Instruments of Power:
How Emotions Contribute to Oppression

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Abstract

In analytic philosophy, discussion of oppression has focused on its definition. However, whilst definitional approaches are valuable as a means of achieving conceptual clarity, they tend to underplay a key aspect of oppression: its embodied, emotional dimension. If we attend to the descriptions of oppression offered in narratives and first-personal accounts, by the oppressed, the centrality of emotions comes to the fore.

In this thesis I argue that attending to the role of emotions is crucial to producing an explanatorily rich account of racial and gender oppression. In contrast to those philosophical models that conceive of emotions as primarily episodic, disruptive and short-lived, I argue that we need to think of emotions as long-lived "patterns" (Goldie, 2012) or "attunements" (Bartky, 1990). Only by doing so can we properly explain their role in oppression. Moreover, attending to the *relational* aspect of emotions (Ahmed, 2004) allows us to account for the ways structures of power operate. Not only are some emotional phenomena partly shaped by oppressive structures, they also play an instrumental role in sustaining and reinforcing them. I contend that, by conceptualising emotions as mechanisms for reproducing structures of power, we can shed light on individuals' complicity and participation in oppression. By showing how oppressors have an emotional investment in structures of oppression, and how emotions "can attach us to the very conditions of our subordination" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 12), we can identify one of the reasons of the pervasiveness of oppression.

For my mother and in memory of my father.

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Introduction

To illustrate the philosophical impetus motivating this thesis, I'll start with a story. Benjamin Britten's opera, *Billy Budd* (1960)*,* based on the novel by Herman Melville, depicts the classical theme of the vulnerability of the powerless, impotent against the cruel caprices of the powerful. It tells the tragic story of Billy Budd, a sailor who, by virtue of his charisma, goodness and innocence, evokes the figure of Christ[1] and becomes a scapegoat. Despite his stammer, Billy Budd is recruited to *HMS Indomitable*. He stands out among the other recruits, so much so that the Master-at-Arms, John Claggart, describes him as "A find in a thousand (...) / A beauty. A jewel/ The pearl of great price." Exultant for being made Foretopman, Billy shouts seawards to his old ship, *Rights O' Man*:

> Farewell to you, old comrades!
> Farewell to you for ever.
> Farewell, Rights o' Man.
> Farewell, old Rights o' Man.
> Farewell to you for ever,
> old Rights o' Man

Billy's rejoicing arouses the distrust of the Master-at-Arms, who wrongly suspects him of supporting of the ideals of the French Revolution. Nevertheless, his character soon wins him the love of his other shipmates, including Vere, Captain of the *Indomitable*. But his popularity feeds Claggart's envy and hatred. Billy represents everything Claggart cannot have: "beauty", "handsomeness", and "goodness". In Billy's light, Claggart sees his own "darkness" negatively reflected:

> O beauty, o handsomeness, goodness!
> Would that I never encountered you!
> Would that I lived in my own world always,
> in that depravity to which I was born.

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[1] Thanks to Eleonora Buono for this observation.

Claggart's destructive motivations are rooted in his erotic desire for Billy. He hates Billy even more *because* he loves him and yet cannot possess him:

> O beauty, o handsomeness, goodness!
> You surely in my power tonight.
> Nothing can defend you.
> Nothing! So may it be!
> **For what hope remains if love can escape?**
> **If love still lives and grows strong where I cannot enter,**
> what hope is there in my own dark world for me?
> No! I cannot believe it! That were torment to keen.
> I, John Claggart,
> Master-at-Arms upon the "Indomitable",
> have you in my power, and I will destroy you.

To destroy Billy, Claggart falsely accuses him of plotting mutiny. Vere, however, knows that Billy is innocent, and is not fooled by Claggart's motivations:

> Claggart, John Claggart, beware!
> I'm not so easily deceived.
> The boy whom you would destroy, he is good;
> you are evil. You have reckoned without me.
> **I have studied men and their ways.**
> The mists are vanishing – and you shall fail!

But when pressed by Captain Vere to respond to Claggart's accusation, Billy stammers. Unable to defend himself, he strikes Claggart and kills him. Despite knowing that Billy was set up, Vere is forced to denounce his crime, and sentences Billy to death by hanging.

Like any great work of art, this opera, with its undertones of Greek tragedy, admits of multiple readings. But I would like to interpret it here as revealing the way in which, by attending only to the letter of the Law and glossing over the motivations underlying relations of power, we fail to understand the harms of oppression. Although he has "studied men and their ways", Vere is impotent in the face of an implacable

martial law. If only Claggart's hostile passions, and his use of the Law to conceal them, could be laid bare for all to see, perhaps Billy would not have suffered such a tragic fate.

Studying "men and their ways" was, up to not so long ago, an integral part of political philosophy. As Susan James argues, "it was until quite recently taken for granted that political philosophy and psychology are intimately connected, and that political philosophy needs to be grounded on an understanding of human passion" (James, 2003, p. 222). Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature,* and Rousseau's *Social Contract*, which aims to "take men as they are and laws as they might be" (Rousseau, as cited in James, 2003, p. 222) are clear examples of this approach. This contrasts with the current situation in contemporary analytic political philosophy. Despite a recent renewal of interest in the emotions (James, 2003, p. 221), the latter remain marginal to much mainstream political theorizing.

James analyses some of the main reasons for the current tendency to dismiss human passions, and offers arguments in favour of giving them a more central role. Against the thought that we can rely on our common understanding of emotions without making them explicit, she objects that this understanding may be less common than is assumed: "one theorist's common sense is another theorist's fantasy" (James, 2003, p. 225). Furthermore, even granting that there may be shared understandings of the emotional dispositions at work in political life, this is not a sufficiently good reason for neglecting them: "it may be informative to make them explicit" (James, 2003, p. 225).

Considering emotions can help us assess the realizability of a political theory, James suggests. We need to explore the psychological capacities that an ideal theory such as Rawls's *Theory of Justice* presupposes.

> By examining the emotional dispositions that a theory requires of
> citizens or subsets of citizens, we can build up a picture of the psychic

demands it contains, and acquire a richer understanding of what it would take to realize it. (James, 2003, p. 232)

Analysing the psychological capacities demanded by a theory forces us to attend to its "psychic realizability". (James, 2003, p.232)

The work I present here supports James's general view that political philosophy would be enriched by giving greater attention to the role that emotions play in our political lives. However, rather than discussing the realizability of ideal theories of justice, my analysis is more directly concerned with what needs to be done "upstream". Rather than exploring what our emotional dispositions *should be* in the ideal conditions imagined by some political theorists, I ask what they *are* under conditions of oppression.

In this respect, my analysis is concerned with what Jonathan Wolff calls "real-world political philosophy", which takes as a starting point

the claim, not that some state of affairs would be good (according to the best theory) but rather that some aspects of the world as presently experienced are problematic, perhaps to a very high degree, in that they grossly restrict the possibility for real people here and now to lead flourishing human lives. (Wolff, 2019, p. 18)

In a recent paper, "Equality and Hierarchy" (2019), Wolff argues that real-world political philosophy is in a better position than ideal theory to understand group-hierarchy and address the measures needed to mitigate its harms. Wolff claims that political philosophy should "start from where we are; consider people psychologically as they are" (Wolff, 2019, p. 17). While I sympathize with this claim, I find that Wolff's approach, as sketched in his paper, is not up to the task. Wolff advocates the need for political realism, and yet, when characterizing the harms of group hierarchy, or when sketching out "fundamental human needs", his discussion remains highly abstract. It does not seem to deal more closely with the "real world" than the liberal philosophers whose approach he

criticises. For example, as a way of exploring "something in the human psyche that has not been addressed" in liberal political philosophy, Wolff argues that the liberal egalitarian should feel challenged by Simone Weil's claim that "hierarchy is a 'need of the soul'" (Wolff, 2019, p. 19). But, regardless of whether Weil's view is true or not, it is unclear *why* the liberal egalitarian should take it as a serious challenge. While Wolff regards Weil's claim as particularly insightful, he fails to clarify the grounds of her diagnosis, or consider where its validity lies. Without wanting to belittle the merits of Weil's understanding of human psychological needs, her view seems to rely on speculation rather than on the real-world evidence that political realism calls for. More problematically still, Wolff's argument seems to presuppose that the fundamental human needs of the soul stand apart from socio-political structures, as if what Weil describes as the need for order and hierarchy was not fashioned in part by structures of power. Like Weil's, Wolff's discussion of the needs of the soul seems unduly ahistorical and depoliticized.

I agree with Wolff that political philosophy should explore human motivation and psychology by studying real group hierarchies. However, rather than speculating about the needs of the "human soul", I contend that such an exploration should focus on our emotional dispositions. In this thesis I examine some of the emotional dispositions that are integral to oppression, taking as a starting point the testimonies of oppressed people themselves. On the basis of these testimonies, I contend that oppression has distinctive emotional features and that, if we are to understand it, we need to take them into account. My approach contrasts with those taken in a number of recent analytic studies, where the emotional features of oppression are largely overlooked. By focusing on them, I argue, we can arrive at a richer explanatory account of what oppression is and how it harms us.

More precisely, I claim that attending to emotions allows us to give an explanatory account of how oppression "works", in a triple sense:

1. Attending to the emotional dimensions of oppression enables us to explain how structures of power partly shape the affective characters of the oppressed and their oppressors. I develop this claim by establishing that certain **patterns of emotion are non-accidentally connected with structures of oppression and privilege**.

2. **Emotions play an instrumental role** in the ways oppression is enforced and sustained over time. Attending to the emotional components of oppression and privilege helps us to explain why oppression continues.

