

## What Is Called Ghostly?: A Mother's Story<sup>1</sup>

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The goal of this review of *Ethnography* #9 is not to till and plough its arguments in order to legitimate it as a rigorous work of academic inquiry, demanding it be admitted into the canon of the social sciences. There are more important gatekeepers and experts who can provide that critical examination. Instead, I read the text in order to see again and again, to encircle its insights, to think about questions of debt, ghosts, and, importantly, the question of reality itself, as they appear and reappear—as they proliferate.

Let me begin this encircling with a stingy Aunt, my Aunt from my father's side, my *bhua* in the United Kingdom. My father worked with her renovating houses. His labor, however, was not formalized since he was undocumented and, therefore, paid under the table—an informal economy made easier by kin relations. But he was not paid in cash, rather by check. There was, then, documentation of the informal exchange, of unsanctioned labor power sold for a wage. It was further documented, my dad realized, when he tried to move us (my mom, my brother, and I) to the United States. It turned out my Aunt had made copies of the checks and soon proclaimed they were loans, demanding the debt be repaid.

An architecture of finance would be different in Punjab in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century as distinctive bonds and social connections would exist to mediate the accusation—bonds not grounded in documentation, but the directives of the Khalsa.<sup>2</sup> A local form that, though quite distinct, is by no means, as Alan Klima points out in the case of Northern Thailand, less abstract. In England, however, the courts as a mechanism of control beckoned to speak truth about debt; so, my mom, with two kids in tow, returned to England while my dad remained in California—the problem of documentation arising once more.

To stay afloat, my mom sewed for a textile manufacturer who would bring cloth to her in his blue van. But it turns out that it is difficult to sew while taking care of a four- and three-year-old while also making numerous trips to the lawyer to discuss debt and other questions emerging from an abstracted money world. My mom, therefore, would work at night. A sensible and rational plan, but one that required she make sure we go to sleep on time. So she told us stories. She would lay the thick orange *raṣāī*, (blanket, I suppose, but that does not do its thickness justice) on the ground in the room she would work in. And, then, she would tell us about her own life and experiences in Punjab; the becoming of an early uncodified archive, an exchange in which a woman's memories are “seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched.”<sup>3</sup>

Though all the stories collapsed into each other as one account begat another as questions kept arising, classification was not a concern, I remember one story about my maternal Uncle, my *mama*, in Punjab. The story was not about him entirely, but about a place—all of which, as Klima explicates in *Ethnography* #9, cannot be so easily divided.

“Territory,” we learn, “is constantly relational, in motion and flux, and that includes the space within the body or even in the mind” (146).

Indeed, to revel in a separation would be an act of individuation, the wallowing in the senses by the ego—an ego cultivating attachments to a particular vision of the world, fastening itself to transitory shadows and the contour of a reality that appears in the silhouettes. It would be *haumai* (egoness), *abankar* (ego/pride), which would defy the “ultimate submission and sacrifice” required to meditate on *naam*, a center without shadows, without features and form.<sup>4</sup> And, yet, one remains bound, unable to yield to one’s longings, or, more precisely, because of the longings themselves; the body aches as Prabhsharanbir Singh has it.<sup>5</sup>

Working through her own thoughts and the body’s limits, (one does get tired sewing and raising children in what is both “a shared body” and “armrest”),<sup>6</sup> my mother remembered a story about my *mama*’s pride and the attendant prayers that followed its downfall. My *mama* doubted a sacred site in their village; he was, one could say, being sensible. If there really is something to Gurdwara Baba Bhagtu Ji, as everyone proclaims, my uncle quipped to my mom early in the morning as they went to the wheat field, then something should happen to me today. Everyone has just created this *pakeband*, this social fiction. But, if something happens, he continued, then I will then have trust, he further mocked. “Prove it, prove it” (90). His doubt demanded proof much like Uncle Chai in *Ethnography* #9—a doubt now itself functioning as an unanchored referent, a citation, grafted outside Uncle Chai’s own constraints, once again.<sup>7</sup>

