Otis. Though the above-mentioned statements explain some of the ways in which I think about the band in terms of Spinoza and Deleuze, certain songs speak more directly to these thinkers. The song “Save Our Souls” from our album *Hopes and Denials* corresponds to Spinozist thought. It is about one being lost, struggling through the oceanic plane of immanence and trying to right oneself. An earlier version of this song was written with our friend Mike Phillips, a hip-hop artist. This period of collaboration was a time of growth for the band because we had never before tried to write “beats,” and we further explored the capacities of our body. Mike wrote lyrics for some songs that are more rock-oriented tracks like “Save Our Souls,” and his lyrics for “S.O.S.” are poignant considering the concerns of this course. The lines “Take hold of your vessel. You’re the master aboard it . . . Until deceased and dead, full speed ahead. You’re the captain of your ship” can represent one actively and “truly install[ing] oneself in the midst” of the modal plane, the moving ground of sensation, with the aim of thinking and living in ways that will open one to new joyful compositions” (Deleuze).

I also think that the lyrics written and sung by my brother Matt, still present in the song’s current version, express the position of humans whose patterns of consciousness seem to subject them to the lowest kind of knowledge, to inadequate affection-ideas. Though I am sure Matt was not writing about Spinozist philosophy when he composed these lyrics, I know that we in the band, as one body and as individual bodies, feel the effects of an infinite number of other bodies

and souls that do not agree with us. We feel the subsequent decomposition of our subordinate relations and the obstructions to our powers of acting. We have sad passions as affections, but we cannot “know absolutely by virtue of what and how” (Deleuze) these bodies and souls are constituted, in what way they do not agree with ours. We can know only the “consequences separated from the premises . . . the effects independent . . . of the causes” (Deleuze). The repeated line of “This is an S.O.S.” laments this state -- instead of “Save Our Ship,” which is also fitting, for as one body we sail both the sea of sound and the sea of immanence, the acronym stands for “Save Our Souls,” speaking to the fact that “in the conditions in which we live, we seem absolutely condemned to have only one sort of idea, affection-ideas” (Deleuze). The bodies and souls that I refer to as affecting us in this way are religious and governmental institutions, are individual figures in power, are modes of thought, and are the greater evils that exist in our country and world.

The list is too long, perhaps impossible, to compile, but Deleuze discusses such bodies and their effects in both his lecture and in *Practical Philosophy*. For example, he asks, “Why are the people so deeply irrational? Why are they proud of their own enslavement? Why do they fight ‘for’ their bondage as if it were their freedom? Why is it so difficult not only to win but to bear freedom? Why does a religion that invokes love and joy inspire war, intolerance, hatred, malevolence, and remorse?” (*Spinoza* 10). No matter how much my capacities for being affected are actualized in the joyful composition that is music-making, or any joyful composition for that matter, I do not cease to be negatively affected and reduced when I encounter on this multivalent, infinite plane various external simultaneous bodies that disagree with my constitution. Music-making is a vehicle for “denounc[ing] all that separates us from life, all these transcendent values that are turned against life” (*Spinoza* 26).

Another The Ghost of Otis song from which I wish to write is called “Cataracts” off of our album *Hopes and Denials*. This song’s lyrics address the struggles that one undergoes in trying to assess and to access, in Lyotard’s terms, the “something” that is happening, which can be experienced as one comes to comprehend the rhythmic movement of bodies that can constitute an ethics of the every day. This ethos designates it as one’s responsibility to search out and to be answerable to these rhythms that impose the subjective “I,” to render visible those elements of prehension that are not immediately reproduced in one’s perception. The opening lyrics of this song, “My eyes are open wide. Why am I still blind?” directly express this effort. They also correspond to one’s quest to form common notions, to determine the cause of one’s affections, while still remaining bound to the realm of passions. The closing lyrics, “Leave this old world behind. Open your third eye ” openly speak to these ideas and to Spinoza’s ethics, for they challenge the listener to think outside his own subjectivity and to seek out new modes of subjectivization. Spinoza refers to “the third eye, which enables one to see life beyond all false appearances, passions, and deaths. The virtues . . . are required for this kind of vision, no longer as virtues that mutilate life, but as powers that penetrate it and become one with it” (*Spinoza* 14). Music-making constitutes and enacts such virtues for myself and for the band.

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Ethical Invention and Intervention  
in Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas* (1938)

In “The Subject and Power” (1982), Michel Foucault explains that “the analysis, elaboration, and bringing into question of power relations and the ‘agonism’ between power relations and the intransitivity of freedom is an increasingly political task - even the political task that is inherent in all social existence” (343). Virginia Woolf engages this political task through her work *Three Guineas*. She confronts the power relations present in both the private and public worlds of upper-class men and women in a 1930s England, illuminating the ways these relations and worlds inform one another. In detailing ways in which one, as an outsider, might ethically manage and inhabit such power relations through political practices of freedom, Woolf resonates with Foucault by relying on such intransitivity of freedom to antagonize contemporary power structures.

In “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom” (1989), Foucault avers that “[f]reedom is the ontological condition of ethics” (284) and that “in order for power relations to come into play, there must be at least a certain degree of freedom on both sides” (292). The political work of *Three Guineas* not only elucidates this condition for others, outlining ways they might ethically assert their freedom, but it manifests Woolf's own practices of freedom, which this paper will closely examine in their connections to Foucault's thoughts on the care of the self. Without yet thinking about certain specific links between Foucault's and Woolf's texts, one may still immediately perceive their interconnectedness. Foucault describes in “On the Genealogy of Ethics” (1994) that, for the Greeks, “the culture of the self” constructs “a sort of permanent political relationship between self and self,” a relationship propelled in part by the Greeks' “*hupomnemata*, . . . a copybook, a notebook” (272). Through writing *Three Guineas*, Woolf engages a similar process, undergoing a perpetual political relation to self while

attempting to politically activate her readers by guiding and strengthening their own practices of freedom. Both the Greeks' *hupomnemata* and Woolf's *Three Guineas* exemplify writing as asceticism. Foucault explains that the Greeks write in such notebooks not to confess or to purify the self, since "the point is not to pursue the indescribable, not to reveal the hidden, not to say the nonsaid, but, on the contrary, to collect the already-said, to reassemble that which one could hear or read, and this to an end which is nothing less than the constitution of oneself" (273). Woolf engages in similar ascetic practices through her scrapbook process for and footnoting in *Three Guineas*. Exploring that which has been published, but hardly a part of dominant discourses, by and about women in biography, memoir, and the daily press, Woolf regenerates "that which one could hear or read" but often overlooks.