3. Attending to the emotional aspects of oppression gives us a better grasp **the harms of oppression,** in a way that abstract notions of "injustice", "imbalance of power" or "inequality" do not. In other words, if we want to understand what oppression *is*, we should pay attention to what oppression *does*. The narrative testimonies of oppressed people reveal that what oppression *does* has a powerful emotional dimension.

Although I claim that emotions tend to be neglected in contemporary analytic discussions of oppression, some of them do of course take these psychological elements into account. Such is the case of Ann Cudd, who aims to offer a "univocal theory of oppression" (Cudd, 2006). However, although Cudd discusses the psychological harm done by oppression, and considers how oppression is reinforced by these very harms, she nevertheless tends to privilege cognitive aspects of oppression over emotional ones. Emotional phenomena are mainly considered as derivatives of cognitive states, above all of beliefs. The relationship between *beliefs* and *emotions* is enormously complex, and lies beyond the scope of this investigation. My discussion of emotions takes it for

granted that emotions have a cognitive element, although not in the strong sense required by many cognitive theories of emotions (Nussbaum, 2001; Solomon, 1993). Rather than exploring the relation between cognition and emotion, my aim is to focus on a different relationship, to which Cudd gives relatively little attention, namely the relationship between feeling and embodiment.

Cudd also rejects the psychoanalytic tradition as a source of valid insights into the psychological aspects of oppression, on the grounds that it lacks empirical corroboration and relies on "dubious assumptions" (Cudd, 2006, pp. 58–59). Instead, she grounds her theory on the findings of cognitive psychology. A detailed discussion of the epistemological questions around psychoanalysis is also beyond the scope of my thesis. However, I do not think Cudd's arguments against psychoanalytic explanations are convincing, and I find some psychoanalytic insights compelling. In discussing the emotional aspects of oppression, I therefore draw on philosophical literature that is indebted to psychoanalytic theory.

Before I summarise the contents of each chapter, three final remarks about the use I make of the notion of "emotion" and about the scope of this thesis are in order.

As the title of my thesis indicates, I aim to show "how emotions contribute to oppression". In so doing, I am not interested in a narrow understanding of "emotion", as a concept that has sometimes been distinguished from other notions such as "feelings", "affect", or "sentiment". Nor am I interested in offering a new typology in order to define "emotion". First of all, this would be an extremely complex endeavour surpassing the scope of this work. The different ways in which emotions are conceptualised is the outcome of a long process of evolution. Notions such as "passion", "affect", "feeling", "affection", "sentiment", and "emotion" do not have univocal meanings. They have often been used interchangeably across different periods and carry their

history with them. For many centuries, philosophers have attempted to organise emotions into diverse hierarchical typologies that answer to their particular problems and presuppositions (James, 1997, p.4). This suggests that, whether neatly distinguished or not, what we call emotion, feeling, passion or affect, are not natural kinds. Since they are historically and culturally constituted concepts, we do not possess a ready-made, easily applicable template allowing us to differentiate them.

Alongside this general warning, my main reason for not explicitly distinguishing emotion, feeling, affect, etc. is more directly tied to the problem that I aim to explain. As will become clear as I develop my argument, what I find in narrative accounts of oppression is that the emotional phenomena with which I am concerned cannot easily be divided into these different categories. Rather, as I shall go on to contend in chapter 3, what I describe as "emotions" or "emotional phenomena" are internally complex and temporally extended. Moreover, their manifestations can take multiple forms. For example, as I'll discuss in chapter 4, bodily feelings are sometimes more salient than the cognitive or evaluative components of what is felt – as, for example, when one feels discomfort, inadequacy, or a confused sense of being out of place, but does not consciously acknowledge these feelings, or have a clear idea of their aetiology. In other cases, both the cognitive component and the bodily feelings may be felt as part of a unitary emotional phenomenon. At a superficial level it may seem that, by drawing sharp distinctions between feeling, affect, emotion, mood, etc., we gain more clarity. However, as I contend, there is a greater danger that we actually lose some of the elements that allow us to throw light into the complex ways in which structures of oppression and affective phenomena are interconnected.

I will therefore use the term "emotions" in a pluralistic sense, as a placeholder for a wide range of affective phenomena, which encompasses unconscious embodied habits, and both conscious and unconscious

feelings and sensations, which in some cases are cognitively and evaluatively rich, and in other cases may be less so. Similarly, I will sometimes use "feelings" and "emotions" as synonyms (as in "feelings of shame and guilt"), and "affective" and "emotional" as synonymous adjectives (as in "affective phenomena" or "emotional phenomena"). By using "emotions" in a broad sense to include a wide range of affective manifestations I aim to highlight the unitary form of the phenomena with which I am concerned.

Due to constraints of time and space, my analysis focuses on two long-lasting forms of domination, gender and racial oppression and privilege. To a lesser degree, I consider how other structures of domination, such as class and sexuality, inflect the ways in which oppression is emotionally "constituted". However, other forms of oppression that I do not consider clearly cry out for analysis, and two particularly deserve to be mentioned. I do not examine the case of antisemitic oppression. Although antisemitism may count in many ways as a form of racism, and although some of the emotional harms[2] it produces are similar to those I discuss in the case of anti-Black racism[3], I consider antisemitism to be a form of oppression with its own distinctive features and complex historical roots. This thesis does not attempt to examine it. Nor do I deal with transphobia, the form of oppression suffered by transgender women and men. While transgender people suffer from the kinds of racial and gender oppression that I do examine, transphobia is a further and irreducible form of harm. Again, I do not discuss it.

Summary of the Argument

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[2] As narrative testimonies from survivors of Nazi Concentration Camps during World War II show, such as Primo Levi's *If This is a Man* (1947) and *The Truce* (1965).
[3] For a historical discussion of the relationship between Jewish identity and whiteness, see (Gordon, 2016).

In **Chapter 1**, I discuss Sally Haslanger's (2012) account of oppression. I use Haslanger's account to exemplify the way oppression tends to be discussed in contemporary analytic philosophy and show the limitations of this kind of approach. I offer a preliminary defence of the importance of attending to emotions in our theories of oppression.

In **Chapter 2**, I present evidence for the main claims of my thesis through several narratives, which show how emotions play a central role in oppression. I defend the epistemic and normative value of these narrative testimonies for thinking oppression and defend the methodology of my thesis.

In **Chapter 3**, I clarify the conception of emotion on which I rely in order to show that oppression has distinctive emotional or affective features. I take issue with Gabrielle Taylor's (1985) account of shame, as an example of a common view of emotions which reduces them to discrete and short-lived episodes, and which I find insufficient for the purposes of this research. I argue that Bartky's (1990) notion of "emotional attunement" and Goldie's (2012) account of "emotional patterns" offer a more fruitful basis for understanding the connection between oppression and emotion. Moreover, against the individualistic framework of approaches such as Taylor's, I contend that Sara Ahmed's (2004a; 2004b) account of emotions as *relational* is better suited to understanding the entanglements between emotions and structures of power.

In **Chapter 4**, I explore the nature of the connection between emotions and oppression more deeply. After considering whether this link can be grasped by stipulating necessary and sufficient conditions, I reject this view. I argue that, by taking a bottom up approach based on the narratives discussed in Chapter 2, we can hypothesize that there is a *non-accidental connection* between certain patters of emotion and oppression. I discuss some difficult cases that seem to contradict this

claim and show how they provide further evidence that oppression has a significant emotional dimension.

Having mainly analysed the non-accidental emotional patterns of the oppressed, I move on to explore the emotional patterns non-accidentally connected to white privilege in **Chapter 5**. Drawing on the philosophical literature on *white ignorance,* and on Shannon Sullivan's (2005) analysis of the *unconscious embodied habits* of white privilege, I extract some of the salient emotions through which white privilege is sustained. In other words, I analyse the emotional dimensions of white complicity in perpetuating racism.

In **Chapter 6**, I turn to masculinity as a form of domination. Drawing on Bonnie Mann's (2014) account of *sovereign masculinity*, which centres on the phenomenology of lived bodily experience, I contend that fear-of-being-shamed is a fundamental emotional structure non-accidentally connected to masculinity. I argue that, in Mann's account, masculinity emerges as a reaction to shame, achieved through strategies of "shame-to-power conversion" (Mann, 2014). These strategies involve emotional mechanisms such as projection, but also demands for admiration and esteem.

1. The definition route

1.1 Introduction

In "Oppressions: Racial and Other" (2012), Sally Haslanger aims to show how racial oppression is best understood as a structural phenomenon, unavoidably embedded in a complex background of institutions, policies, and cultural representations. Tackling an individualistic approach that primarily aims to explain oppression by appeal to agents' intentions, Haslanger offers a definition of structural oppression for which she claims a number of advantages. First, this definition allows us to distinguish between different kinds of oppression that can occur simultaneously, as when a group is oppressed on grounds of race but also gender and class. Secondly, Haslanger contends that her account can encompass cases where a group is not explicitly targeted, but is nevertheless oppressed, because there is a non-accidental connection between belonging to a group and being subject to injustice. After presenting Haslanger's main arguments, I first will take issue with two points: with a distinction between being an oppressor and merely occupying a privileged position, which plays a significant role in her argument; and with her view that, in the context of structural oppression, individuals are oppressors insofar as they *abuse* their power. This will constitute the main constructive work of this chapter.

In a second part of the chapter, I will argue that Haslanger's distinction between "privileged" and "oppressors" is insufficient to account for how privileged groups contribute to sustain oppression by the mere fact of being privileged. Drawing on Alison Bailey's (1998) expansion of Marilyn Frye's (1983) notion of *privilege*, and on Barbara Applebaum's (2010) analysis of *complicity* as a way of explaining privileged subject's participation in oppression, I argue that oppression is "not just a matter of *doing*, but [is] also a matter of *being*"

(Applebaum, Being White, Being Good, 2010). In this sense, I contend that to be "privileged" is to be an "oppressor". I conclude this chapter by arguing that closer attention to the emotional phenomena connected to structures of oppression may allow us to deepen our understanding of the ways in which oppression is perpetuated. This last point will be the main focus of the subsequent chapters of my thesis and I will just offer here a preliminary defence of its importance.