This is not the kind of doubt that is also marked by sincerity. One could say that doubt would be a position of *nimrata*—one’s own uncertainty that refuses to be enfolded into ordinary life, a doubt that refuses adjudication, remaining uncountable.<sup>8</sup> Instead, my uncle’s doubt about the power of the gurdwara, which is, recall, irreducible to that space, was directed outward toward a sensible reality. It was, to continue with doubt, an attempt to translate social reality through rational deliberation in order to eliminate “obstacles inherited from the past” now reduced to ideology.<sup>9</sup>

This doubt then sought to confirm the so-called real. He did not doubt, for example, that the temple actually existed physically. Rather the doubt sought to determine if other aspects of the temple, the ones that appeared to him as the more fantastic features in relation to physical structure, were observable fact, to see if one could account for them. My Uncle, let us say, was being inclusive, looking to admit the temple into reality. In his inclusivity, the ostensible goal was to proclaim dominion over all aspects of reality and, therefore, the temple.

My Uncle and Mom returned home right before the afternoon and waited for my grandmother to finish cooking. And the police appeared and arrested my Uncle. He had been accused of attacking someone in the village—someone who (it eventually came out) had fallen while intoxicated, injuring himself. Facing the shame of his drunkenness, he said some village boys had attacked him. The police beat my Uncle while interrogating him, adjudicating between cause and effect though my Uncle was eventually released once the

matter, the police thought, became clearer—a matter of contingency and error that still bargained with reality. The goal of the police, too, after all, is to cut the world, render sensible. “Move along! There is nothing to see here!”<sup>10</sup>

But it might not be about finding something. After his beating, my Uncle then went and paid his obeisance; prayed for forgiveness. His thoughts and expressions, it had turned out, extended far beyond small talk between siblings as cause and effect refused easy adjudication (55). The policing of the sensible was not a simple mistake either. Instead the accounts did not add up. Even though there was no real observable fact that would satisfy the evidentiary regime of the social sciences, except for self-assured claims of contingency, my Uncle could only pray at that moment, a different doubt, rather than certainty, creeps in. There was an intervention upon causality, upon the visible, and, to return to my *mama's* words, what was sayable.

The halting and hesitant nature of my mom's voice as she remembered is lost, but also loosened here and then too as detours repeated themselves.<sup>11</sup> What is of note is not the everyday life of my mom and her recounting, her own rewriting, but the spirits themselves which emanate from and give way to each other. My Aunt from my mom's side's mother-in-law too had promised an exchange at the Gurdwara, a gift that, when ignored, ostracized, created a great disturbance, as spirits “entered” my Aunt. Entered is not the best term, to repeat, maintaining certain distinctions about body and mind (154). Instead, hundreds of horses haunted my Aunt, interrupting the sequence of life, and she continually fell underneath the horde, crushed under their weight. These shadows stopped their replay only when the promised exchange and prayers occurred in excess to the very promise.

Such spirits are, as Klima explains, admissible into the canon the social sciences attempt to produce about peoples, geographies, and traditions. Just consider, for example, my own narration of the stories, placing them with my mother and in a real context though a partial one. This is, Klima writes, the ontological turn's main disciplinary effect: “to admit previously unacceptable entities into anthropology” (16). We could then “expand the conquest of the unknown by the known, or increase the precision of our apprehension of it” (30). A conquest predicated on the collection of information, a fine-tuned gathering of the granular in the everyday and given an epistemic place. Once rendered as mere information, such stories can then reveal, to give an example, the capaciousness of a tradition lost when we focus on a normative register and on how the lost stories continue to “haunt” the present. The social sciences are, if anything, inclusive.

This penetrating welcoming insight could historicize the stories and, therefore, separate history from the story. “When history separated itself from story,” as Trinh T. Minh-ha writes, “it started indulging in accumulation and fact” as the Past lay waiting to be revealed, to be explained, to be conquered.<sup>12</sup> As an “an administrative and inquisitorial act,”<sup>13</sup> historicization of the stories could reveal the effects of colonialism and transformation of kin relation or the resistance to colonial desire for a reified enumerated religious identity—questions of constraint and freedom.<sup>14</sup> The stories could also signal the existence of the wrong type of ghosts, ghosts that require exorcism, to authenticate a correct world as

wonder dissipates. Or, similarly, the ghosts could require recognition; cultural difference beckons. We could, if we were feeling frisky and transnational in our curiosity, link the stories to migration and questions of nostalgia for a regionally defined culture, necessarily heterogeneous.