Organizing her thoughts and actively constructing knowledge relevant to her ethos, Woolf reassembles the ignored or misinterpreted pieces of "the already-said," constituting herself within an alternative history based on published facts. Woolf provokes her readers to join her in seeking and compiling such marginalized information and to challenge the authority represented by the footnoted sources, which themselves parody a patriarchal tradition. Through *Three Guineas*, Woolf makes an "attempt to determine what one can and cannot do with one's available freedom" (Foucault "On the Genealogy" 278), manipulating her profession and position to underscore, manipulate and influence power relations. Woolf's text enacts "a steady screening of representations" (Foucault "The Cultivation" 63), those within the text itself and within the actual world that the text engages. Woolf proves to believe in "the necessity of a labor of thought with itself as object" (62) by challenging herself and her readers to think about the way that they think, or rather, do not think. Woolf emphasizes this necessity in the following passage from *Three Guineas*: "Let us never cease from thinking - what is this 'civilization' in

which we find ourselves? What are these ceremonies and why should we take part in them? What are these professions and why should we make money out of them” (77). By thinking through such ingrained notions, one might comprehend the way in which these structures individuate the self and the ways that one can exit them by actively self-fashioning.

In “The Cultivation of the Self” (1984), Foucault explains that care of the self “does not require simply a general attitude, an unfocused attention;” it is “not just a preoccupation but a whole set of occupations . . . [It] implies a labor. It takes time” (50). From Woolf’s scrapbooking to her exhaustive allusive work, *Three Guineas* was no doubt a labor, inarguably undertaking “a whole set of occupations” in its layered analyses of the conditions of, and those that created, a 1930s England. Because of the breadth of Woolf’s project, the narrator often entertains discursive tangents, employing footnotes in order to elaborate on such occupations without distracting from her main points, and also to interrupt the work, and the reader, so as to incite active participation on the reader’s part. The narrator constantly calls attention to the time that must be devoted to such considerations, stressing that there is certainly not enough time in the pages of *Three Guineas* to comprehend them all. Here, the reader must take up this project, devote her time, enact a political relationship to herself, in response to Woolf’s provocations.

By way of these footnotes, as well as much of the text’s content to which the essay will soon turn, *Three Guineas* actualizes a fundamental aspect of the Ancient Greeks’ care of the self, what Foucault describes as “the correspondence in which one reveals the state of one’s soul, solicits advice, gives advice to anyone who needs it - which for that matter constitutes a beneficial exercise for the giver, who is called the preceptor, because he thereby reactualizes it for himself” (51). Foucault notes that “[h]ere we touch on one of the most important aspects of this activity devoted to oneself: it constituted, not an exercise in solitude, but a true social

practice.” The word “correspondence” is particularly significant with regard to *Three Guineas* in that it means “communication by exchange of letters,” which alerts one to the work’s epistolary form. Transforming the private letter into the public letter, Woolf participates in a fictional, literal correspondence while also performing the Greeks’ notion of correspondence as it relates to the care of the self. She counsels her correspondents and her readers along the lines of this ethics, thereby reactualizing her own ethos. Woolf shows that engaging writing as ascesis, realizing one’s own freedom, and cultivating one’s self are not separate from the political or the public but rely on reception, reciprocity, and power relations to successfully function. Foucault explains that “[w]hen, in the practice of the care of the self, one appealed to another person in whom one recognized an aptitude for guidance and counseling, one was exercising a right” (53). In this light, one can understand the Barrister’s entreaty in *Three Guineas* as utilizing this right. One can also acutely perceive the ways that Woolf’s text generates an “intensification of social relations” (53) that directly links to the text’s embodiment of the ethics of concern for the self.

The ethics that Woolf constructs and champions in *Three Guineas* clearly engage the four aspects of the relationship to oneself that Foucault characterizes in “On the Genealogy of Ethics.” It is difficult to decisively define the first aspect as it relates to Woolf and to *Three Guineas*, since this aspect, the ethical substance, is “not always the same part of ourselves, or of our behavior, which is relevant for ethical judgment” (263). The second aspect of the relationship to oneself, the mode of subjectivation, is also somewhat elusive, since “the way in which people are invited or incited to recognize their moral obligations” (264) can actually link many factors - aesthetic, political, rational, and converge within the oscillating realms of the public and private, the professional and personal. However, Woolf makes much clearer “the means by which we can change ourselves in order to become ethical subjects,” the mode of

subjectivization, which is the third aspect of the relationship to the self, “the self-forming activity . . . *asceticism* in a very broad sense” (265). Woolf is also more direct about “the kind of being to which we aspire when we behave in a moral way,” the fourth aspect, the goal of this self-forming activity, “the telos” (265). Thus, working through the more apparent instructions and explanations concerning Woolf’s ethos, one can try to interpret her ethics along the lines Foucault establishes.

One aspect of the ethical substance, “the material that’s going to be worked over by ethics” (263), that *Three Guineas* considers is gender, particularly womanhood. The importance of this ethical substance inheres in the fact that womanhood is also the mode of subjectivation by which microfascism, which Woolf conceives of as the “infantile fixation” (*Three Guineas* 162-70), works on and through females, inciting them to moral duties that are actually detrimental to themselves and to all of humanity in that they perpetuate war and tyrannies-as-civilities. Subjectivation operates by way of this difference via the subsequently generated womanhood emotion, constructions of the “lady,” and the atmospheres surrounding both (*Three Guineas* 158-9). Through Woolf’s use of the notebook in the spirit of the Ancient Greeks’ care of the self, Woolf locates four aspects that constitute the “unpaid-for education” (94) available to the daughters of educated men as a product of the subjectivating forces of recent historical moments that persist in her own. As Woolf’s narrator explains, “those teachers, biography indicates,” are poverty, chastity, derision, and freedom from unreal loyalties (94).

Here, Woolf explicitly participates in the critical ontology as it is defined by Foucault: “a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them” (Foucault “Enlightenment” 319). By locating these four conditions generated by the

modes of subjectivation of womanhood, Woolf's text illuminates for the reader ways to perform a relationship to the self, as does her use of footnotes. Identifying from these imposed constraints an ethical opening, Woolf empowers women, particularly the daughters of educated men, toward "a change of activity . . . to be sought within oneself, in the relation of oneself to oneself," to enact "a shift in one's attention" (Foucault "Cultivation" 64). These four traits, attitudes, conditions, this unpaid-for education, exist as products of the objectifying patterns and structures in women's lives; women are close to them, know them well, and Woolf details ways in which women might operate through them to become ethical subjects.