1.2 Oppression: agents and structures

Haslanger points out that, although the notion of oppression is commonly used to identify situations of injustice, it remains vague. In an attempt to clarify the concept, she distinguishes between "agent oppression", a conception favoured in individualistic interpretations, and "structural oppression", a notion employed in accounts that aim to show how oppression is embedded in institutions, laws, and cultural and social representations.

1.2.1 The individualistic approach

According to a prevailing individualistic account, oppression is primarily conceived in terms of agents harming others by a *misuse* of their power. However, Haslanger argues, this doesn't say enough about the parties involved: are we talking about individual or collective agents and patients? And what is the nature of the power exercised in cases of oppression?

     In order to clarify these two preliminary issues, Haslanger distinguishes four categories of relation between the oppressing agent and the oppressed subject:

     (1) An individual oppresses an individual (e.g., cases of abuse in parent-child or marital relationships).

(2) An individual oppresses a group (e.g., a tyrant oppresses the people).

(3) A group oppresses an individual (e.g., a community punishes a scapegoat).

(4) A group oppresses a group (e.g., a ruling oligarchy oppresses the people).

Haslanger argues that, in any of these cases, the nature of the power exercised by the oppressor(s) needs to be specified. She distinguishes therefore two sources of oppressive power. First, power may be *socially grounded*, in the sense that its source lies in a pre-existing social hierarchy. An example of this is the socially grounded power that men have with respect to women, or White people with respect to Black people[4]. For example, in the case of gender violence against women, male aggressors misuse the social power they have over women in a patriarchal society. Gender violence does not merely consist in the use of physical force to coerce, but in the fact that the aggressor

(a) has social power over women sustained in/by institutions or cultural representations, and

(b) by virtue of his social power, believes himself to be entitled to use physical force to coerce women.

Secondly, and by contrast, Haslanger argues, power may not be socially grounded. There may be cases of "agent oppression" where the oppressor does not hold more social power than the oppressed. For example, a woman could psychologically and physically harm a man, even though she has less social power than him; a poor man could kidnap a rich man;

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[4] I will follow Haslanger's use of capitalization for the names of races "to highlight the difference between ordinary color words and the homonymous use of such words as names for some races, and to highlight the artificiality of race in contrast to the apparent naturalness of color (or geography)" (Haslanger, 2010, p. 311n1)

or a man could exercise physical violence against another man who shares his social power and status.

Seen exclusively from an individualistic perspective, the latter examples appear to imply that oppressive relations do not necessarily involve misusing a social power which derives from a pre-existing social hierarchy. Rather, these cases suggest that oppression could consist in the misuse of any kind of power to harm another person unjustly. However, Haslanger contends, claiming that oppression consists in misusing any kind of power to cause unjust harm is unsatisfactory because it encompasses too much, not allowing us to clearly delineate the specificity of oppression with respect to other kinds of harms.

Moreover, the individualistic approach is insufficient in that it reduces the wrongs of oppression to the agents' wrongful intentions, thoughts or actions:

> On an individualistic approach, agent oppression is the primary form of oppression and the agents' wrongdoing is its normative core: oppression is primarily a moral wrong that occurs when an agent (the oppressor) inflicts wrongful harm upon another (the oppressed); if something other than an agent (such as a law) is oppressive, it is in a derivative sense, and its wrong must be explicated in terms of an agent's wrongdoing. For example, one might claim that laws and such are oppressive only insofar as they are the instruments of an agent (intentionally) inflicting harm. (Haslanger, 2012, p. 318)

Hence, accounts that conceive oppression as primarily a moral harm performed by an individual or a group (understood as a collection of individuals) fail to explain cases of oppression in which it is unclear where the agent's responsibility lies; for example, when their intentions are not manifest.

1.2.2 The institutionalist approach: structural oppression

Opposed to an individualistic approach that tends to reduce oppression to a moral wrong requiring an agent's hostile intention, an institutionalist account of oppression focuses on its effects. On this view, what matters are not the intentions or actions of an individual agent (say, a tyrant), but the effects of political structures by virtue of which the agent is a tyrant and the people are oppressed (tyranny): "Tyranny is wrong not because (or not just because) tyrants are immoral people intentionally causing harm to others, but because a tyrannical governmental structure is unjust." (Haslanger, 2012, p. 314)

The individualistic account, centred on agents' intentions, thoughts and actions, requires a moral theory to determine the wrongful character of a situation. By contrast, the structural analysis requires a political theory or a theory of justice to "provide the normative evaluation of the wrong" (Haslanger, 2012, p. 314). Haslanger's examples of structural oppression present some cases in which social groups are explicitly targeted by formal legal discrimination such as "Jim Crow" legislation in the United States. But there are other cases where groups have suffered injustice despite not being *explicitly* targeted: "Under 'Jim Crow', poll taxes and (often rigged) literacy tests prevented nearly all African Americans from voting; although such practices did not explicitly target Blacks, they were oppressive." (Haslanger, 2012, p. 315). Furthermore, structural oppression, Haslanger contends, is not exclusively enforced by legislation. The impact of cultural norms and representations on the distribution of labour and the undermining effects of negative stereotypes are part of what constitutes structural oppression. Importantly, in cases of structural oppression, the *intention* to discriminate or harm is not necessary. Two examples illustrate the fact that, often, neutral intent,

thoughtlessness and indifference can be sufficient to generate oppression:

> In 1971, the U.S. Supreme Court considered a case in which Blacks were systematically disqualified for certain jobs due to mandated tests that could not be shown to correlate with successful job performance. The Court found that "practices, procedures, or tests neutral on their face, and even neutral in terms of intent, cannot be maintained if they operate to freeze the status quo of prior discriminatory practices" (Haslanger, 2012, p. 315)

In reference to a 1985 case involving legislation that discriminated against disabled people, the Court ruled "that unjust discrimination can occur not just as a result of animus but simply due to thoughtlessness and indifference" (Haslanger, 2012, p. 315).

Additionally, one of the advantages of a structural account of oppression, as opposed to an individualistic one, is that it allows us to more precisely pin down the source of the problem in common cases where oppression is an effect of how structures distribute power: "When the structures distribute power unjustly, the illegitimate imbalance of power becomes the issue rather than an individual abuse of power *per se*" (Haslanger, 2012, p. 315). If correctly identifying the issue is a necessary step towards the reduction or eradication of oppression, the structural account will therefore be preferable.

1.2.3 Relationship between structures and groups

In order to understand racism, sexism and other forms of oppression as structural, it's important to clarify the nature of the connection between a social structure and a social group. As Haslanger asks, "[W]hat makes a particular instance of structural oppression 'group-based oppression', such as racist, sexist or class oppression?" (Haslanger, 2012, p. 322). Before we can answer this question, several issues need to be analysed.

First, as Haslanger points out, "it is not always clear under what guise members of a group are being subjected to injustice" (p. 322). In some cases the type of oppression is racial, in others it's sexual, in other cases both are combined. For example, in cases of racialized misogyny and racialized sexism, Black women and other women of colour are commonly assimilated to racially and sexually charged stereotypes (such as being associated with exoticism and perceived as hypersexual and/or aggressive) in ways that White women tend not to be[5]. As Haslanger concludes, any satisfactory analysis of oppression must therefore be *intersectional* (Crenshaw, 1995), i.e., it must be attentive to how forms of oppression intersect and/or have their own particular ways of manifesting: working-class Black women's oppression will not be adequately understood by separately mobilizing categories of class, race or gender without attending to their interconnections.

Secondly, we need to attend to the problem of how social groups are targeted by forms of oppression. How are such groups constituted? How are they identified? How does the "targeting" take place? In answer to these questions, Iris Marion Young (1990) suggests (a) that social groups pre-exist the oppression that affects them, and (b) that groups are oppressed on the basis of their *conscious* identities. For example, one is oppressed as Latina in the United States if one recognizes oneself as a member of the group "Latinas". Haslanger, however, is not convinced. Against Young, she argues that a social group X may be oppressed as F, although it does not identify itself as F. Furthermore, the identity of a group is not necessarily a pre-existing given, but a dynamic reality continually in the process of being constructed. In this process, institutional practices play a significant role. For example, before being taken from Africa to the American continent, the populations that were enslaved, and later on would form the group of Black slaves, did not exist as such, nor did they recognize themselves as such. Similarly, being

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[5] Moya Bailey (2014) coined the term *misogynoir* to describe the ways in which Black women are subjected to unique forms of racialized misogyny.

enslaved, and therefore becoming part of the social group "Slaves" as a result of the institution of slavery, was accompanied by distinctive forms of cultural production in resistance to this institution, which subsequently became part of the group's cultural identity (oral storytelling, songs and laments). In other words, the identity of a group takes form through, or in resistance to historical socio-political and economic structures. Therefore, a satisfactory analysis of the oppression of groups must allow for these points.

For these reasons, Haslanger rules out the following criteria as necessary conditions for structural group oppression:

1. Identification of members X of the group G with their being oppressed as F.
2. Explicit targeting of the group G by formal and informal policies and practices.
3. Intention to oppress on behalf of policy makers.