Such exploration is conquest, as Ranajit Guha teaches us; we know where the “there” is—an “imperial ‘there’” even if we call it “indigenous” for our own satisfaction.<sup>15</sup> In such curiosity for discovery, the essential purpose would be to find the right concepts to provide a representational truth of what is a social or colonial or economic construct. The child is no longer listening to the stories, but pointing “at the uncharted regions on a map to say, ‘When I grow up I will go there’” with an “aura of providentiality”<sup>16</sup> even though, lest we forget, as Hortense Spillers rightly argues, “‘Geography’ is not a divine gift” but, instead, simply an “alternative reading of ego,” more *haumai*.<sup>17</sup>

Reality discerned by a serious social scientist who collects facts on the ground arbitrates, to continue with our example, the truth of a tradition and its difference. Yet this truth is not so easily mapped. It remains elusive and creates an endless delirium as each individual act constitutes a new fact to decipher.<sup>18</sup> Interpretation, then, as Talal Asad writes, “feeds on uncertainty, and uncertainty on interpretation. Suspicion avoids coming to a conclusion.”<sup>19</sup> It is this suspicion, marked by a seriousness about what reality really is, that produces a certain endless and porous quality to reality while reifying reality even further. The social sciences signify the real, but there is no final arbitration, (except for, I suppose, reviewers and reviews).

Here, the enterprising specter comes to capture the very indeterminacy that drives interpretation as *Ethnography #9* highlights vividly. To take another example, in his recent book on the anti-colonial revolutionary Bhagat Singh, Chris Moffat writes about how his work is animated by the possibility that the anti-colonial dead remain demanding interlocutors for the living. And, yet, Moffat assures us, “such an agenda does not require the reader to accept that ghosts or revenants actually ‘exist’” since the key is to consider how the anti-colonial dead are entities to which something is owed rather than actual ghosts.<sup>20</sup> Bhagat Singh thus becomes a creditor as we sink further into a real and believable debt. Though unreal, in their trust, these ghosts have convictions. But not so fast. Ghosts exceed, as Jean Langford writes, “the shape of stories told about them precisely because they do not speak on law’s terms, on history’s terms, or even on anthropology’s terms.”<sup>21</sup>

*“Derrida said we must speak with specters. And others tell us these specters are not seriously real of course. Of course not. Don’t worry. You can read on. Derrida is not doing anything freaky” (30).*

The specter in such writing indebted to ghosts, like Moffat’s, as *Ethnography #9* states, “serves the purposes of a concept that captures indeterminacy and a certain inadequacy”—the inadequacy of modernity and historicist conceptions of time, for example. It is then a tropological spectral writing that “takes metaphors from the spirit world to, as it were, complete its thoughts about what exceed its grasp” (26). It is an inherent transgression within the social sciences that functions much like the obsessive who makes an impossibility

the very object of their desire, producing its own satisfaction.<sup>22</sup> But, as Asad asks, “Is every action, every event, every thing a sign?”<sup>23</sup> Are ghosts simply signs to be interpreted or that which signals the impossibility of our interpretation? Do ghosts simply refine reality? There might be, instead, no need to conclude, which means that there is no need “to convince you that I made sense.”<sup>24</sup> Convincing itself, to turn to etymology, is to conquer, to overcome; it is to produce a conviction.

Against this arrest, looking more awry, as Klima compels us to do, through a gothic ethnography in the vein of *Ethnography #9* can teach us something different. The question concerns writing. Does writing only supplement, repair, the relation to the sign in its interpretation or, importantly, non-interpretation? For Michel de Certeau, in the primal scene of ethnology, this is precisely what occurred in the scriptural tomb that enclosed imperishable truths, making words into objects.<sup>25</sup> And yet in *Ethnography #9* the central problem is not that scholars do not recognize these problems; they recognize them all too well. But even in this recognition, perhaps because of recognition itself, the form of writing remains unchanged. It remains to signify the real.