This double movement between subjectivation and subjectivization in *Three Guineas* constitutes an "attempt to determine what one can and cannot do with one's available freedom" (Foucault "On Genealogy" 278). The essential factor here is active choice, the choice to no longer be subjectivated by such roles and the choice to subjectivize *from* them by answering to the privilege-duty that is the care of the self, through which one "assesses the relationship between oneself and that which is represented, so as to accept in the relation to the self only that which can depend on the subject's free and rational choice" (Foucault "Cultivation" 64). For Woolf, gender is fundamental to the process of subjectivization: "Different we are, as facts have proved, both in sex and in education. And it is from that difference . . . that our help can come, if help we can, to protect liberty, to prevent war" (*Three Guineas* 123). Though the fact that this difference falls prey to such penetrating modes of subjectivation necessitates Woolf to conceive of a Society of Outsiders, *Three Guineas* constitutes a social practice on many levels. Most evidently, the text identifies and outlines for the female reader ways by which she is being subjectivated and ways she might alter this condition by enacting a relationship to self, which

Woolf also pedagogically fosters via her footnotes and her multivalent use of voice, tone, and form.

Most notably, the text asserts that this change will work to prevent war, influencing those power relations that are “mobile, reversible, and unstable” (Foucault “Ethics” 292). By occupying these four elements constructed and perpetuated by individuation and transfiguring them to ascetic virtues (in the sense that Foucault uses the word “transfiguration,” “a difficult interplay between the truth of what is real and the exercise of freedom” (Foucault “Enlightenment” 331)), such an outsider might exit her “limited margin of freedom,” where she is “still in a state of dominion insofar as . . . [her] options [are] ultimately only stratagems that never succeed[. . .] in reversing the situation” (292), in this case, those of war, oppression, micro- and macrofascism. Foucault posits that “the problem is knowing where resistance will develop . . . and what form it will take” (292) to express the perspective of those in power, those who wield subjectivating forces, who wish to maintain power in a state of domination.

Woolf has this knowledge and shares it with her reader, not to prevent effective practices of freedom but to enable others to enact them. Woolf does the work of locating where resistance *can* develop and what *form* it must take. Her text embodies the care of the self as a “privilege-duty, [a] gift-obligation that ensures our freedom while forcing us to take ourselves as the object of all our diligence” (Foucault “Cultivation” 46). As Woolf so fervently and lucidly illuminates in *Three Guineas*, by doing so, one learns “that the public and private worlds are inseparably connected; that the tyrannies and servilities of one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other . . . that we cannot dissociate ourselves from that figure” of the Fuhrer, Duce, Tyrant, Dictator “but are ourselves that figure” (168). Continuing in this passage, Woolf elucidates the way that that her figurations of the ethics of concern for the self as a practice of freedom can effect immanent

and macrolevel social change: “[W]e are not passive spectators doomed to unresisting obedience but by our thoughts and actions can ourselves change that figure” (168). It is perhaps in this way that Woolf’s care of the self most viably constitutes a true social practice.

With regard to self-forming activity, the narrator asks, “[H]ow can we enter the professions and yet remain civilized human beings; human beings, that is, who wish to prevent war?” (91). The narrator then delineates the ways that Woolf wishes one’s ethics to work over the substance of womanhood: by reconfiguring the four qualities that patriarchal traditions have impressed on women -- poverty, chastity, derision, and freedom from unreal loyalties, including the moral duties to which modes of subjectivation incite the individual. It seems that poverty, by which “is meant enough money to live upon . . . But no more. Not a penny more” (Woolf 97), corresponds to Foucault’s discussion in “The Cultivation of the Self” of certain “testing procedures” (58) involved in the Greeks’ care of the self. These procedures “are a way of measuring and confirming the independence one is capable of with regard to everything that is not indispensable and essential . . . One makes oneself familiar with the minimum” (59-60). By doing so, the daughters of educated men addressed in *Three Guineas* can rid themselves of warmongering emotions like possessiveness, jealousy, and greed (Woolf 100).

The telos of this ascesis is “freedom, equality, peace” (Woolf 134), which can be achieved by transfiguring institutions, such as educational systems and the professions, in order to prevent war. The narrator directly confronts this notion in *Three Guineas*, asking, “[W]hat is the aim of education, what kind of society, what kind of human being” should it seek to produce (42)? The narrator continues, describing that “[t]he aim of the new college . . . should be not to segregate and specialize, but to combine. It should explore the ways in which mind and body can be made to co-operate” (43). This last instruction corresponds to Foucault and the Greeks by intimating

the necessary harmony of logos and bios. Depicting the college further, the narrator asserts, “The poor college must teach “only arts that can be taught cheaply and practiced by poor people . . . It should teach the arts of human intercourse; the art of understanding other people's lives and minds, and the little arts of talk, of dress, of cookery that are allied with them” (43). These guidelines seem to echo Foucault’s writing on the Greeks’ care of the self in “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom:” “[E]thos was a way of being and of behavior. It was a mode of being for the subject, along with a certain way of acting, a way visible to others. A person’s ethos was evident in his clothing, appearance, gait . . . For the Greeks, this was the concrete form of freedom” (286). The college’s description also abounds with concern for the art of life, closely aligned with the care of the self.

The narrator goes on to explain that this new college would be a place “in which learning is sought for itself; where advertisement is abolished; and there are no degrees; and lectures are not given, and sermons are not preached” (Woolf 43). These ideas resonate with Foucault’s “What is Enlightenment?” (1994) when he posits, “What is at stake, then, is this: how can the growth of capabilities be disconnected from the intensification of power relations?” (317). Perhaps in an ideal school like that which the narrator of *Three Guineas* posits, individuals might be able to increase their capacities without intensifying power relations. This idea connects to the narrator’s discussion of some passive means that outsiders might employ to prevent war, such as maintaining “an attitude of complete indifference” toward unreal loyalties, like patriotism (Woolf 127) and religion, by absenting oneself from Church (139).

