

Beginning Again: Teaching, Natality and Social Transformation

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“That there be a beginning, man was created before whom there was nobody” said Augustine in his political philosophy. This beginning is not the same as the beginning of the world; it is not the beginning of something but of somebody, who is a beginner himself.¹

All I wanted was to be a man among other men. I wanted to come lithe and young into a world that was ours and to help build it together.... You come too late, much too late, there will always be a world — a white world — between you and us.²

TEACHING IN “THE GAP BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE”

In the preface to her latest anthology of writings by and about women of color, Gloria Anzaldua describes what happened when the students in a class she taught at the University of Santa Cruz on women of color in the U.S. confronted one another about racism.³ In this direct confrontation, racism was not approached as a historical phenomenon, but in its “enunciative present,” as a system of persistent racial privilege and marginalization.⁴ This was no abstract, depersonalized discussion: Anzaldua writes about her students of color “holding whites accountable” for racism, and about her white women students in turn “begging” students of color to “teach them” about racism and to tell them what they wanted white students to do about it. Anzaldua describes her students of color’s refusal to become engaged in “time-consuming dialogues” with white women, explaining that the women of color in the class “expressed their hundred years weariness of trying to teach whites about Racism.”⁵

This poignant expression of frustration and exhaustion — “the hundred years weariness” with which Anzaldua allies herself — points to some of the difficulties teachers encounter when the politics of identity emerges in the classroom and we are faced with the educational challenge of interrupting the cycle of recrimination and defensiveness that often characterizes direct confrontations about racism and other forms of social inequality. In scenarios like the one Anzaldua describes, teachers find themselves caught in what Hannah Arendt calls “the gap between past and future.”⁶ To teach in this gap is to take on the twofold task of introducing students into a world that precedes them, while preserving the possibility that students might undertake something new in relation to this world.

As Arendt conceives it, this gap is not a space of stasis but a provocative space, one which opens the possibility of interrupting social processes that appear fixed and inevitable. Nevertheless, teachers and students alike are positioned awkwardly within it as we find ourselves confronted by the ways the world acts on our students at the same time as we are called upon to prepare our students to act on the world. As students encounter issues of social difference in the classroom, sometimes for the first time, they become aware of the ways in which they have ceased to be perceived as newcomers to the world. They begin to perceive themselves through the eyes of others, as latecomers to a world that precedes and indeed has constituted them,

positioning them in relation to a past and to one another across complex axes of race, class, ethnicity, gender, nationality, religion and other salient social differences. For many students, this is a bewildering realization as they experience themselves as belated for the first time. For other students, exemplified by the women of color whose weariness Anzaldúa describes, this sense of belatedness is only too familiar, and they come to our classes already worn down and barely able to move under the weight of the past. Belatedness poses a problem when students perceive themselves as completely fixed in their social positions. They may become so overwhelmed by feelings of guilt or shame, anger or outrage, that they become mired in a politics of recrimination and resentment. Such a politics leaves little room to transform the meanings and implications of their particular social position, and even less room for forging new relations across difference.

Teachers too are awkwardly positioned in the gap between past and future, for we are confronted with the difficulties of teaching in the midst of belatedness in such a way that this kind of social reduction, recrimination, and resentment is avoided without attempting to shirk the weight of history. Too often, the pedagogical response to classroom tension is to avoid conflict, either by refusing the educational salience of identity, or by teaching as if issues of difference are purely aesthetic causes for celebration rather than issues demanding sustained social analysis. The trouble with this wishful thinking is that race and other aspects of social inequality are not merely hangovers from the past; they are constitutive of the present, manifest in systems of meaning and behaviors that are etched deep in our psyches and inscribed on our bodies. As Arendt reminds us, the past “is a force, and not, as in nearly all of our metaphors... a burden man has to shoulder and of whose dead weight the living can or even must get rid in their march into the future. In the words of Faulkner, ‘the past is never dead, it is not even past.’”⁷