But one wonders: where is that knowledge of real and not real, presence and absence, especially for those who do not ask these questions?

One can be carried away by the stories, settings, and characters, the sound and sight, but at the same time, “deep down” (in an excavatable space?), we know it is not real. Dig that up. Where is that knowledge? Is it there as you watch? If you do not ask this question, is it there? If you do happen to call it up, from where? And if you call it up, still — where is it? Can you know, sense this? .... By what means do you know that you know? Where is it, what is it, how is it? (152)

The radical turn then is how one questions the source of perception itself in order to direct toward a different point.

Though insufficiently illuminated, the light in the room where my mom would spend the night sewing refracted not only ghosts and her past as an inheritance spilled into the room, but also hit upon her anger, a call for justice. Questions of exchange are also inseparable from questions of justice though who owes whom I am not sure. At the lawyer's office, against the protocols of evidence and context, my mom implored that my *bhua* take an oath at the Gurdwara that the checks she gave my father were loans--a point at which one becomes “unreasonable” or “belligerent” since one's demands exceeds the accounting and legal records;<sup>26</sup> an incorrect question has already been asked.<sup>27</sup>

Admissibility to institutions bracketed, these demands merged with the stories she told us as the possibility of justice to come animated the explanations, digressions, and phantasms. This call for justice was, banally, what is, while also contaminated by that which is not, *maya* and the debts it produces. We must wait, my mom would tell us, we must have patience, *sabr*. My mom's waiting with the stories and spirits can appear fantastic, though not entirely now, generated and enlightened as they are through her speech and my writing.

But even when taken as what is, as Klima points out, “unlike in social science, in real life there is no patrol to enforce the barrier between the living and the dead, no way to keep all of them out, and there are far too many around to expel” (66). Though there is no patrol for these innumerable spirits, there are chains of authorization and legitimation. There are ethical relations prescribed and built with the spirits.<sup>28</sup> Working within these dehiscent forms of authorization that teach how to inhabit an unreal world, the very questions and concerns of the social sciences and, perhaps, even ethnography appear askew.

To expand further, more inclusivity, a spirit world is not simply there to consider historical indeterminacy and appropriate political possibilities that coincide neatly with academic desires. And neither is it strictly located within individual relations since being-with ghosts is “not only a politics of memory, inheritance, and generations and cannot be reduced to that” (20). Specters exceed such placement, the very there-ness of there. *Ethnography #9* reminds us of the imperial ‘there,’ of our attachments and how those desires mediate our worlds including the one that appears most real. To play on words, desire is where the subject counts itself, making the subject present in its transactions and dissolutions as payment looms.<sup>29</sup> And, in this counting, today, let us recall, “The numbers are always winning,” as Gil Anidjar tells us.<sup>30</sup>

My mom’s anger and her want for retribution necessarily attach her to this reality, to winners and losers. Anger further binds to the self that then produces the shadows that both chase and are chasen. My mom understood this and she would tell my brother and I that one should control *kam* (lust), *kerodh* (wrath), *lobh* (greed), *mob* (attachment) and *abankar* (ego/pride) as a tradition unfolded, too, from her stories.<sup>31</sup> To appropriate Klima’s writing, there is a recognition that the local world one is in is not “an ideal world, and almost everyone involved can, if called upon, apply a moral code to the entire situation that would pointedly separate ‘good’ from the ‘bad’” (120).

Such contradictions refuse to be organized into a consistent unity even though narcissistic identifications, such as with the nation or even one’s self, promise otherwise. “The human-that-we-are,” Fernand Deligny poignantly writes, is “presumed to be the end goal” as we continue to demand others join us in our orderly arrangements; the ego’s alternative reflection of itself in a hall of mirrors.<sup>32</sup> Yet schizophrenic dissolution tied to deterritorialization, more desirable to scholarly sensibilities, too, offers its own difficulties. Even while celebrating deterritorialization, Deleuze and Guattari, as *Ethnography #9* reminds us, “issue warnings about caution, patience, and slow, deliberate exploration of the openings and becomings rendered possible by this deterritorialization” (70).<sup>33</sup>

The goal then remains how to work through these shadows with *sabr* and discipline, the right conduct, which my mom prescribed even while the prescriptions themselves gave way. As my brother and I waited with my mom, anger coincided with meditation on *naam* as we learned to inhabit the world and other worlds, to think of attachment and *maya*, while lying down on what remained, even with the *raẓāi* and its thickness, even with the not-so fantastic stories, a hard, unescapable, and, possibly, unjust ground.