Another ethical substance that *Three Guineas* considers is one’s culture and intellectual liberty. Once more identifying modes of subjectivation and instructing the reader in the ascetic virtues of chastity, derision, and freedom from unreal loyalties, Woolf asserts that one can

engage certain freedom practices so as to perpetually arrive at the telos of nonslavery. As Foucault asserts in “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom,” “Not to be a slave . . . was an absolutely fundamental theme” for the Greeks (285). Speaking to the benefits of care of the self for educated men, the narrator of *Three Guineas* benevolently insists that by working over, in one way, this ethical substance through paying women for their domestic jobs, “your own slavery would be lightened . . . Culture would thus be stimulated. You could see the fruit trees flower in spring. You could share the prime of life with your children” (132). Woolf’s instruction with regard to this ethical substance seems to engage the care of the self in that it attempts to answer “what are the means by which we can change ourselves in order to become ethical subjects -- what are we to do, either to moderate our acts, or to decipher what we are, or to eradicate our desires” (Foucault “On Genealogy” 260-2). Deriding and dispensing with the hypnotism of pageantry and personal distinctions, of publicity and advertisement, as another ascetic practice, one might achieve the telos of increas[ing] private beauty and of creating new wholes (*Three Guineas* 134-5).

Freedom from servitude is a theme in the Greeks’ care of self that Foucault describes in “The Cultivation of the Self” as “a path by which, escaping all the dependences and enslavements, one ultimately rejoins oneself” (65). Foucault goes on to explain that “[t]he individual who has finally succeeded in gaining access to himself is, for himself, an object of pleasure” (66). Foucault’s work links to *Three Guineas*, which instructs that if one follows its active and passive ascetic measures with regard to culture and intellectual liberty, then “[n]o longer would you be . . . the albatross on the neck of society . . . the deflated work slave calling for replenishment” (*Three Guineas* 132). Instead, “the old mill in which the professional man now grinds out his round . . . with so little pleasure to himself . . . would be broken; the

opportunity of freedom would be yours . . . the half-man might become whole” (132). Woolf’s *Three Guineas* not only asserts an ethos that resonates with Foucault and the Greeks, but it also engages Foucault’s work with the subject and truth, with power and knowledge. *Three Guineas* seems to offer “new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries” (Foucault “The Subject and Power” 336), inventing an ethos to intervene in such individuating power relations.

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**To Peace**

In the room of cigars,  
 She's awkward. None lit;  
 Still airs' constricted.  
 Men's senses

Sheath her, disarming,  
 Erasure, inside  
 With out, potential  
 With bed skirt. Veins

Refuse stasis, but minds  
 Close on silence  
 So loud, she's shouting:  
 "If I am solely

For their enjoyment,  
 Then why is no one  
 Having any fun?"  
 She pouts, reclining.

The walls of the room  
 Start distorting.

She's killed the buzz.  
 Killed our jubulance  
 And rugged mirth  
 Snuffed out by her body,

Her blunt tool. Contortionist,  
 She lalts, tilts herself  
 Into oblivion. Insecurities  
 Ribbons commingling,

Their cymbals crash.  
 The ceremony gets on--

Rifles cocked and loaded.  
 Sound it off. Make that sound  
 Again – State, state,  
 Statelessness -- the siren.

In an age of sleepers,  
 I am a narc. Relax the silencer.  
 A part for or apart from?

I cast myself, out,

Into various parts  
Of star, revolving  
Mass of fire, infinite  
Shapes in oscillation.

I am a doll. I'll don her  
Dress to tear it off.

I am a goose around  
All these ducks,  
But I can't run fast  
Enough to swap spots.

And that adrenaline stuns,  
When chased up the stairs  
By an invisible monster, ensnared  
In my own home's benignity.

And now, alone. Somniloquy  
To call my own, but no  
Brotherhood, and no code.

When they fight for me,  
Their tongues will loll

Your name to the question *Why?*  
For me, they will fight

And they will die  
In each others' arms,  
Rock themselves to stone.  
Yet what do I own? My own mode

Of transport. I pull the strings  
To my purse. And when they pry  
Open my coffers, they will find nothing  
Of use to them as they are,

Save for possibility,  
Save for love.

With derision as lifeblood,  
I succumb to the shell's call,

One hushed word,  
Freedom, murmured over

And over. Once, gurgled,  
Then, garbled -- Now, sung.

**What's Here, What's Now:  
Poetics of The Critical Ontology**

I cannot move from this moment  
whole. I divided, has multiplied  
with not walls blocking but  
sutures busting and vestibules  
bursting. If I walk out  
that door, I'll dissipate.

---

Home, where the stove is.  
Who's the only one in this house  
with hands? Who knows how  
to load a dishwasher, cut fat  
off of chicken? These same fingers  
that curl up eyelashes, slide plastic  
applicators against the most vulnerable  
part of the body, to bat the fact

that womanhood's a pillow-  
case over the head.  
inverted capacity,  
strength to question.  
Dignity in such endurance?  
What then of fear  
to abandon in a supermarket, lose  
in an amusement park?

He needs me more,  
hand on his back. There,  
some mothering  
instinct, co-dependence  
that benefits with, in that last instant  
before I lose it, overflow  
with my own violence, his smile.  
in that eye-twinkle of a small child,

feet tucked up under  
thighs, safe and reassured,  
that mounting pressure  
ebbs. The mother in me  
can endure. Who knows the scales'

true reading and thus takes blows  
for the better half. He rocks back  
and forth for a moment;

I swing to and fro without respite.  
Tonight, I need him more,  
his not-so-secret infirmity,  
waiting for him to once again  
block off, show his strong wall.  
I like it in this box,

where doors open to close,  
towering rocks contain  
flowing waters until, exhausted,  
they, distracted, allow evaporation  
to erase what once was hidden  
and immutable. Snap to--

His eyes on the tube,  
mine glued shut.

---

Holidays approach and pass  
without my furtive hands  
ever getting wrapped  
in their ribbons. Ironic

what demarcates  
a culture's structures,  
implies its values and beliefs,  
causes everyone to take a day

off from grinding  
into nothing--work  
and shopping; driving,  
buying. What a sight,

what beauty--an empty Kohl's  
parking lot. I engage festivities  
the way I want, make my own  
ceremony of them,

one that celebrates disgust,  
lure of the mattress cover.

Plastic baskets and straw  
then are tokens of a mother's

love. She sweeps hysterical  
under and over the rug,  
since she's not the power  
to brush the crushing intangible

once and for all into the fire.  
For her care and effort, I consume,  
bring her flowers, the dyed  
eggs she complains

we didn't color.  
Don't be upset,  
Mother. Don't fret  
a daughter's unraveling,

her incurable dolor.  
These unnatural roses  
don't suffice;  
They lack adequately

combating affect-  
ion to drill into atoms.  
I would have to rip a tree,  
flowering pink,

from its rightful place in the ground,  
sacrifice its life, to ever show her how  
much I love and hate  
and don't really care at all.