To teach in the gap between past and future is to take on the weighty responsibility of introducing students to the world *as it is* rather than as we might wish it to be, even though, as Arendt acknowledges, we “did not make it and even though [we] may, secretly or openly, wish it were other than it is.”⁸ Only in relation to this world will students come to an understanding of what needs to be challenged and reconfigured. To teach as though the world is other than it is, is to send the message to students that it is not in need of transformation; it has already been transformed. Arendt’s concern here is that students will become accustomed to having the world changed for them, apparently on their behalf. To teach in this way, as though the world were other than it is, is to deny students “their own future role in the body politic.”⁹ It is “to strike from the newcomer’s hands their own chance at the new.”¹⁰ But what does it mean to teach for the future? It does not mean that we can dictate its terms, nor can we seek to determine the outcome of our students’ engagements with issues of difference and social inequality. The classroom is not the place where we decide what the world will look like; it is at best a space in which, as teachers, we can attempt to create the conditions of possibility for the rejuvenation of the world.¹¹ Our task is neither to teach as if the world were new, nor to try to bring the new into being; it is rather, in Arendt’s curious formulation, to “preserve newness.”¹²

Teaching to “preserve newness” is made all the more difficult by the repetitive structure of teaching itself. Year after year we encounter the weariness or pessimism that some students bring to these meetings, and the bewilderment of others as the certainty of their place in the world is shaken up, or as their efforts to make connections with their fellow students are frustrated. The *deja-vu* quality of these encounters reminds us that are always in some sense “beginning again.” But this often leads to the kind of frustration Anzaldúa expresses as we begin to feel as if we are not getting anywhere at all. As a result, many of us become impatient with what we perceive to be the slow pace of social change, or with the seeming lack of social transformation. In the sections that follow, I put this twofold structural difficulty — the fact of belatedness and the repetitive nature of education — into play in order to draw attention to the pivotal and yet precarious role of the teacher in preserving newness. Of particular interest to me is the peculiar mix of passion, patience, responsibility and detachment that are necessary for this important but difficult undertaking.

NATALITY AS “THE ESSENCE OF EDUCATION.”

When Arendt identifies natality as the “essence of education,” she is drawing attention both to the central role education plays in introducing the constant stream of newcomers into the world, and to the reasons why we educate: to create the conditions for the “setting right” of the world.¹³ However, both the fact of belatedness and our attendant impatience point to the difficulties of teaching to preserve newness and the corresponding frailty of natality. In order for natality to translate into the renewal of the world, our students’ capacity for action must be facilitated. Precisely because the link between natality and action is not assured, education plays a crucial role in Arendt’s political philosophy. Education can foster the students’ capacity for action, or it can foreclose it. As Arendt writes:

Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and the young, would be inevitable.¹⁴

Arendt likens natality to a “second birth,” an act of self creation in relation to the world which precedes and in which we are immersed.¹⁵ Natality stands for the moments in our lives when we take responsibility for ourselves in relation to others. In this way, natality initiates an active relation to the world. It signifies those moments in our lives (and there are many) in which we set out to put forward an answer to the question that Arendt argues is at the basis of all action. This is the question “Who are you?” which is posed to every newcomer to the world at various moments in our lives.¹⁶

This is not an easy question, in part because each of us spends our whole life fashioning ourselves in answer to it, but largely because we do not answer this question on our own.¹⁷ Who we are is as much a matter of how we appear to others as it is a matter of our own self-perception. Indeed, our self-perception is bound up in and is largely formed in response to the ways we are named and positioned by others. In this sense, the ways in which we are positioned by others — at the level of institutions, systems and structures as well as by individuals — are constitutive of who we are. To talk of social positioning as “constitutive” of one’s identity is to