Haslanger proposes instead a definition of the structural oppression of groups designed to account for the complexities we have just sketched. In some cases, the institution in question targets a social group explicitly; in some cases, it does not explicitly target such a group but has clear ramifications for it; and in other cases, its target is a group that has not previously had an established sense of itself (Haslanger, 2012, p. 325). The first formulation of the definition of structural oppression of groups is the following:

> (SO$_1$) Fs are oppressed (as Fs) by an institution I in context C iff$_{df}$ in ($\exists R$) (being an F nonaccidentally correlates with being disadvantaged by standing in an unjust relation R to others) and I creates, perpetuates, or reinforces R.) (Haslanger, 2012, p. 325)

As an example, the definition is applied to a case of gender oppression:

> Women are oppressed as women by cultural representations of women as sex objects in the United States in the late twentieth century iff being a woman in the United States in the late twentieth century nonaccidentally correlates with being subjected to systematic violence, and cultural representations of women as sex objects create, perpetuate, or reinforce the systematic violence. (Haslanger, 2012, p.323)

Haslanger draws on *Shattered Bonds,* Dorothy Robert's (2002) analysis of racist child welfare policies in the United States and lays down the factors that are relevant in determining whether there is a non-accidental correlation between belonging to a group and being oppressed. In the cases examined by Roberts, Black people were oppressed by child welfare policies in Chicago during the 90's in virtue of a double factor: primarily as poor, and secondarily as Black. Using this example, Haslanger next goes on to offer a more complete definition of structural oppression by introducing a distinction between primary and secondary oppression:

> (S0$_2$) F S are oppressed (as Fs) by an institution I in context C iff$_{df}$ in C ($\exists R$) (((being an F nonaccidentally correlates with being unjustly disadvantaged either primarily, because *being F* is unjustly disadvantaging in C, or secondarily, because ($\exists G$) (*being F* nonaccidentally correlates with *being G* due to a prior injustice and *being G* is unjustly disadvantaging in C)) and I creates, perpetuates, or reinforces R.) (Haslanger, 2012, p. 332)

In the context described in *Shattered Bonds* the definition applies as follows:

> Blacks are oppressed *as Blacks* by child welfare policies in Chicago in the 1990s because in that context being poor results in having one's family unjustly disrupted [primary oppression], and being poor nonaccidentally correlates with being Black *due to a prior injustice* [secondary oppression], and the child welfare policies cause or perpetuate unjust disruption of families. (Haslanger, 2012, p. 332)

Haslanger argues that this definition of structural oppression can also be useful when applied to cases of (intentional or unintentional) agent oppression. Where O is the oppressor and V the victim:

O oppresses V as *an F* by an act A in context C iff$_{df}$ in C (V is an F (or O believes that V is an F) and (being an F (or believed to be so) nonaccidentally correlates with being morally wronged by O) and A creates, perpetuates, or reinforces the moral wrong. (Haslanger, 2012, p. 334)

Haslanger claims that this definition has two significant strengths: it can account both for cases of structural oppression in which agents of oppression are not easily identifiable, and for cases in which groups or individuals can be recognized as agents.

1.2.4 Strengths of the institutionalist approach

Haslanger claims a number of epistemological and pragmatic advantages for her institutionalist analysis. First, unlike an individualistic approach, a structural analysis allows us to understand the relational nature of social power: "[the latter] depends on the institutions and practices that structure our relationships to one another" (Haslanger, 2012, p. 316). When an individual uses their power to oppress, they do not simply act out of wickedness, but are empowered by a context that facilitates or even rewards this use of power.

Secondly, the institutionalist approach can account for forms of oppression "for which no individual is responsible" (Haslanger, 2012, p. 318) or for situations where it is unclear which agents in particular are responsible.

Thirdly, the institutionalist explanation is preferable for pragmatic reasons. Whilst the individualistic approaches tend to suggest that ending oppression would require the moral transformation of oppressors – an unrealistic goal – the institutionalist perspective points towards more achievable and effective aims such as modifying the institutions and practices that facilitate oppression.

However, Haslanger warns against the potential misuse of the definition of structural oppression if applied to people who are

"attempting to navigate as best they can the moral rapids of everyday life" (Haslanger, 2012, p. 320). Her worry is that the proposed definition may wrongly classify some individuals who occupy structurally privileged positions as *oppressors*, when in fact they may not necessarily be so. We need to remember, Haslanger contends, that not all privileged people are oppressors – in fact, some of them may fight against oppressive practices. So, although there are powerful reasons for taking an institutionalist approach, it is important in her view to avoid a form of reductionism that doesn't take sufficient account of individual differences in the uses of power.

Thus, in an effort to do justice to the complexity of racial and gender oppression, Haslanger seeks to find a middle ground between two perspectives that, taken *in extremis*, could narrow our understanding of the phenomenon:

> I believe that an individualistic approach to group domination is inadequate because sometimes structures themselves, not individuals, are the problem. Likewise, an institutionalist approach is inadequate because it fails to distinguish those who abuse their power to do wrong and those who are privileged but do not exploit their power. I recommend a "mixed" approach that does not attempt to reduce either agent or structural oppression to the other. (Haslanger, 2012, p. 320)

1.3 Some problems

1.3.1 Usefulness of a formula?

In presenting a definition of structural oppression, Haslanger intends to offer an analytic tool applicable to ethnoracial groups in order to recognize possible cases of racial oppression. Equipped with her formula, we only need to find *Fs*, *Is* and *Rs*. However, as Haslanger herself points out, the definition does not pretend to offer an objective criterion for distinguishing oppression from other harms, or from false claims of oppression (as for example, when white supremacist groups claim to be oppressed by Affirmative Action or masculinist groups say they are

oppressed by women's rights). Haslanger notes that such controversial cases cannot be solved by an epistemic criterion alone; ultimately, they depend upon substantive notions of right and wrong. Haslanger points out that her goal "has not been to analyse ordinary uses of the term 'oppression' or to legislate how the term should be used, but to highlight how we might better understand structural group domination" (Haslanger, 2012, p. 333). We may ask then if the definition is really applicable and useful to cases other than the ones Haslanger discusses. If the definition is meant to be applicable as a formula, it should allow us to understand the structural domination of all relevant groups. But if the definition fails this test, it is not clear how far it is useful for understanding oppression as a structural phenomenon.

1.3.2 Problematic distinctions

In this section I will address a number of objections to Haslanger's distinction between "the privileged" and "the oppressors" with the aim of showing that her account does not fully capture how structures of oppression are sustained by those who benefit from them. I will also take issue with her claim that individuals or groups are agents of oppression in the context of structural oppression insofar as they *abuse* their power.

   If individual agents can be oppressors without intending to treat others unjustly, Haslanger may be right to claim that merely being privileged is not a sufficient condition of being an oppressor. Developing this line of thought, she frames the distinction between the oppressiveness of structures and the oppressiveness of individuals as follows: social and political structures are oppressive by *misallocating power* unjustly; individuals are oppressive by (intentionally or unintentionally) *abusing* their power. "Structures cause injustice through the misallocation of power; agents cause wrongful harm through the abuse of power (sometimes the abuse of misallocated power)." (Haslanger, 2012, p. 320).

On this account, the privileged are only virtually or potentially oppressors. We can distinguish the oppressor *in potentia* (let's call it the "Merely Privileged") and the oppressor *in actu* (the "Oppressor"). What makes the Merely Privileged different from the Oppressor is that the latter *abuses* their power, while the former does not. In fact, the Merely Privileged may use their power, Haslanger argues, to fight against oppression.

There are several aspects to unpack in Haslanger's distinction. First, I will show that the notion of *abuse of power* is problematic as a means for analysing how individual agents contribute to oppression. Secondly, Haslanger's argument seems to downplay the role of privilege itself in maintaining structures of oppression. I contend that her account of privilege seems close to what Alison Bailey (1998) calls a "negative notion of privilege". Thirdly, Haslanger seems to make oppression exclusively a matter of what one *does*: one could *be* privileged without *acting* as an oppressor. However, on this account, it is not clear what might prompt agents to occasionally "abuse" their power. More problematically, Haslanger's argument seems to imply that there's nothing wrong with maintaining one's privilege just as long as one does not abuse one's power. I argue that this view does not challenge the ways in which structural privilege may function as a mechanism that maintains oppressive structures in place. For example, in the context of white supremacy, this account is insufficient for challenging "white saviourism" and "white exceptionalism" in attitudes and practices that, whilst apparently attempting to undermine oppression, may in fact hold oppressive structures in place.

1.3.3 Are all privileged oppressors?

Haslanger introduces the notion of privilege as implied by structural oppression: "Practices and institutions oppress, and some individuals or groups are privileged within those practices and institutions"

(Haslanger, 2012, p. 316). However, the notion of the "privileged" is introduced here to be immediately distinguished from the "oppressors":

> But it would be wrong to count all those who are privileged as oppressors. Members of the privileged group (...) may in fact be working to undermine the unjust practices and institutions. Nevertheless, in the context of structural oppression, there may be some who are more blameworthy than others for perpetuating the injustice; they may be more responsible for creating, maintaining, expanding, and exploiting the unjust social relationships. In such cases, *an individual counts as an oppressor if their moral wrongdoing compounds the structural injustice, that is, if they are agents of oppression within an oppressive structure. But not all those who are privileged by an oppressive structure are oppressive agents* (Haslanger, 2012, p. 316. My italics).

Haslanger seems to consider this distinction to be an important one. In a different passage she points out that

> Although it is important to capture the sense in which all of us perpetuate unjust structures by unthinkingly participating in them, *it is also important to distinguish between those who abuse their power to harm others and those who are attempting to navigate as best they can the moral rapids of everyday life* (Haslanger, 2012, pp. 319–320. My italics)

What distinguishes the Merely Privileged from the Oppressors, in Haslanger's view, is not the presence of good or bad intentions, but the fact that, unlike the Merely Privileged, the Oppressor *abuses* their power, whether intentionally or unintentionally, or even "unthinkingly" by being indifferent or insensitive. By contrast, Haslanger argues, an individual who is structurally privileged is not an oppressor as long as they do not abuse their power.