I'd plant her  
a strong cockleshell  
beech, with leaves that turn  
bronze in autumn, remain  
on the tree into late winter.

In our house, an outsider,  
the only place I belong,  
I marvel at the silence  
and the calm. *Larval?* I wonder.  
*These babies have sprouted*

*fangs and wings*

*and are beating  
at our windows.*

In the next room,  
my mother's sleep sounds.

---

Their routines abandoned,  
I struggle to form  
my own. Without these roles,  
year-old instructions, dirty  
plates pile up, and clothes.  
Hygiene goes by the wayside,  
at home in the margin; all this scrubbing  
and brushing renders one less  
human. Civilized  
beings smell fragrant.  
Girls polished idols  
in a room captivate  
when put-together, just so

you'll want to undress them—Me,  
I want to make them  
stay dressed like that, feathers  
in my eyes' hat, mouth-watering  
delicacies. I am undercooked  
chicken that isn't sitting right, relinquishing  
personal style, brands, labels,  
“PINK” embroidered on the buttocks.

Shirk the status quo of No Faces.  
So plaque on teeth, then: is Real?  
Is work? No ghost of ghosts  
here? A house ransacked

with living, refuse to keep  
up appearances--mirrors  
that reflect a grinning beast. Commercials  
flicker on the screen, write your name  
in rays you cannot see.

---

Fluidity

Wake every day

Know that you can change

Balk in the face

Of all that you proclaimed

Yesterday

Today        you are new

Are infinite

You can flee   alee

In ways they cannot reach

---

Knees wet with soggy grass,  
cat's presence is a gift—  
most precious ripple, peak,  
reading on this seismograph,  
mountain on this heart machine.

---

I don't fly flags.  
I never have,  
and, in town,  
most people have  
taken theirs down.  
Only the skull-and-cross-  
bones stay up,  
erect and snapping  
in gusts leftover  
from Hurricane Earl.

We don't fly flags anymore,  
since we can't raise Hope,  
sunken by the anchor,  
so we change the state's

motto to "Unwind" rather  
than engage nominalism.

Nor can we salute old  
glory--freedom in whips, bloody  
scraps of skin, and shrapnel  
from explosions sewn in--

she seems too poignant.

So we lower her,  
our heads,  
put to rest in a veteran's fold in the closet.

---

In dependence:

Today could be  
a day when bits of me blow up  
and sparkle. Shimmery, tantalizing,  
they'd crackle, jump,  
rise, disperse.

Instead, bits of fabric hurt  
with worsening, rub skin-burns,  
asphyxiate. Scraps of flag  
slap to tatters in the wind, break loose

to catch my limbs and twist, dig in,  
bruise, bite and bend,  
insist I genuflect  
at the feet of an eyeless stone man.

---

*He has no right to keep me  
from my own.*

Antigone

Dictums gifts bestowed,  
I am grateful for all  
that's been given to me,

the homey space these milk  
crates make, the many  
windows of moving light, granted  
illusion of freedom.

I will bloom, imploding  
this alien neighborhood  
where I am caught,  
chameleon daughter  
of no country, and no God.

I will reach with stem and petal,  
heart and brain, mortar, pestle,  
slip through openings  
toward the sun. Stare down anyone  
who comes around with greedy  
fingers eager to pluck.  
*Hm*, they'll falter, when they lift  
the lid. They'll find the lizard  
has disappeared, and in her stead

a sunflower. Who has made  
of these limits infinite  
spaces? Those that provide the plant  
its conditions to grow? My roots  
aren't in their soil. Let them  
rip me from the ground. I'll only  
start again, and more composed.

## Presentation

Title of Project -- *The Perpetual Creation and Provocation of the Self*

Title of Presentation -- *We who are free, are we free?* (taken from the title of an essay by Helene Cixous published in the journal *Critical Inquiry* in 1993)

My project has changed so much throughout the semester, and it is my thought- and affect-events themselves that ultimately constitute the project. I'd like to begin with an account of my project's evolution.

My initial project proposal was ambitious, attempting to encompass all developments ever in art and literary theory in relation to my own creative writing, an encyclopedic endeavor that would allow me to work from a complete knowledge, to know at all times with whom I am entering into conversation when I write as a poet, an intellectual, or a creative nonfiction writer. I wanted to study the relationship of form and content with each other and with regard to concerns of meaning, value, singularity, and authenticity, which I believe I did end up doing, albeit via alternative routes and in unexpected ways.

I intimated in this proposal that I wanted to somehow integrate the work of four figures, present in my project from its beginning: Virginia Woolf, a British writer and thinker of the twentieth century, and particularly her credo, *Three Guineas*, published toward the end of her life and career; Michel Foucault, a French philosopher and thinker of the twentieth century, particularly his later works collected under the title *Ethics*, volume one subtitled *Subjectivity and Truth* (1997); and Gilles Deleuze, a French philosopher writing in the twentieth century, whose text on Spinoza, a Dutch Jewish philosopher writing in the seventeenth century, entitled *Spinoza:*

*Practical Philosophy* (2001), has greatly inspired and instructed me since encountering the text as a Freshman.

With regard to Woolf and Foucault, I wanted to pursue the care of the self, a rich philosophy of the cultivation of the ethical subject that Foucault refigures from its manifestations by the Ancient Greeks, which involves perpetually engaging ascetic practices of freedom so as to, for Foucault and Woolf, exit microfascistic ways of being. Writing the self as a mode of self-fashioning is an aspect of this art of life that seems most relevant to both my initial proposal and to my resulting project. With regard to Deleuze on Spinoza, I was thinking about these thinkers' notions of the self and the world as being made up of an infinite number of bodies that constitute one whole capable of affecting and of being affected by other bodies, constantly confronting the potential for decompositions and for new compositions, for novel, spontaneous, and joyous combinations.

I had such trouble getting a sponsor to commit to this project; though each candidate seemed to see the work's potential and, I hope, my earnestness to pursue it, each for various reasons could not take on the project. When someone suggested that I request Professor Stephen Barber's sponsorship, I looked again at my project's working title: "The Perpetual Creation and Provocation of the Self." "Hmmm . . .," I thought. "This proposal does seem to resonate with that course I took with Professor Barber." This claim was surely an understatement -- the texts and thinkers to which I had been so brilliantly introduced in that course were the very core of my initial proposal. For some reason, I could not yet fully see that I was attempting to enact, through my creative writing, this art of life, this care of the self.