draw attention to the productive relationship between the ways in which one is seen by others and one's self-perception. The relationship between the two is complex since we are positioned in different ways by different social structures and in different contexts. Fully cognizant of this dialectic of identity, Arendt argues that one extricates oneself out of the tension between the two at a great political and personal cost. Arendt warns of the "loss of reality" that comes from not taking stock of how one is seen by others. This loss of reality has two dimensions: Sometimes, it is a matter of not recognizing the ways in which one's social positioning affects one's life chances. Turning structural problems into personal failings in this way does little to enhance either one's self-understanding or one's understanding of the larger world. At other times, what is lost is an understanding of the effects of our social positions on others. As Melissa Orlie points out, these are "collective trespasses" that "arise as we live our locations."¹⁸ They are not necessarily deliberate wrongdoings. Arendt also cautions against resigning oneself passively to the ways in which one is positioned by others. To do so is to refuse the effort of transforming the social meanings of particular group identities. It also refuses the task of challenging those social and political institutions which structure and perpetuate exclusions, marginalization, or oppression.¹⁹

IDENTITY MATTERS: TEACHING IN THE MIDST OF BELATEDNESS.

The trouble is that our efforts to transform ourselves in relation to our social positioning take place always amidst conditions of constraint, as we find ourselves bumping up against those who insist on reducing us to our social positioning, refusing us a chance at living out the wonder of being new to the world. Under such conditions, we cease to be unique and become instead a genus: a woman, a Jew, Black. This is what happens to Frantz Fanon, as he moves beyond his community only to find himself amidst whites who mark him as a particular kind of person: "Look, a Negro!"²⁰ In "The Fact of Blackness," Fanon explores the phenomenology of this gradual merger of self-perception into social positioning. Writing of his initial desire to be simply a man among men, unmarked by history, unburdened by colonization, Fanon explains, "all I wanted was to be a man among other men. I wanted to come lithe and young into a world that was ours and build it together." But, marked as a black man by the points and stares of others, Fanon realizes the impossibility of attaining the humanist ideal of generic man. As he moves through the world, he is constantly reminded that "You come too late, much too late, there will always be a world — a white world between you and us."²¹ Fanon's journey into Negritude begins with his realization that to be a black man in a racist society is to be "overdetermined from without."²² It is to feel oneself perpetually belated, an heir to pre-existing meanings rather than one who makes meaning for oneself.²³

By marking the world between "you and us" as a white world, Fanon draws attention to the asymmetrical status of blackness and whiteness. It is only in a racist society that blackness serves to mark one as a particular kind of person, and becomes simultaneously a condition which one might desire to escape, and an inescapable condition. These are interesting times, however, as those within the dominant social group increasingly find themselves called to accountability, as whites or as men, for

their positions of privilege. Until recently, whites and men had no desire to escape a situation which guaranteed them privileged access to public space, education, employment, and property. The fact that they too were latecomers was a source of gratitude, for they had inherited the earth. Now, that their future roles are less and less assured, however, they too feel weighted down by belatedness. As whites and men are called to account for their positions of privilege in what continues to be a racial hierarchy, what becomes clear is that they are less able to shirk the weight of history. Each time any of us seek to soar above the identities which attach to us by virtue of our appearance, we are brought back down to earth. Our efforts to deny our embeddedness in history are resisted by those “others” who remind us of the ways in which we continue to benefit from racism.

What educators are now confronted with is not the belatedness of blackness, but the fact of belatedness, which is no longer restricted to social groups with a history and a cultural memory of subjugation. This is not to suggest that the belatedness has the same impact on the privileged, who are now having to relinquish guarantees and assurances once taken for granted. But the psychological impact is similar. No matter what our social positioning, it seems that no sooner have we arrived than we are told that the world is tired of us; it has seen the likes of us before. In response, many of us become weary and may grow resentful, and we witness similar reactions in our students. Whether this resentment manifests itself as despondence or as self-righteous anger, it is unlikely to lend itself to the task of creating the conditions of possibility for new kinds of relations to emerge amidst the politics of difference. Given the intractability of belatedness, and the impossibility of transcending our racial identities, what are the possibilities for transforming the meanings that attach to our social positioning — for interrupting the cycles of resentment in which so many of us and our students are liable to become knotted?²⁴