The example Haslanger uses to illustrate the case of a Merely Privileged agent is that of a male professor, named Larry, who disobeys racist legislation by granting women of colour access to his lectures. A noteworthy element of Haslanger's contrast between the Merely Privileged and the Oppressor therefore seems to consist in the fact that, whilst an Oppressor abuses their power, a Merely Privileged person is

not an Oppressor in that they are actively committed to undermining oppression. In all the examples given by Haslanger, the Merely Privileged person actively resists structurally unjust institutions or conventions. This suggests that, in Haslanger's view, refraining from abusing one's power (i.e., from being an Oppressor) requires more than passive abstention.

However, Haslanger's distinction between the Merely Privileged and the Oppressor seems problematic for three reasons. First, it is unclear whether Haslanger thinks that actively working to undermine oppressive institutions and social conventions is a *sufficient condition* for not being an oppressor. Arguably, privileged individuals may in good faith attempt to undermine oppression while at the same time unknowingly reinforcing it. In this scenario, only privileged individuals who are highly aware of the causes of structural oppression would be in position to actively and effectively work against it. An enlightened elite would thus have more chance to qualify as Merely Privileged. However, oppressed groups have often documented how even those privileged subjects who actively attempt to dismantle oppression and are in a position to have a good knowledge of how structural oppression works often fail to do so, instead reproducing the oppressive mechanisms that they in principle intended to undermine. The conflictual encounters between Black feminists and White feminists are testimony to this. An example is offered by Marilyn Frye (1983) in her essay "On Being White: Thinking Toward A Feminist Understanding of Race and Race Supremacy":

> This matter of the powers white feminists have because of being white came up for me very concretely in a real-life situation a while back. Conscientiously, and with the encouragement of various women of color (...) a group of white women formed a white women's consciousness raising group to identify and explore the racism in our lives with a view to dismantle the barriers that blocked our understanding and action in this matter. (...) In a later community meeting, one Black woman criticized us very angrily for ever thinking we could achieve our goals by working only with white women. (...) It seemed like doing nothing would

be racist and whatever we did would be racist just because *we* did it. We began to lose hope; we felt bewildered and trapped. (...) She [the critic] seemed crazy to me. That stopped me. I paused and touched and weighed that seeming. It was familiar. I know it as deceptive, defensive. I know it from both sides; I have been thought crazy by others too righteous, too timid and too defended to grasp the enormity of our difference and the significance of their offenses. (Frye, 1983, pp. 111–112)

From the perspective of Black feminism, bell hooks (1989) gives an account of how liberal White feminists tended to reproduce racist oppression while at the same time attempting to disrupt it:

> As I write, I try to remember when the word racism ceased to be the term which best expressed for me exploitation of black people and other people of color in this society and when I began to understand that the most useful term was white supremacy. It was certainly a necessary term when confronted with the liberal attitudes of white women active in feminist movement who were unlike their racist ancestors – white women in the early woman's rights movements who did not wish to be caught dead in fellowship with black women. In fact, these women often requested and longed for the presence of black women. Yet when present, what we saw was that they wished to exercise control over our bodies and thoughts as their racist ancestors had – that this need to exercise power over us expressed how much they had internalized the values and attitudes of white supremacy. (hooks, 1989, p. 112)

Based on these examples and following Haslanger's criteria for being Merely Privileged but not an Oppressor, we could say that racially privileged liberal White feminists actively attempted to undermine racial injustice. They acted on good intentions by requesting the presence of Black women in the feminist movement and took action by forming consciousness-raising groups in order to examine their prejudices. Nevertheless, their attempts were insufficient to prevent them from being oppressive towards Black women. Thus, Haslanger's distinction does not clearly show what kind of effort to undermine oppression would qualify some people as Merely Privileged, and what kind would qualify the privileged as Oppressors.

Arguably, Haslanger's distinction only holds if the attempts of the Merely Privileged to dismantle oppression are *successful*. However, her

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argument is also dependent upon the view that to be an Oppressor is mainly a matter of performing specific *actions*, rather than a general way of being. I will show how this perspective obfuscates the way in which the structurally privileged perpetuate structures of racial and gender oppression by the mere fact of being privileged[6].

1.3.4 Abuse of power?

Another problematic aspect of Haslanger's distinction between the Merely Privileged and the Oppressors lies in her use of the notion of *abuse of power* to account for the cases where people act as agents of oppression. How is it that, in the context of structural oppression, individuals *abuse* their power? Let's examine some of her examples to illustrate how individuals are agents of oppression. The first example is that of a professor called Stanley, who discriminates against women of colour by giving them low grades independently of their merits. The case presupposes a context in which the relationship between students and professor takes place within a "just" (i.e., non-racist) legal framework. The example is meant to illustrate how sometimes people are wronged in virtue of the actions of individuals alone, even in the absence of structural injustice. How to understand the notion of "abuse" here? It seems that in this case, Stanley abuses his power because he uses it in an *illegitimate* way, i.e., against what the law stipulates. The "abuse" lies here in a *misuse* of power: Stanley exercises his power in ways that he is not (explicitly or implicitly) authorized to. The idea here is that the

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[6] Insofar as Ann E. Cudd draws a similar distinction between being privileged and being an oppressor, my critique to Haslanger applies to her account as well. For Cudd, "Even if one is a member of a privileged group, one need not oneself be an oppressor (…). One could, for instance, struggle against the social system from which one gains through one's group membership, even if one is powerless to renounce that membership. (…) To be an oppressor (…) one needs to be a member of a privileged group, to gain from oppression of another social group, to intend to so gain, and to act to realize that intention by contributing to the oppression of the oppressed group from whose oppression one gains" (Cudd, 2006, p. 25).

exercise of Stanley's power is circumscribed within the limits that are defined by the nature of his role as a professor; when such limits are trespassed, there is "abuse of power".

Stanley is an agent of oppression merely because he "abuses" his power by using it to wrong individuals without legitimacy. However, because this thought experiment presents the context as "just", the example does not allow us to understand what it is to be an agent of oppression *in the context of structural oppression*. A privileged agent becomes an Oppressor, in the context of structural injustice, if their action reinforces the pre-existing oppressive structure:

> (...) in the context of structural oppression, there may be some who are more blameworthy than others for perpetuating the injustice; they may be more responsible for creating, maintaining, expanding, and exploiting the unjust social relationships. In such cases*, an individual counts as an oppressor if their moral wrongdoing compounds the structural injustice, that is, if they are agents of oppression within an oppressive structure*. But not all those who are privileged by an oppressive structure are oppressive agents. (Haslanger, 2012, pp. 316–317. My italics)

Haslanger argues that, within the context of structural oppression, individuals are Oppressors because they "abuse their power": "[...] agents cause wrongful harm through the abuse of power (sometimes the abuse of misallocated power)." (Haslanger, 2012, p. 320) Therefore, in compounding structural injustice, agents abuse their power. Going back to Stanley's case: if, in the context of sexual and racial structural oppression, Stanley gives lower grades to his female students of colour regardless of their merits, he is at least responsible for maintaining unjust social relations. But would Stanley be *abusing* his power? According to Haslanger, he would. However, in a context where laws and institutions are *de jure* racist, Stanley would be acting in a *legitimate* way. In a white supremacist context (e.g., during "Jim Crow"), discriminating against women of colour would be one of the powers that Stanley would be authorized to exercise. Yet, his actions would surely be

oppressive. Thus, contrary to Haslanger's claim, an agent can be an Oppressor not necessarily by abusing power, but by simply exercising the social power conferred to them. Consequently, it's the very nature of the power exercised by agents which, in the context of structural oppression, constitutes oppression, rather than an abuse of power as such. Haslanger's formulation could thus be modified as follows: "Structures cause injustice through the misallocation of power; agents cause wrongful harm through the abuse of power; [within the context of structural oppression, they cause harm by *using* misallocated power.]"

I contend that agents do not need to *abuse* their power to be Oppressors. In the context of structural oppression, it is enough for an individual to use the misallocated power to which they are entitled in order to be an agent of Oppression. Haslanger is right to insist that there are differences of degree in the uses of power, and some uses have a greater impact in maintaining and reinforcing oppressive structures than others. However, while she draws a sharp distinction between the Merely Privileged and Oppressors, I argue that there is only a difference of degree. Furthermore, distinguishing the Merely Privileged from Oppressors suggests the existence of a "pure" space where some subjects who are privileged *simpliciter* could be located. In the context of structural oppression there is no such a thing as a "pure", oppression-free space that some could inhabit. Within an oppressive system, privileged people (individuals and groups) may be more or less oppressive, depending on how they use their social power.

1.3.5 Privilege as being, oppression as acting?

A third problematic aspect of Haslanger's distinction between the Merely Privileged and Oppressors lies in the fact that being an oppressor mostly consists in performing particular *actions*. This is manifest in her application of the definition of structural oppression of groups to the cases in which agents are identifiable as oppressors: "*O* oppresses *V* as

an F by act *A* in context *C* iff$_{df}$ in *C* (*V* is an *F* (or *O* believes that *V* is an *F*) and (being an *F* (or believed to be so) nonaccidentally correlates with being morally wronged by *O*) and *A* creates, perpetuates, or reinforces the moral wrong.)" (Haslanger, 2012, p. 334) According to this framework, one can be socially privileged in a context of structural oppression, but one does not become an oppressor unless one effectively engages in actions that harm other individuals or social groups. Being privileged would thus be a social *condition*, whereas being an oppressor would belong to the realm of *action*: one may *be* privileged, but one may or may not *act* oppressively.