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Omnia El Shakry, Zunaira Komal, and Muneza Rizvi for reading previous versions of this essay. And, on an oppositional note, I would like to thank my mother who never quite understands what I am writing.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see Purnima Dhavan, *When Sparrows Became Hawks: The Making of the Sikh Warrior Tradition, 1699-1799* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 129. Such questions would be mediated not by a centralized state, but local forms in a “decentralized mode of authority.” Though Dhavan locates this decentralization as a failure “to establish a unified state,” it could be a radically different mode of governance altogether not tied to questions of center. (129).

<sup>3</sup> Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 121.

<sup>4</sup> Balbinder S. Bhogal, “Ghostly Disorientations Translating the Adi Granth as the Guru Granth,” *Sikh Formations* 3 no. 1 (2007): 26.

<sup>5</sup> Prabhsharanbir Singh, “Auseinandersetzung, Colonialism and Heidegger’s Oblivion of Other Beginnings,” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 51 no. 2 (2019): 183. To put in conversation with another tradition, as Stefania Pandolfo writes, “The passions and faculties of the soul in its bodily existence are at once an obstacle and the necessary ground, the stage, so to speak, of the life of the soul.” See Stefania Pandolfo, *Knot of the Soul: Madness, Psychoanalysis, Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 238.

<sup>6</sup> As we learn, “Nor is it a given that ‘you’ simply inhabit your body; instead ‘you’ share your body, just like an armrest, with several other forces, emotions, thoughts, perceptions, vibrations, intensities, attractions, and repulsions (146). Klima, *Ethnography* #9.

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context” in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 320.

<sup>8</sup> Spirits are related to this type of doubt. In *Hanging Without a Rope*, Mary Steedly argues “spirits provoke a way of reading narrative experience against the grain of credibility: as uncertain, duplicitous, always open to revision, *bottomless*” (15). There are, however, dangers in tying spirits to indeterminacy as I discuss below. For more, see Mary Steedly, *Hanging without a Rope: Narrative Experience in Colonial and Postcolonial Karoland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> Talal Asad, *Secular Translations: Nation-State, Modern Self, and Calculative Reason* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 3. Or, as Asad wrote recently about his mother, “I began to see that, like so many non-intellectuals, her religious practices were embodied, and that her embodied religion did not offer itself to hermeneutic methods—to the deciphering by observers of the real meaning of what she did—although it obviously ‘meant’ much to her” (4). See Talal Asad, Jonathan Boyarin, Nadia Fakil, Hussein Ali Agrama, Donovan O. Schaefer, and Ananda Abeysekara. “Portrait”, *Religion and Society* 11, 1 (2020): 1-29.

<sup>10</sup> Jacques Rancière, Davide Panagia, and Rachel Bowlby. “Ten Theses on Politics.” *Theory & Event* 5, no. 3 (2001) doi:10.1353/tae.2001.0028.

<sup>11</sup> “You can’t rush a story. You have to go back, repeat, detour, and go back again,” (204). See Steedly, *Hanging Without A Rope*.

<sup>12</sup> Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, 119. This refusal of information creates amplitude rather than delirium. Or, as Walter Benjamin writes “it is half the art of storytelling to keep a story free from explanation as one reproduces it” (89). See Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt and trans. Harry Zohn, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc, 1968).

<sup>13</sup> As Prathama Banerjee argues, the very “act of historicization, an administrative and inquisitorial act,” placed the Santhal hul into chronology, creating a measurable event that could be deemed it historical (20). Prathama Banerjee, *Politics of Time: 'Primitives' and History-writing in a Colonial Society* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006). That is, conquest is not enough, as Ranajit Guha contends, but requires symbolic mediation to be made into law. These signs, Guha writes, “act in each instance as carriers of agreed meanings which bring the past to bear on a present collapsed into the future (88). See Ranajit Guha, “A Conquest Foretold,” *Social Text* no. 54 (1998): 85-99.