Arendt warns against the twin dangers of the two most common responses to belatedness: embracing social positioning as a given, as *social pariahs* do, and refusing one's social positioning, as do *parvenus*.²⁵ Both of these responses exhibit a lack of social understanding and a refusal to take even the first step toward social transformation, which begins with recognizing one's location in relation to others, and one's implicatedness in a social system that attaches to one whether or not one wishes it. *Social pariahs* accept rather than challenge their abject positioning. They feel “fated” by their social positioning. If students feel trapped by their social positioning, they are unlikely to take on the difficult task of social transformation. *Parvenus*, on the other hand, attempt to escape the “fatefulness” of social positioning by attempting to ignore it, downplay it, erase it or refuse it.²⁶ But these efforts are doomed to fail because identity is not just a matter of self-perception. We constantly bump up against social structures and individuals who refuse these efforts to transcend our social positioning and persist in marking us in particular ways. In the end, both come to the same point. The *parvenu* finds herself unable to transcend her social positioning, and comes to share the *social pariah's* sense of identity as fixed, determined and inescapable. Unlike the *social pariah*, however, the *parvenu* is more likely to be disgruntled and resentful than despondent. Resentment is a response to

feeling trapped under “the weight of the past and the apparent foreclosing of futures.”²⁷ Depending on the social positioning of the student, this resentment may manifest itself in anger at being forced into the category of oppressor, or in anger that results from a history of subjugation which is simultaneously denied and reinforced by the broader culture. As Melissa Orlie points out, the problem with both these positions is that “contestants locked in a battle of escalating recriminations, far from releasing or redeeming the past, repeat and increase its weight.”²⁸

By contrast, *conscious pariahs* reconfigure their relationship to their social positioning.²⁹ This entails facing up to what they are in a way that resists feeling either too late or too new to the world. An overwhelming sense of belatedness risks churning out *social pariahs* who feel “fated” by their identity — so fixed by the world that preceded them that there is no possibility of unsettling this world and of bringing something new into it. But the trouble with the *parvenu* is that they have no sense of history; they feel too new. Once they find themselves held accountable for *what* they are in relation to others, they are at a loss, bewildered by this unfamiliar sense of belatedness.

Conscious pariahs are those who, in Sartrean language, are able to live authentically. That is to say, they are willing to face up to the uneasy fact of “having freedom within the limits of a situation.”³⁰ This entails a twofold recognition: first, of the limitations that follow from one’s belatedness, and second, that within these limitations, one is nevertheless free to assume or to refuse the “responsibilities and risks” that follow from attempting to live authentically, which is to say, in recognition of one’s situatedness. Sartre explains that those in the dominant social groups tend to live inauthentically because they are more likely not to be confronted with the fact of their particularity.³¹ Once challenged to answer to the unwitting power effects of our social positioning, however, we are often uncertain about how to proceed. Our first impulse may be to deny our implicatedness in a history of harm or wrongdoing, or as a beneficiary of privilege. Once we admit to these things, we have to face up to the profound challenge of figuring out: “*What is to be done in a world where even when you were a solution you were a problem?*”³²

The challenge for teachers consists in creating spaces in which students can confront their sense of belatedness without feeling immobilized by it. Ideally, such spaces enable students to live out the wonder of being a newcomer to the earth not by attempting to soar above their social positioning, but by reconfiguring it in a meaningful way. But here teachers encounter the other aspect of the temporality of natality: that students become aware of their belatedness at different stages of their lives. While many students — particularly minority students and women — are aware of their social positioning, and have been for a long time, other students are not used to thinking of themselves as white, or as men, or as heterosexual. Indeed, for many, the classroom will be the first time they are confronted with the ways in which they are belated. This sets up an asymmetry in the classroom as students confront one another and themselves not only from different social positions, but also from different time frames. The problem of asymmetry is exacerbated by the depth of anger and discomfort, outrage and resistance that comes to the fore in discussions of identity. These are necessary difficulties, for the politics of identity

cuts to the quick of what it means to live authentically, raising hard questions about responsibility and freedom, about the relationship of the present to the past and of both to the future. But these are also frustrating encounters, since accusation and recrimination are often allowed to take the place of thinking productively about what it means to share a world with others. In what follows, I want to show how Arendt's conception of natality is a helpful way to reconceive our relations to our students and their relations to one another. I will do this by way of a return to the Anzaldua example with which I began.