However, this attempt to draw a distinction between *being* privileged and *acting* oppressively overlooks the complex ways in which oppression is part of a way of being, and not merely a matter of performing concrete actions. In other words, "being" and "action" are not disconnected, and acting as an oppressor derives from particular ways of being in the world and in relation to others. Haslanger's attempt to break the connection between "being" and "acting" may be informed by what Alison Bailey (1998) describes as a "negative conception of privilege", which tends to obfuscate the role played by privilege itself in sustaining structures of oppression.

According to Bailey, the negative conception of privilege derives from Frye's birdcage metaphor, which illustrates the systematic dimension of oppression. In order to understand oppression, Frye argues, we need to look not only at the particular obstacles and lack of choices that oppressed people face, but also at how these obstacles or barriers are systematically interconnected, like the wires of a cage:

> [Oppression is] the experience of being caged in… Consider a birdcage. If you look very closely at just one wire, you cannot see the other wires. If your conception of what is before you is determined by this myopic focus, you could look at that one wire, up and down the length of it, and be unable to see why a bird would not just fly around the wire… it is only when you step back, stop looking at the wires one by one, microscopically, and take a macroscopic view of the whole cage, that you

can see why the bird does not go anywhere; and then you will see it in a moment. (Frye, 1983, pp. 5–6, as cited in Bailey, 1998, p. 105)

What happens if we use the metaphor of the birdcage to mirror the notion of privilege in it? Arguably, if to be oppressed is to have one's life options reduced by a set of systematic and interconnected barriers, then to be privileged is to be *exempt* from those barriers. However, Bailey contends, this image is insufficient for understanding the nature of privilege: "privilege is more complex than simple immunities from the systemic barriers of which Frye speaks." (Bailey, 1998, p. 115) In Frye's account, privilege is reduced to its *negative* dimension, as receipt of benefits due to an absence of barriers. By contrast, for Bailey privilege has a *positive* dimension, which consists in "the presence of additional perks that cannot be described in terms of immunities alone." (Bailey, 1998, p. 115) By paying attention to this positive sense of privilege we can more clearly show how privilege itself sustains oppression, and therefore, how privileged subjects participate in oppression *by the mere fact of being privileged*.

How to understand these additional *perks* or advantages that privilege confers? Here Bailey draws some important distinctions in order to clear out a common confusion:

> Just as all oppression counts as harm, but not all harms count as oppression, I want to suggest that all privilege is advantageous, but that not all advantages count as privilege" (Bailey, 1998, pp. 107–108).

Bailey clarifies the difference between "privilege" and mere "advantages" by first distinguishing between *earned* and *unearned* advantages. A second distinction concerns how these assets or advantages are conferred: either *systematically,* or *accidentally*. Thirdly, this conferral may be either *justified* or *arbitrary*. Employing these distinctions, privilege is defined as consisting in the arbitrarily and "systematically conferred nature of (...) unearned assets." (Bailey, 1998, pp. 107–108) For example, in virtue of racial privilege, people racialized as White

have a surplus of credibility by which they are perceived as more reliable, honest and competent than non-White people (Fricker, 2007)[7].

Privilege is also *dynamic* in its nature. It does not just consist in receiving a series of concrete assets (such as money or properties). Rather, it's a *mechanism* that produces and reproduces assets: privilege has "an unconditional 'wild card' quality" in that "its benefits cover a wide variety of circumstances and conditions" (Bailey, 1998, p. 108). While particular advantages or assets can be concrete and circumscribed, privilege is adaptive in its way of functioning so that assets can generate further assets. Therefore, privilege can be described as a mechanism of systematic reproduction of advantages distributed to members of dominant groups on an arbitrary basis i.e., solely based on their membership of these groups.

The last point becomes easier to grasp if we pay attention to the fact that the distinction between "earned advantages" and "unearned assets" is not clear-cut. Privilege can be thought not only as the systematic and arbitrary conferral of unearned assets, but also as a dynamic structure that systematically and arbitrarily facilitates the acquisition of *earned* advantages as well:

> Perhaps the point here is not that earned advantages and privilege are necessarily distinct, but rather that some advantages are more easily earned if they are accompanied by gender, heterosexual, race or class privilege. Privilege and earned advantages are connected in the sense

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[7] This phenomenon has been analysed by Miranda Fricker with the notion of *epistemic injustice*, which she defines as "a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower". Fricker distinguishes between two main forms of epistemic injustice: *testimonial injustice* and *hermeneutical injustice*: "Testimonial injustice occurs when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word; hermeneutical injustice occurs at a prior stage, when a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences. An example of the first might be that the police do not believe you because you are black; an example of the second might be that you suffer sexual harassment in a culture that still lacks that critical concept. We might say that testimonial injustice is caused by prejudice in the economy of credibility; and that hermeneutical injustice is caused by structural prejudice in the economy of collective hermeneutical resources." (Fricker, 2007, p. 1)

that privilege places one in a better position to earn more advantages. The link between earned advantages and unearned privilege generates a situation in which privileged groups can earn assets (e.g., control of resources, skills, a quality education, the attention of the mayor, a good reputation, a prestigious well-paying job, political power, or a safe place to live) more easily and more frequently than those who don't have white, male, heterosexual, or economic privilege. (Bailey, 1998, p. 110)

Privilege thus understood operates as a dynamic structure or mechanism that produces and reproduces enabling effects for to whom it applies.

The problem with reducing privilege to its negative sense is that doing so obscures the extent to which the latter depends on the structures that systematically and arbitrarily disadvantage some people with respect to others. By contrast, understanding privilege in its positive sense allows grasping how to *be* structurally privileged is, by the same token, to be implicated in the perpetuation of oppression. Therefore, with the positive notion of privilege we can get a more complete understanding of oppression:

> If the structural features of oppression generate privilege, then a complete understanding of oppression requires that we also be attentive to the ways in which complex systems of domination rely on the oppression of one group to generate privilege for another. (Bailey, 1998, p. 117)

As an illustration of the distinction between negative and positive privilege, Bailey gives the following account:

> I first became aware of this distinction during a conversation I had with a young white male student in my "Introduction to Women's Studies" class. Once he became aware of the unearned aspects of his male privilege, this student was eager use it in politically useful ways. He suggested that one way to do this would be to accompany women on a Take Back the Night March, a historically women only demonstration against sexual violence. Since men can go out at night with little risk of sexual assault, he reasoned, he might use this unearned privilege to, in his words, "protect the women as they marched." What this student had in mind, no doubt, was to exercise his role as protector to defend the marching women against members of his gender with predatory

leanings. In other words, he wanted to use his privileged protector status in a way that supported feminist projects. (Bailey, 1998, p. 115)

The example shows two dimensions of privilege: being a White man, the student faces fewer barriers than women to circulate safely at night (negative privilege). But by the very fact that women are in danger due to being oppressed by a heterosexist system, the male student has access to the superior status of a *protector* (positive privilege). However, because the student only understands privilege in its negative sense, he fails to see how he contributes to sustain women's oppression by being a "protector", since "when male protectors step in, the symbolism of the march is undermined":

> In his eagerness to help the cause he does not notice the systemic links between his heterosexual male privilege as a protector and women's oppression. He does not notice how his offer of protective services reinscribes the function of the hetero-patriarchal protector/predator gender role assigned to men. In attempting to [be] supportive he falls into his scripted role as a protector. (Bailey, 1998, p. 116)

Bailey's account makes "visible the role of privilege in maintaining hierarchies." (Bailey, 1998, p. 117) As it stems from her analysis, the difference between *being* merely privileged and *acting* as an oppressor is not straightforward: by being merely privileged (positive sense), one also participates in oppression.

There's an additional element in Bailey's account that casts light on the insufficiency of Haslanger's distinction between being Privileged and acting as an Oppressor. Privilege, in both its negative and positive senses, is a mechanism that "structures the world" in a way that tends to be invisible to those who benefit from it. In consequence, it tends to remain unacknowledged by the privileged. Privilege, in this sense, is characterized by a "structured invisibility". The combination of the structuring of one's world and the invisibility of this structure has consequences for how the privileged tend to perceive themselves and their capacities. In other words, by invisibly structuring one's world,

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privilege also conditions the perception of the self. For example, privileged subjects will tend to think of themselves as more capable of achieving goals on the basis of their own individual merits:

> The structured invisibility of privilege insures that a person's individual accomplishments will be recognized more on the basis of individual merit than on the basis of group membership. Redirecting attention away from the unearned nature of privilege and toward individual merit allows persons born on third base to believe sincerely that they hit a triple. In fact, the maintenance of heterosexual, white, or male privilege as positions of structural advantage lie largely in the silence surrounding the mechanisms of privilege. (Bailey, 1998, p. 113)

This has consequences for how a privileged self may take shape with a sense of inhabiting a world that largely fits their needs and doesn't seem to present much resistance to their volitions and efforts. However, "structured invisibility" is closely connected to the ways in which mechanisms of privilege maintain and/or reinforce oppression. For example, the privilege of a White man's relative ease in finding jobs and being promoted has its flipside in the disadvantages of women in the work market, and especially of women of colour. Thus, if to be privileged is to be involved in sustaining structures of oppression by the very fact of inhabiting a world that has systematic enabling effects for one's self in virtue of its disabling consequences for others, then to be privileged is to *participate* in oppression and, in this sense, to *be* an oppressor. In consequence, the participation of the privileged in sustaining oppression cannot be simply reduced to a matter of discrete *actions* or occasional behaviour in which they may occur.

However, from the fact that there is no sharp distinction between being privileged and acting as an oppressor, it does not follow that there are no differences among oppressors. In the first place, oppression can take many forms. Each system of oppression is embedded within particular cultural and historical contexts that shape the beliefs and behaviour of oppressors and oppressed, so that, for example, members of the ruling class in seventeenth-century India will differ significantly

from Spanish colonizers in sixteenth-century America or eighteenth-century slaveholders in the United States. In addition, we can distinguish between oppressors with respect to other criteria such as their degree of awareness of the harm they are doing or contributing to, the extent of their explicit or implicit adherence to the system that sustains oppression, or the seriousness of the harms they inflict upon the lives of the oppressed. There may be important differences of degree. Not all oppressors are responsible to the same extent for the harms of oppression.