Attaining Professor Barber's companionship and guidance was the first major turning point of my project, as his pedagogy was a turning point in my life, and an active joy. Quoted from an essay by Foucault, a major facet of the care of the self is correspondence, that which "constitutes a beneficial exercise for the giver . . . because he thereby reactualizes it for himself." If anything is most true about the achievements of my project, I hope that it is this aspect of the care of the self.

Having attained Professor Barber's sponsorship, I had to redetermine the particular focus and aims of my project. Creative writing would no longer be at its center, but rather I would return to critical study without wholly abandoning the creative pulse. With Professor Barber's help, I realized that I had at least four different projects wrapped up in my initial proposal, so I had to choose a plausible direction to follow considering the time restraints of the semester. I deliberated over pursuing the dada movement in the contemporary arts, either in conjunction with my creative writing, with the art of life, with Deleuze on Spinoza, or all of the above.

And these available avenues did not even encompass the art I desired to make with my brother, a URI alumnus of the Fine Arts department, an abstract sculptor and a musician, with whom my queer relationship and correspondence posits the conditions of possibility for many of my, and our, attempts at subjectivization and propels my pursuit of the care of the self. This work consists of artistic collaborations along the lines of the collaborative work of poet Blaise Cendrars and painter Sonia Delaunay and the collaborations of poet Frank O'Hara and painter Larry Rivers, as well as a live event and a museum visit that would constitute active embodiments of both post-dada impulses, the care of the self, and Spinozian styles of life. So,

midway through the semester, I had gathered these projects together, once more under one proposal, as though I had reduced my ambitions to a manageable month's work.

In both proposals now, the initial and the modified, I was attempting to encompass projects that are really my life's work -- scholarly writing, creative writing, and artistic friendship as enactments of the art of life as conceived of by these four thinkers. Professor Barber helped me to see that these endeavors were the work of a life, and, ultimately, that the life is the work. I had wanted to make this project in the Humanities as substantial and legitimate as possible, and yet I found the figures and thought at the project's core to be project enough, realizing the value and integrity of such work.

All of the possible projects, these life projects, that I wanted to encompass in this Honors project, had these four figures as their conditions of possibility, and the project has now culminated with both them and me at its center. In Socratic spirit, these figures have been my provocateurs, sticking out on the proposals' pages -- what are you going to do with us, Krista? Why are we a part of this? And are we enough? Can you get free? The project evolved seemingly organically, its own body, without my wholly conscious direction or control. The project is the renewal, the truer achievement, of my belief in and assimilation of the care of the self, the art of life, the ethics of concern for the self as a practice of freedom, and the ways that I enact it, share it as viable, as legitimate, as actual, as true.

Working through the reading, writing, re-reading, and re-writing of this project, the philosophies of these four figures became more rich than ever, intersecting in remarkable ways. Moving between subjectivation, the process by which microfascist forces objectify and forge a certain kind of individual, and subjectivization, the perpetual work toward exiting such forces through the fashioning of an ethical subjectivity -- these two terms invented by Foucault and

figured by Woolf -- can be grueling and affectively taxing, generating in a body infatuated sad passions rather than the active joys available to other ways of being -- ideas conceived of by Spinoza and worked over by Deleuze. The critical and creative work of prose in which I converse with the thought of Deleuze and Spinoza helped me to synthesize in such ways these philosophies. Music-making, as I can conceive of it from my encounter with Deleuze's text, constitutes a practice of freedom in the perpetual work of the cultivation of the ethical subject and the art of life.

I also wrote a critical essay in which I contemplate the ways in which Woolf's *Three Guineas* corresponds with Foucault's notions of the care of the self, particularly its notebook and correspondence aspects, engaged by the Ancient Greeks and reappropriated by Woolf and Foucault, and the process of subjectivization, again a process by which one might exit microfascistic power relations by fashioning a self that seeks, as quoted from Foucault defining the critical ontology, "a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them" (Foucault "What is Enlightenment?" 319).

When setting out to write poetry for my project, I thought I might write stanzas on poverty, chastity, derision, and freedom from unreal loyalties, the four ascetic virtues that Woolf outlines in *Three Guineas* and that allow for, as Professor Barber illuminates in his essay entitled "Exit Woolf" in the collection of essays, *Feminism and the Final Foucault* (2004), "the double movement of subjectification/subjectivization that characterizes the practice of freedom in critical ontology" (55), where the key pivot point is choice. I outline in my above-mentioned

essay the ways that these ascetic virtues constitute the *self-forming activity* that must work over *the ethical substances* of gender and womanhood, these italicized terms identified by Foucault.

Some of these ideas did make it into the poem -- ruminations on the unreal loyalties of patriotism and nationalism, of consumerism and capitalism -- but I did not find my way to explicitly or richly connecting them to the processes of subjectivization that might be enacted by myself and others living in this particular historical moment. This lack of development made me realize that these categories pertain very specifically to a certain generation of women who were subjectified by them and then to Woolf's own generation who, she suggests, might ethically subjectivate selves *from* them. I see now that I must identify such possibilities in my own life-- modes by which I am subjectified that I might subversively occupy in order to self-fashion an ethical subject from them.

Thus, the questions I seek to answer as I continue in the perpetual effortfulness that is the concern for the self as a practice of freedom are: What are the ascetic practices that I must engage in order to cultivate the self as an ethical subject? In other words, what is my self-forming activity? What are my methods of enacting depersonalization and deindividuation?

The back-and-forth, affected struggle between subjectivation and subjectivization is the main thread of the poem from which I am going to read some excerpts. The poem is entitled "What's Here, What's Now: Poetics of the Critical Ontology."