PATIENCE AND POSSIBILITY

One of the problems with Anzaldua's framing of the classroom encounter is that she recognizes what is old and familiar about these confrontations without acknowledging that what is happening is simultaneously — and paradoxically — recognizably familiar and startlingly new. We see this in her positioning of the class as a "*classic example*," her frustration with what appears to be (and in some senses is) white students' *persistent* insistence that others do the work of drawing attention to racism — and her own allegiance with the "*hundred years weariness*" her students express. *Once again*, white women have to be challenged by women of color to recognize their position of white privilege. And *yet again*, Anzaldua finds herself witnessing white women responding defensively, evasively, or naively to the challenge.

In an important way, these feelings of frustration and expressions of exhaustion are educative: they draw attention to the tremendous discomfort that attends efforts to directly address racism, and to the repetitive quality of these discussions which begin to seem so similar that, to seasoned teachers, both what is said and who says what becomes predictable. But if, following Arendt, one takes natality as the essence of education, what is educative about their despair is also deeply disturbing. What is lost is some sense of the potential for newness which manifests itself in the face of belatedness. If the purpose of education were simply to instill in students a sense of belatedness, teaching would be a depressing endeavor indeed. The possibility that these students might reconfigure the meaning of the social positionings with which they are confronted in the classroom, forging unexpected social relations and unsettling deeply entrenched social forces in the process, is what redeems teaching, offering the possibility of hope.

What seems like old hat to the teacher may well be quite new to some of the participants, who may never have discussed racism in a mixed-race group before, and many of whom may never have been called to accountability on issues of race and racism in such a direct way before, at least not by these particular classmates or comrades. The familiar feel of encounters like this is a feature of belatedness. But here too we need to bear in mind the asymmetrical way in which students become aware of their belatedness. This is Fanon's point about blackness, which marks the colonized as "other" at a young age. While white Americans are, at a young age, aware of the ways in which race attaches to others and marks "the other" as different, they do not become aware of the ways in which whiteness attaches to them until much later. Thus, white students are less likely to be "weary" of their whiteness than

are students of color. Indeed, for many, this class may be the first time they have been called into their whiteness.

This asymmetrical reaction to belatedness, and the correspondingly unequal distribution of weariness, indicates the ways in which discussions like this are saturated in natality. The reason why these kinds of confrontations seem never to make progress is a direct result of this asymmetry which characterizes encounters across cultural difference: newcomers are constantly being born and are continually in the process of being introduced to one another and to the world. Natality lends encounters across difference their paradoxical quality of feeling familiar and yet being new. Each confrontation feels like we are beginning again. In many ways, this is precisely what we are doing. However, rather than regarding the weariness as a sign of lack of progress, weariness ought to be taken as a sign that an ethical encounter is underway. The weariness expressed by students of color testifies to the ways in which we simultaneously are and are not new to one another. Reduced to our social positioning, we are perceived as being interchangeable with others who are “just like us.” This is what lends encounters across difference their repetitive quality, and the frustrating sense that in these encounters we are always starting from scratch.

On the other hand, the fact that we still undertake these encounters indicates that on some level we are aware that these are necessary repetitions; that each of us simultaneously is and is not new to the other. In this sense, the weariness that attends these encounters is not a mark of failure; rather, it is a sign that to encounter an(other) ethically is an exhausting process. Recognizing what is new about the other and becoming aware of what is novel about each particular encounter does not eliminate what is tiring about these encounters, but it does reconfigure the weariness as an ongoing and unavoidable aspect of encounters across difference.