Summing up, Haslanger's account of the participation of agents in structural oppression in terms of "abuse of power", as well as her distinction between being privileged and being an oppressor seem conceptually insufficient. First, agents do not need to abuse their power to participate in oppression. In the context of structural oppression, it is often enough for them to use a power that is in itself oppressive. Secondly, her distinction between "being privileged" and "being an oppressor" is unclear in terms of the efforts it requires in order not to be an oppressor. Thirdly, her account seems to be based on a negative conception of privilege as passive receipt of assets, which results in an insufficient examination of how privileged subjects participate in enforcing and maintaining oppressive structures *by the mere fact of being privileged*. Drawing on Alison Bailey's account of privilege as a mechanism of systematic and arbitrary conferral of unearned assets and facilitating the acquisition of earned advantages, I took issue with Haslanger's distinction between Privileged and Oppressors, which mirrors the difference between "being" and "acting".

I contend that, insofar as privilege is a dynamic mechanism that structures the world, and inasmuch as it does so in ways that are invisible and unrecognized for its beneficiaries, to be situated in a position of privilege is to be placed in the position of the oppressor, since the very same structures that enable some individuals are the ones that disable others. The distinction between merely *being* privileged and

acting as an oppressor thus becomes very hard to delineate and maintain.

1.4 Complicity: how the privileged participate in oppression

Haslanger's distinction between those who are merely privileged and those who act as agents of oppression is also indebted to a conception of responsibility tied to notions of causality and blame. As she argues, "there may be some who are more *blameworthy* than others for perpetuating the injustice; they may be more responsible for creating, maintaining, expanding, and exploiting the unjust social relationships" (Haslanger, 2012, pp. 316–317. My italics). Or again, "Whether an individual or a group is blameworthy for the injustice will depend on what role they play in causing or maintaining the unjust structure" (Haslanger, 2012, p. 317).

However, an emphasis on causal responsibility and blame may obscure how privileged groups – and their individual members – are responsible for enforcing and maintaining structures of oppression. Reducing responsibility for oppression to a matter of blame and causation also reflects an individualistic conception of agency that is insufficient for our purposes. Another model is needed in order to account for how privileged groups are responsible for sustaining oppression.

An alternative way to challenge the distinction between "being" privileged and "acting" as an oppressor can be found in the notion of *complicity*. In her book *Being White, Being Good. White Complicity, White Moral Responsibility and Social Justice Pedagogy* (2010), Barbara Applebaum develops a critique of traditional accounts of responsibility (which focus on notions of causality and blame) and argues that a notion of responsibility tied to the concept of complicity is better suited to capturing how the privileged participate in oppression.

Applebaum notes that, whilst questions of complicity have been given considerable attention in critical race theory and feminist scholarship, such accounts have traditionally centred on the complicity of the oppressed in their own oppression and engage to a lesser degree with the question of the complicity of the structurally privileged in perpetuating systemic injustice.

However, as Applebaum contends, recent developments in Critical whiteness studies have explored how "white people, through the practices of whiteness and by benefiting from white privilege, contribute to the maintenance of systemic racial injustice" (Applebaum, 2010, p. 2). This claim, called by Applebaum the "white complicity claim" is tied to the question of responsibility in that "the failure to acknowledge such complicity will thwart whites in their efforts to dismantle unjust racial systems and, more specifically, will contribute to the perpetuation of racial injustice" (Applebaum, 2010, p. 3).

White people's belief in their own moral innocence, good intentions and purity tends to operate as a screen that conceals their awareness of their participation in oppression. The belief of White people in their own moral innocence is encouraged by models of moral responsibility that remain tied to notions of causality and blame. Based on such notions, White people tend to think that only those who are explicitly racist (such as the KKK or white supremacist groups) should be held responsible for their participation in racism, while believing themselves to be "off the hook", for example, by their good-willed declarations of anti-racism. As a result, White people tend to vigorously resist any suggestion that they might also be implicated in sustaining racist oppression by the mere fact of being White:

> Traditional conceptions of moral responsibility (...) not only fail to expose white complicity but also contribute to the normalization of denials of complicity that protect systemic racism from being challenged. One of the problems with traditional conceptions of moral responsibility is the presumption that moral innocence is attainable. Because such notions of responsibility center on the question "what can

I do?" rather than the question "what needs to be done?" they encourage moral solipsism, heroism and white narcissism. (Applebaum, 2010, p. 5)

I will come back to this exploration of the privileged's complicity with oppression in future chapters of my thesis. My aim is to show how complicity with oppression is channelled by emotional phenomena, in order to offer an account of oppression that makes sense of its pervasiveness.

1.5 Looking forward: why we need to pay attention to the emotions

My analysis of Haslanger's discussion of oppression is, I suggest, enough to show that it is insufficient. A satisfactory account of oppression needs to take into consideration a series of complexities that her account denies or overlooks. First, I argued against Haslanger that, in the context of structural oppression, agents do not need to *abuse* their power in order to participate in oppression. Secondly, I contend that her distinction between "being" privileged and "acting" as an oppressor is conceptually weak in that it fails to give a clear criterion for their distinction. Thirdly, Haslanger's analysis offers a negative conception of privilege as passive receipt of advantages. Drawing on Alison Bailey's expansion of the notion of privilege and on Barbara Applebaum's notion of complicity, I suggest that Haslanger's conception leaves unaddressed the complex ways in which structurally privileged groups and individuals enforce and sustain structures of oppression *by the mere fact of being privileged*.

There is, however, a further problem with Haslanger's stance, to which I now turn. This will be the main theme of my thesis and will occupy me in the following chapters. At this stage my aim is to introduce it, and provide a preliminary defence of its importance.

Philosophers such as Haslanger who draw attention to the structural dimensions of oppression rightly identify the inadequacy of

analyses of oppression that focus primarily on the individual motivations of members of privileged groups. Such analyses are theoretically and normatively insufficient. On the one hand, they do not adequately diagnose the causes of oppression and the mechanisms through with it is produced and reproduced. On the other hand, due to this epistemic deficiency, they tend to overemphasize the role individuals can play in reducing oppression. As a result, they offer naive and unrealistic proposals aimed at changing the way individuals think or feel, which have little impact in real life struggles against oppression.

As we have seen, these accounts leave the structural roots of oppression unchallenged. As Haslanger points out, it's often "structures themselves, not individuals, [who] are the problem". But they also suffer from a further limitation. They largely fail to take account of the ways in which oppression partly shapes emotions and underestimate the extent to which people's resulting emotional "constitution" limit their ability to change. Theoretical proposals for changing the way people think or feel often fail to take into consideration the extent to which a satisfactory account of social change must examine and engage with the emotional characters of oppressors and oppressed.

Moving beyond Haslanger's discussion, we have seen that institutionalist analyses tend to overlook issues related to individuals' complicity in oppression. But here, too, we find a deficiency. Like their individualist counterparts, structural analyses tend to underplay the emotional impact of structures of oppression, both on the oppressed, and on those who benefit from oppression. The emotional mechanisms through which oppression is produced and reproduced are in general neglected in the analysis of oppression as a structural phenomenon. When emotions are taken as a central element in oppression, the prism of analysis tends to be psychologizing and individualistic, and this tends to produce a justified suspicion in those who are committed to institutionalist analyses. For these reasons, attempts to address the role emotions play in oppression are often suspected of being naive and

misguided. This mistrust is visible, for example, in Haslanger's critique of individualistic accounts on oppression:

> Bigotry, hatred, intolerance are surely bad. Agreement on this is easy, even if it is not clear what to do about them. But if people are prevented from acting on their bigotry, hatred, and intolerance – at least prevented from harming others for these motives – then we can still live together peacefully. Living together in peace and justice does not require that we love each other, or that we even fully respect each other, but rather that we conform our actions to principles of justice. (Haslanger, 2012, p. 335)

Haslanger's argument rightly rejects a naive approach to transforming people's hostile emotions through a sort of affective conversion. Even if people who respect principles of justice are hypocritical, she points out, the fact that they respect them is enough to reduce oppression. What is therefore crucial is that institutions be just:

> Should we be concerned if some members of the community are hypocrites in acting respectfully toward others without having the "right" attitude? Of course, this could be a problem if hypocrites can't be trusted to sustain their respectful behavior; and plausibly hatred and bigotry are emotions that involve dispositions to wrongful action. Nonetheless, for many of those who suffer injustice, "private" attitudes are not the worst problem; systematic institutional subordination is. (Haslanger, 2012, p. 335)

On this account, emotions are relegated to the private sphere. Although this is not the focus of her argument and these remarks occupy a marginal position in her account, Haslanger nevertheless seems to rely on the view that the emotional element does not merely belong to the individual as something private and idiosyncratic, but it is instead linked to structures of power. This claim is presented as an additional support for her argument that the focus of any struggle against oppression should be transforming the structures of power, rather than the individuals' cognitive and emotional biases:

> Cognitive and emotional racial biases do not emerge out of nothing; both are products of the complex interplay between the individual and the

social that has been a theme throughout this chapter. Our attitudes are shaped by what we see, and what we see, in turn, depends on the institutional structures that shape our lives and the lives of those around us (Haslanger, 2012, pp. 335–336).