To Attend to the Subject, To Assess the State of Emergency:  
Emerging through Immersion in the Thought  
of Deleuze, Spinoza, Foucault, and Woolf

*tremulous, filmy eyed as I was, with my wings still creased,  
sitting there on the edge of my broken chrysalis . . .*

Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being* (1976)

My project culminated into a study of the individual as Foucault figures the term, the individual who is generated and determined by harmful power structures, in this case, capitalism and the embedded imprint of pastoral power, and also a study of the attempt one can make to rid one's self of that individual and create another self, the ethical subject. Yet I discovered that the affect-events of this never-ending process are intense and persistent. What for this fatigue, lethargy, sadnesses, depression? And how to account for the moments or periods of joy, bliss, beauty, pleasure, and the ways they can or do not exercise freedom? The constant, almost simultaneous, alternation, the struggle, those responses or states of being, seem crucial to this project and the lifelong project of the care of the self -- they are the affects of perpetually undergoing de-individuation, depersonalization, and the effort to define and enact ascetic practices that might fashion the concern for the self as a practice of freedom. I use the following quote from Woolf's essay "A Sketch of the Past" (1939) from *Moments of Being* (1985) to figure this condition:

I was thinking; feeling; living; those two lives that the two halves symbolized with the intensity, the muffled intensity, which a butterfly or moth feels when with its sticky tremulous legs and antennae it pushes out of the chrysalis and emerges and sits quivering beside the broken case for a moment; its wings still creased; its eyes dazzled, incapable of flight. (124)

After one realizes that one is being subjectivated, one can begin instantaneously to resist and attempt to escape these constraints. However, this exiting does not merely occur but consists of

a perpetual effortfulness. One can conceive of freedom, but without the identification or invention of ascetic practices, without the order of the ethics of concern for self as a practice of freedom, one can remain stunned, constantly pulled between the simultaneous forces of subjectivation and subjectivization, this idea being one of the major developments of my project.

Another main facet of this project's culmination has been the realization that since the dawn of my intellectual, political, spiritual, and artistic awareness (I do not say my coming into, as I am perpetually coming into this awareness, coming to and from it), I have been contemplating and sometimes experiencing the possibilities of and my inclinations toward living in certain ways -- ways actually fulfilling, meaningful, and more free -- articulated and enacted by the texts of the four figures who have been the focus of my project: Virginia Woolf, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and his work on Spinoza.

I had conceived of the possibility of living in ways Deleuzian and Spinozian, had thought about the power structures and epistemological conditions that Foucault so brilliantly elucidates, have been struggling against and finding ways out of the civil, servile tyrannies of this historical moment as Woolf does. And yet I never had a way of thinking, talking, or writing about these circumstances until I was introduced to these texts and these thinkers. Perhaps the power of the texts has to do in part with the apparent harmony these thinkers have attained of the *logos* and *bios*, as their enacting the ascetic practice of writing the self makes clear, writing the self as a mode of self-care, self-fashioning, and self-government (in terms of Montaigne's famous statement, "Not being able to govern events, I govern myself"), all of which constitute the care of the self as a social practice. Perhaps the power of the texts also resides in the apparent success these thinkers have achieved at deindividuation, what the texts' depersonalized tones, which are

yet full of care, creativity, *life*, intellectual freedom, the tone of the ethical subject, might suggest.

I am struck by the fact that a book I once loaned from a friend when I was maybe fourteen, which I have since encountered in various unexpected places, a book by which I was greatly affected and inspired, resonates so acutely with the material of my project. This book is entitled *Days of War, Nights of Love* (2001), published by CrimethInc., an anonymous, multifarious entity that deeply resonates with Woolf's conception of Society of Outsiders, her instructions toward poverty, derision, chastity, and freedom from unreal loyalties, Foucault's notions of depersonalization and deindividuation, of historicity and epistemological constructivism:

[I]t is not a membership organization. It is not an elitist vanguard that purports to lead the masses out of darkness to salvation--experience has shown . . . that such parties are the social forces that *create* masses. And it is not a Movement, either: for such things only exist as a part of history, and as such are subject to its laws--gestation, ascendance, decline. As crimethink is a force that exists beneath the currents of history, outside the chain of events, CrimethInc. is the first stirrings of a revolt that will take us all *out* of history. (9)

This book spoke truths I had never had the words or thoughts to articulate, yet I almost dismissed it, knowing that, considering the creative, radical aesthetic of the book, others might view it as illegitimate, as low culture, as liberal propaganda, as artistic deviance--in other words, would not take it seriously. For example, on either side of the page that contains the impersonal, composed passage cited above are pages whose large text consists of only a question and an answer. The first reads, "What is crimethink? / Today, everything that can't be bought, sold, or faked is crimethink" (8) and the second reads, "What is CrimethInc.? / CrimethInc. is the black market where brilliant schemes and wild abandon are traded for lives" (10). The voice of these pages is much different from that of the page in between them, a voice that strikes me as affected, as

subjectivated, though struggling admirably, and possibly effectively, to subjectivizate. Perhaps this element of the book most resulted in my not being able to confidently, lucidly, intellectually engage the text.

The project and my studies have prompted me to return to this book, to understand its intelligence, bravery, beauty, ambition, and integrity in ways that I could never before assess/access. There was another reason that the book went by the wayside in my life -- I did not know what I to *do* with it. Yes, I felt *at home* when I read it, in a way I had never felt, a home, a belonging, I have never felt, such peace, freedom, and joy I experienced at the requital of this text. It was as though these writers knew what kind of world I wanted to live in, were feeling the feelings and thinking the thoughts I was having about living in our particular moment. But when I put the book down, I was still me, the world still the world. I could not harness the book's power; without it in my hands, the book lost its substance. In the book's "Preface," the writers explain the following:

[T]his book is not designed to be used in the way a 'normal' book is. Rather than reading it from one cover to the other, casting perfunctory votes of disapproval or agreement along the way (or even deciding to 'buy in' to our ideas in passive consumer fashion), and then putting it on the shelf as another inert possession, we hope you will use this as a *tool* in your own efforts--not just to think about the world, but also to *change* it. (11)

Still, I had no notion of what using the book as a tool meant at the time. It was only a book.

How could it change me, change my conditions, change the world?

Having intimately read the texts of Woolf, Foucault, Deleuze, and Deleuze on Spinoza, particularly Woolf's *Three Guineas*, I see now what the writers of the crimethink volume desire - - to foster, to fashion, a subject through which the book's truths, openings, and potentials become actualized in the operations of the subject's daily life, for the reader to realize that his or her subjectivity constitutes the very conditions of this possibility. Like Woolf, who imagines

possibilities for resistance in the here and now, the present, rather than for some theoretical future, *Days of War, Nights of Love* expounds, “We want to *live*, to be *here*, *now*. A desire that goes beyond the present, past, future, atemporal” (117). As Woolf’s *Three Guineas* does, this book seems to participate in the “historico-critical attitude” of modernity, the experimental politics of self on which Foucault muses in his essay “What is Enlightenment?” as “the test of reality, of contemporary reality, both to grasp the points where change is possible and desirable, and to determine the precise form this change should take” (316). Intriguing that in Foucault’s Preface to Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1983), Foucault writes, “It would be a mistake to read *Anti-Oedipus* as the new theoretical reference . . . I think that *Anti-Oedipus* can best be read as an ‘art’” (xiii). Foucault posits that this book that describes the “art of living counter to all forms of fascism” could be made “into a manual or guide to everyday life” (xiii). I look forward to reading the full text of this work and entering it into conversation with the book-tool by CrimethInc.