The problem is more accurately located in the governing expectation that conversations and confrontations like this will get us to a predetermined somewhere — a utopian space where there no longer will be a need for encounters across difference. Arendt’s conception of natality as the essence of education challenges this utopian thinking by reminding us of the constant influx of newcomers who are introduced to the world at different moments, and who make their way in relation to this world and one another in different time-frames. Natality poses a challenge to the way we conceive of progress, reconfiguring what is usually thought of as a steady forward motion into a more apt characterization of the process of progress that Homi Bhabha calls “time-lag.”³³ The idea of a time-lag draws attention to the pauses which punctuate progress, constraining and limiting what is usually thought to be a steady stream of time. It is not that Bhabha reads time as “endless slippage,” and thus disparages the very idea of social progress; rather, he wants to develop a more apt metaphor for progress, one that attends to the ways in which the past works to slow down modernity’s drive toward the future. On this view, time moves forward less steadily, and social progress is never assured. The idea of the time-lag draws attention to the way in which belatedness always threatens to overrun the possibility of the new. It also reminds us of the constant stream of newcomers who not only make it necessary for us to begin again, but who then undertake their own new beginnings.

Introducing newcomers into an old world while preserving the possibility that students might undertake something new in relation to this world, requires that teachers meet students in the “gap between past and future.” This gap does not symbolize an escape from history, but a fissure within time. It signifies the break in tradition which characterizes modern life. Arendt points out that this break in tradition is not without its dangers: most notably that we risk forgetting the past, which in turn means that we will have lost our guide to understanding the present.³⁴ But at the same time, Arendt is optimistic about the break in tradition, which helps loosen the “chain fettering each successive generation to a predetermined aspect of the past.”³⁵ In the process, it opens up a space of freedom which enables us to resist the notion that we are fully determined and fated by history.³⁶ It offers each new being an opportunity to see how they have been made what they are, and provides an incentive for them to reconfigure themselves in response to this history.

To teach in “the gap between past and future” is not to neutralize either the frustration or the bewilderment of our students, nor should we allow these reactions to mire students in despair. Both responses would be problematic: the first because it tries to erase a genuine problem, and the second because it is an evasion of the teacher’s responsibility to inspire students to try to risk initiating the new. Here the teacher’s role is central, since it is difficult to expect the very students who are experiencing the fraught dynamics of a direct confrontation to step back and recognize the ways in which the encounter with (an)other is always in some sense a new beginning, even if it is saturated with deeply sedimented cultural memories. By the same token, what is difficult for other students is the realization of the ways in which they are belated and seem only too recognizable to their peers.

A better strategy would be for the teacher to draw attention to the disjunctures experienced by the students, and to make these the focus of attention: How is it that some of us experience our social positions as universal, while others are put in Fanon’s position and marked out as a particular kind of person? How do these different degrees of awareness of our social positioning shape the way we relate to the world and to one another? What kinds of responsibilities do we bear by virtue of our social positioning? And what kinds of freedoms do we have in relation to this social positioning?³⁷ What might it mean to live authentically in a Sartrean sense, aware of the both the limits and the freedoms of our situation? Questions like these encourage students to think about the ways in which those who are different from them experience the world, and about ways in which their social positioning shapes that of others. In this way, the relational aspects of social positioning are brought to the fore. The possibility of bringing about new relations and new social realities begins with these kinds of realizations and recognitions.

Like other aspects of teaching, assuming this degree of responsibility requires tremendous patience on the part of the teacher, for these encounters are incessant; as long as new generations are born, they will be necessary.

This means that teaching for social transformation requires a constantly renewed effort on the part of teachers. Since newcomers are constantly born, and in need of introduction to the world, our work as teachers reflects and indeed is

paradigmatic of Bhabha's conception of the "time-lag." As teachers, it is we who exist in the gap of time between past and future, and it is within this "small non-time-space in the very heart of time" that we are asked again and again to undertake the task of "preserving the new" with each generation, and with every child in each generation.³⁸

1. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 177. In keeping with my argument about what it means to learn to live in "the gap between past and future," I have decided not to alter Arendt's use of the generic male (although my need to draw attention to this decision underscores a certain discomfort). My concern is not merely with the integrity of her text, but with my reluctance to rewrite the past in the image of the present. Eliminating language which make us uncomfortable does little to help us understand the exclusions and erasures of the past. As a consequence, our motivations to transform contemporary exclusionary practices becomes less and less clear.