<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Povinelli, *Empire of Love: Toward A Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> Guha, “A Conquest Foretold,” 92.

<sup>16</sup> Guha, “A Conquest Foretold,” 92-93.

<sup>17</sup> Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (Summer, 1987): 70. Spillers writes: “Quite to the contrary, its boundaries were shifted during the European "Age of Conquest" in giddy desperation, according to the dictates of conquering armies, the edicts of prelates, the peculiar myopia of the medieval Christian mind. Looking for the "Nile River," for example, according to the fifteenth-century Portuguese notion, is someone's joke. For all that the pre- Columbian "explorers" knew about the sciences of navigation and geography, we are surprised that more parties of them did not end up "discovering" Europe. Perhaps, from a certain angle, that is precisely all that they found - an alternative reading of ego.”

<sup>18</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1987), 36.

<sup>19</sup> Asad, *Secular Translations*, 120.

<sup>20</sup> Chris Moffat, *India's Revolutionary Inheritance: Politics and the Promise of Bbagat Singh* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 4-5. I mention this not to denigrate Moffat’s otherwise worthwhile book, but to highlight how the specter functions to capture indeterminacy.

<sup>21</sup> Jean M. Langford, *Consoling Ghosts: Stories of Medicine and Mourning from Southeast Asians in Exile* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 211. And, yet, Langford notes, “Ghosts for these emigrants are not simply stand-ins for violated corpses of political citizens or for unremembered victims of violence, but rather the material traces of dead who insist on active relations with the living” (210). The question is, however, how does one write about these relations.

<sup>22</sup> For inherent transgression, see Slavoj Žižek, “The Inherent Transgression,” *Cultural Values* 2, no. 1 (1998): 1-17. For impossibility and obsessive, see Jacques Lacan, “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire” in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 698 and Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VI Desire and Its Interpretation*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink. (Medford, MA: Polity, 2019), 295 and 428.

<sup>23</sup> Asad, *Secular Translations*, 120.

<sup>24</sup> Talal Asad, “Thinking about Religion through Wittgenstein,” YouTube Video, 1:51, posted by Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR), June 15, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kchl65zxIE>

<sup>25</sup> de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 212.

<sup>26</sup> Povinelli, *Empire of Love*, 56.

<sup>27</sup> Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, 149.

<sup>28</sup> Here I follow Gayatri Spivak who, in her critique of Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*, writes “the ethical is not a problem of knowledge but a problem of relation” (70). See Gayatri Spivak, “Ghostwriting,” *diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 65-84.

<sup>29</sup> Lacan, *Desire and Its Interpretation*, 409.

<sup>30</sup> Gil Anidjar, “Ghosts Count,” in *Milestones: Commentary on the Islamic World*.

<sup>31</sup> In other words, motherhood remains central to the unfolding of tradition even with the violence of capitalism and colonial rule. As Marika Rose explains, “With the separation of productive and reproductive labour which characterizes the advent of modernity comes the relegation – never complete and always contested – of both spirituality and child-rearing to the private sphere, placing both churches and universities at a difficult intersection of public and private life, in the sphere of ‘civil society.’ Even with this institutional separation and the reconstitution of motherhood, in which, Omnia El Shakry writes about colonial Egypt, “mothers came to be responsible for the physical, moral, and intellectual development of children within the nexus of a nascent nationalist discourse, in the colony, this is not entire story since understandings of



motherhood were not “merely parasitic upon colonial or European discourses.” (128-129). See Marika Rose, “The Violence of Care: on Genealogy and Social Reproduction Essays” *Political Theology Network*, May 7, 2020, <https://politicaltheology.com/the-violence-of-care> and Omnia El Shakry, “Schooled Mothers and Structured Play: Child Rearing in Turn-of-the-Century Egypt,” in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, ed. by Lila Abu-Lughod (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1998), 126-170.

<sup>32</sup> Fernand Deligny, *The Arachnean and Other Texts*, trans. by Drew S. Burk (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 221.

<sup>33</sup> One could recall, for example, how “extreme trajectories” can take hold within openings and becomings. See, for example, Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 65-66.