Through this project’s culmination, it has become queerly, delightfully, integrally and immanently clear to me the ways in which the thought of the four figures who constitute the focus of my project coalesces with the ideas present in this book by CrimethInc. I was afraid that my project would not amount to enough, to something. The chapter entitled “Capitalism” from *Days of War, Nights of Love* articulates for me the value of and nourishes my belief in and love for the thought- and affect-events that constitute this project: “[U]nder capitalism our lives end up revolving around things, as if happiness is to be found in possessions rather than in free actions and pursuits . . . [C]apitalism centers everyone’s values around what they have rather than what they do . . . People might be more likely to find happiness in a society that encouraged them to value their ability to act freely and do what they want above all else” (63-4). These four

figures and the CrimethInc. text fundamentally link by way of enacting the philosophy of the free soul and the care of the self, pursuing the art of life, and performing the critical ontology. The following page from *Days of War, Nights of Love* is particularly resonant:

### **Transformation**

If the accumulated knowledge of Western civilization has anything of value to offer us at this point, it is an awareness of just how much is possible when it comes to human life . . . [S]cholars of history and sociology and anthropology can at least show us this one thing: that human beings have lived in a thousand different kinds of societies, with ten thousand different tables of values, ten thousand different relationships to each other and the world around them, ten thousand different conceptions of self. A little traveling can still show you the same thing, if you get there before Coca-Cola has had too much of a head start.

That's why I can't help but scoff when someone refers to 'human nature,' invariably in the course of excusing himself for a miserable resignation to our supposed fate . . . If there is anything lacking . . . in our lives . . . any corner of happiness that we have not yet thoroughly explored, then all that is needed is for us to alter our environments accordingly . . .

And there is another valuable discovery our species has made, albeit the hard way: we are capable of absolutely transforming environments . . . We have completely remade our world in the past few centuries . . . It only remains for us to experiment with executing (or, for that matter, not executing) these changes intentionally, in accordance with our needs and desires, rather than at the mercy of . . . forces like competition, superstition, routine.

Once we realize this, we can claim a new destiny for ourselves, both individually and collectively. No longer will we be buffeted about by powers that seem beyond our control; instead, in this exploration of ourselves through the creation of new environments, we will learn all that we can be. This path will take us out of this world as we know it, far beyond the farthest horizons we can see from here. We will become artists of the grandest kind, painting with desire as a medium, deliberately creating and recreating ourselves--becoming, ourselves, our own greatest work. (14-15)

The philosophies of these four figures as they relate to music-making in my life seem to be uncannily incorporated in the section of the book entitled, "Freedom:"

Freedom is a sensation.

We have only 'choice.'

It's almost ludicrous to think of how many men and women have fought and died for the American idea of freedom: a man in a voting booth with a pencil, choosing which box to check. Real freedom, the kind

of freedom we are fighting for, is something much grander--it means creating the choices you choose *between*, for starters. A better illustration is the musician in the act of playing with her companions: in joyous, seemingly effortless cooperation, they actively create the sonic and emotional environment in which they exist, participating thus in the transforming of the world which will in turn transform them. Take this model and extend it to every moment of our lives-- now *that* would be real freedom.

For me, music-making seems to constitute what Foucault calls the "limit-attitude:"

We are not talking about a gesture of rejection. We have to move beyond the outside-inside alternative; we have to be at the frontiers . . . In what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints? ("Enlightenment" 315).

Foucault writes, "For the attitude of modernity, the high value of the present is indissociable from a desperate eagerness to imagine it, to imagine it otherwise than it is, and to transform it not by destroying it but by grasping it in what it is" ("Enlightenment" 311). The songs themselves, and our writing and performance of the songs, constitute the continuous projects of the critical ontology and the double movement of subjectivation/subjectivization.

As bodies, we try to remain open and attend, responsible, to the utter singularity of the present, to that which has not yet been conceptualized, to sustain the specificity of the unprecedented now, to creatively respond by forming new joyful compositions. Foucault describes modernity as a "consciousness of the discontinuity of time: a break with tradition, a feeling of novelty, a vertigo in the face of the passing moment . . . [,] adopting a certain attitude with respect to this movement" ("Enlightenment" 310). He asserts that "this deliberate, difficult attitude consists in recapturing something eternal that is not beyond the present instant, nor

behind it, but within it" (310). In these ways, music-making enables me to enact this attitude of modernity.

I recently came across the admissions essay that I wrote for URI, which ends with the following paragraph:

Playing in The Ghost of Otis is one of the most important things in my life. It has fueled my ambition to discover, learn, and grow in areas other than music, such as foreign affairs, language, and politics. The band is a catalyst for change. Through this art, we express our philosophies, engaging ancientness, modernity, and the yet to be. It is a way of living, fueling my want of knowledge and life.

I am full of joy that I still feel this way about playing music but as a subject and experience infinitely enhanced -- more rich, lucid, faithful, with more perpetual access to pleasure and moments of freedom, and perhaps most importantly, less lonely, less despondent -- through my correspondence with the thought of the four figures who were the foci of my project.

I move from this project to the project of my life, to determining the modes by which I am subjectivated and the ethical substances over which I must work. I feel the ethical substances that I identify in my essay on Woolf and Foucault -- gender/womanhood and culture/intellectuality -- are still two substances that must be worked over by ethics in our particular historical moment. The self-forming activity, the ascetic practices, in which I must engage are less evident. I must work toward defining them, toward establishing an order of my relationship to self so as to exercise my freedom.

Realizing the ways in which the work of these four figures intersect and relate to, are embodied by, music-making and writing, recognizing that I am experiencing, and the ways I am experiencing, the double movement between subjectivation and subjectivization, I feel closer to actualizing the care of the self in my own life. Through my interlocution with Deleuze, Spinoza, Foucault, and Woolf, I become a little less filmy eyed, less tremulous, and capable of flight.

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