2. Frantz Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness," *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 112; 122.

3. Gloria Anzaldua, "Hacienda Caras, una Entrada," in *Making Face; Making Soul/ Hacienda Caras*, ed. Gloria Anzaldua (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1990), xix.

4. Homi Bhabha, "'Race,' Time and the Revision of Modernity," *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 250.

5. Anzaldua, "Hacienda Caras, una Entrada," xx.

6. See Arendt's "Preface: The Gap Between Past and Future," in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 13.

7. *Ibid.*, 10.

8. Arendt, "The Crisis in Education," in *Between Past and Future*, 189.

9. *Ibid.*, 177.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*, 193.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*, 174; 192.

14. *Ibid.*, 196.

15. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 176-77.

16. *Ibid.*, 178. The language here is significant. Arendtian actors want to show who and not merely what they are. In other words, this is an individuating language.

17. In *The Human Condition* Arendt writes that "it is more than likely that the 'who,' which appears so clearly and unmistakably to others, remains hidden from the person himself, like the *daimon* in Greek religion which accompanies each man throughout his life, always looking over his shoulder from behind and thus visible only to those he encounters" (179-180). It follows from this that the actor is not the best teller of the story of his or her life. Arendt's emphasis on the other's perception of who one is heightens the intersubjective dimension of her conception of political action.

18. See Melissa Orlie's "Forgiving Trespasses, Promising Futures," *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, ed. Bonnie Honig (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 341.

19. Herein lies the dichotomy of the pariah and the parvenu which I explore below. The pariah is aware of his/her "outside" status, and is thus in touch with reality, whereas the parvenu is susceptible to the loss of reality that follows from refusing to admit to his or her marginal or outsider status. However, only the *conscious* pariah is engaged in a project of self-fashioning that attends both to the fact of their social identity, and to the task of transforming the political meaning of this social positioning. Arendt explores the loss of reality to which the parvenu is susceptible in her biography of Rahel Varnhagen: *Rahel Varnhagen* (1958; reprint, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974). The last two chapters are particularly illuminating — "Between Pariah and Parvenu" and "One Does Not Escape Jewishness."

20. Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness," 109-14.
21. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 236-337.
22. Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness," 116.
23. *Ibid.*, 134.
24. I am indebted to Melissa Orlie for this idea of "interrupting" cycles of resentment by taking responsibility for "how we display the effects of what we appear to be." She explains: "We cannot altogether change what we are, nor the fact that in the course of living we trespass against others. But we can change the meaning and significance of what we are when we transmute its effects by challenging the patterns of social rule that multiply our trespasses... we become responsive to others' claims about our effects and when we show a willingness to transpose them, we may disrupt what are predicted to be and redirect the social necessities that flow from our inherited subject positions." See "Forgiving Trespasses, Promising Futures," 348.
25. My discussion of the social pariah, the parvenu, and the conscious pariah is indebted to Melissa Orlie's description of their configuration within contemporary conceptions of identity politics. See Orlie, "Forgiving Trespasses, Promising Futures," 345-46.
26. I derive this term from Melissa Orlie's discussion of the relationship between foreclosing identity and resentment. *Ibid.*, 344.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*, 345.
29. Arendt borrows this term from Bernard Lazare. See her essay, "The Jew as Pariah," in *The Jew as Pariah*, ed. Ron Feldman (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978).
30. Jean-Paul Sartre *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1948: reprint, New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 90.
31. *Ibid.*, 90-91.
32. From Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Cited in Bhabha, "'Race,' Time and the Revision of Modernity," 256.
33. Bhabha, "'Race,' Time and the Revision of Modernity," 238.
34. Arendt, "Preface: The Gap Between Past and Future," 13.
35. Arendt, "What is Authority?" in *Between Past and Future*, 94.
36. *Ibid.*
37. These last two questions are raised by Melissa Orlie, "Forgiving Trespasses, Promising Futures," 343-45.
38. Arendt, "Preface: The Gap Between Past and Future," 13.