Haslanger's focus on the structural element of oppression, and her opposition to "an undue emphasis on racist individuals and racist attitudes in recent philosophical work" (Haslanger, 2012, p. 336) seems to suggest that tackling the structural element will contribute to modifying emotions such as hate and bigotry, so that there is little need for any independent discussion of how to modify the emotions and attitudes of individuals. As an example, if structural changes are introduced so that police stop systematically targeting Black people and people of colour, then we may expect that the negative stereotype of Black men as being dangerous and the fear correlated with it will significantly be reduced. This is suggested by the following example, drawn from Haslanger's work:

> Is it hard to imagine that young White people who look around and see police locking up people of color at disproportionate rates, might conclude there is something wrong with these folks? Something to be feared then perhaps despised? (Wise, 2000, as cited in Haslanger, 2012, p. 336)

Contrary to an individualistic and psychologizing view of emotions, which conceives them as internally configured in the individual psyche and as becoming externalized when expressed (the "inside out model", on Sara Ahmed's terms), the view that our emotions and attitudes are shaped by structures – and that, as a consequence, changing the structures will suffice to modify our emotions – is perhaps located too far on the opposite side (the "outside in model"). Without rejecting the ways in which social, cultural and political structures shape our attitudes and feelings, we may still find such a view problematic insofar as (1) it may reinforce the idea that individuals are passive in how they "take in" the emotions that are "outside" in the social world; (2) it presupposes too sharp a distinction between an inside (individual) and an outside (the

social), as Sara Ahmed (2004a) points out. Haslanger seems attentive to this risk of reducing individuals to matter passively shaped by social structures, adding after Wise's example quoted above that

> Of course, individuals are not merely passive observers; attitudes are not inert. We stand in complicated relationships to the collectively formed and managed structures that shape our lives. Structures take on specific historical forms because of the individuals within them; individual action is conditioned in multiple and varying ways by social context. (Haslanger, 2012, p. 336)

The challenge therefore remains to think about how emotions are involved in oppression in ways that (1) do not reinforce an individualistic and psychologizing perspective; (2) do not reduce groups and individuals to passive observers; (3) do not disregard the active role that emotions play in sustaining oppression.

Approaching the role emotions play in oppression through an individualist lens will not yield an epistemically or normatively satisfying analysis. But refusing to engage with the way emotions are in play by concentrating exclusively on structural mechanisms is also not enough. It leaves unaddressed some important elements that we need to acknowledge in order to think about how oppression works and how it can be reduced. Attention to the interplay between emotions and oppression may allow us to understand why structures of oppression resist change. In addition, analysing the connections between oppressive structures and emotional dynamics is useful in accounting for the complex relations between social structures and individuals: insisting only on the structural element may have the downside of obfuscating individuals' complicity with oppression, and leave unaddressed questions of how individuals may be responsible for their participation in it. On the other hand, as argued above, insisting only on individuals' behaviour produces a very limited analysis and solutions.

While it is true that "for many of those who suffer injustice, 'private' attitudes are not the worst problem; systematic institutional subordination is" (Haslanger, 2012, p. 335), it is in my view still crucial

to examine how institutions themselves are catalysts of affects and involved in their social reproduction. When institutions reinforce sexism or racism, they "secrete" affects that play an important part in the formation of the characters and relationships of those who are disadvantaged or rewarded by them. Moreover, if oppression manifests as well through interpersonal exchanges, our emotions may have more impact and weight than Haslanger acknowledges. What's left out, what we need to address, is the role of emotions in sustaining and reinforcing oppression. This will be the subject of chapter 2.

1.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I took issue with Haslanger's account of oppression and argued that simply producing a definition fails to give us a rich enough understanding of this phenomenon. I challenged Haslanger's claim that, in the context of structural oppression, individuals are agents of oppression insofar as they "abuse" their power, and criticised her distinction between being merely privileged and being an oppressor. Drawing on Bailey's expansion of Frye's account of oppression, I contended that Haslanger's view of privilege is insufficient for explaining the ways in which the privileged are complicit in sustaining oppression. Finally, I offered a speculative proposal, to be expanded in the chapters that follow, that a richer and more nuanced account of oppression requires a deeper consideration of emotions.

2. The narrative way

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter ended with a preliminary defence of the importance of emotions in our conceptualization of oppression. In this chapter, I shall present a series of testimonies and narratives that provide evidence for the main argument of my thesis, namely, that emotions[8] play a fundamental role in oppression. In future chapters, I shall explore the nature of the role of emotions in oppression in more detail. In other words, through these preliminary examples, I shall show *that* emotions play an important part in oppression; in future chapters I aim to account for *how* they do so.

These testimonies, narratives and phenomenological analyses of the lived experience of oppression reveal essential features of this phenomenon. I start by offering arguments about the importance of this narrative and conceptual material for any philosophical theorizing of oppression (2.2). One dimension of racial oppression has consisted in treating the bodies of the oppressed as "spectacular", as the object of the *gazing, knowing white subject* (Yancy, 2017), and as the site of projection of the emotions of the oppressors. Precisely because this history has silenced and denied the agency of the oppressed, I argue that it is crucial to engage with their narratives and theorizing about their own condition. Doing so will clarify the methodology of my thesis.

In the final section of the chapter (2.3), I will contend that narratives and descriptions of the lived experience show how oppression is internalized through emotions such as shame, guilt and fear. Furthermore, I will contend that feelings of inadequacy, division and disorientation can often make resistance to oppression more difficult. Feelings of shame resulting in self-loathing and isolation are also an

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[8] In Chapter 3, I specify what kind of emotional phenomena will be the focus of my thesis.

important feature of alienation, as an extreme form of internalized oppression.

2.2 Why listening to the oppressed matters

Why must the voices of the oppressed be the starting point for any theorizing about oppression? In the case of oppression, failing to consider the narratives of those who experience it may lead to unsatisfactory accounts because, as I go on to argue, oppression is in significant ways an emotional, embodied experience. The work I present here adopts a critical stance to traditional ways of theorizing in philosophy, and in analytic philosophy more particularly, and advocates an alternative method that aims do greater justice to the experience of oppression.

2.2.1 The nature of the topic

A first argument in favour of theorizing on the basis of narratives concerns the nature of the object of our enquiry. To theorize about oppression is different from philosophizing about the concept of infinity or about the innateness of ideas. Because oppression has, as the narratives show, a strong emotional content, failing to engage with this dimension of the lived experience of oppression will considerably impoverish any theoretical enquiry into it. In analytic philosophy, theorizing tends to focus on abstract, sometimes unrealistic, thought experiments that typically do not deal with lived experiences[9]. Without implying that such exercises are devoid of usefulness as a means to testing philosophical "intuitions" and sharpening conceptual tools, I contend that an excessive emphasis on thought experiments carries the risk of over-simplifying and mischaracterizing the issue in question[10]. In

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[9] For a critique to an excessive emphasis on "streamlined hypothetical cases" in contemporary analytic philosophy, and a defence of the "philosophical benefits" in using of real-world cases, see Furman (2016, pp. 15–47).

[10] See examples like 'Stanley' and 'Larry' in Haslanger's account of oppression, discussed in the previous chapter.

fact, by focusing on thought experiments, we risk missing essential aspects of oppression, precisely because such experiments do not typically engage with the emotional content of oppression. Yet, the ways that oppressed groups narrate and theorize their experience shows that emotions play a central role. We therefore need a methodology that does not systematically exclude the voices of oppressed groups.

2.2.2 A method that reduces the reproduction of oppression

The argument for putting the voices of the oppressed at the centre of our philosophical enquiry is coupled with ethical concerns. Insofar as oppression is traditionally exercised in ways that reduce the oppressed to silence and passivity – for example, by discrediting their capacity to think and feel, or by denying them agency[11] – any account committed to fighting against oppression must be vigilant about the risks of reproducing methods of theorizing that may perpetuate these very same oppressive practices. Ignoring the accounts that members of oppressed groups give of their own experience and of their perception of the oppressors may therefore contribute to marginalizing and devaluing their experiences. As Patricia Hill Collins (2009) has argued about the articulation of Black feminist thought, some narratives and testimonies have been traditionally relegated to a status of "subjugated knowledge":

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[11] As George Yancy has argued, an important aspect of the traumatic experience to which Black bodies were subjected during the Middle Passage and upon their arrival in America lies in the "spectacularization" of their bodies that the "white gaze" operates. But if treating the Black body as an object of spectacle was one of the ways in which White domination was settled, Yancy argues, some of the first narratives of the lived experience of slavery must therefore be read as a direct challenge to the predominant "white epistemic regime". The treatment of the oppressed bodies as object of spectacle is not limited to eighteenth-century America. It continues to be present in the White imagination, both in the form of distorted representations that reduce marginalized bodies to figures of criminality, passivity, incapacity, which Yancy names the "Black imago", and through projective mechanisms that sustain White's constructions of their self-image. In this sense, more contemporary narratives that present the lived experience of anti-Black racism in the United States can also be understood as challenging the persistence of the "white epistemic regime" (Yancy, 2017)

> Because elite White men control Western structures of knowledge validation, their interests pervade the themes, paradigms, and epistemologies of traditional scholarship. As a result, U.S. Black women's experiences as well as those of women of African descent transnationally have been routinely distorted within or excluded from what counts as knowledge. (...) In this context, Black feminist thought can best be viewed as subjugated knowledge. Traditionally, the suppression of Black women's ideas within White-male-controlled social institutions led African-American women to use music, literature, daily conversations, and everyday behavior as important locations for constructing a Black feminist consciousness (Collins, 2009, pp. 269–270)

Because the epistemic norms that govern what are deemed to be legitimate processes and products of knowledge are not neutrally constructed, but rather benefit those in positions of power as well as reinforcing the norms that legitimize oppressive structures of power, the knowledge that oppressed groups have gathered tends to be discredited, which leads to their testimonies being disbelieved:

> Far from being the apolitical study of truth, epistemology points to the ways in which power relations shape who is believed and why. For example, various descendants of Sally Hemmings, a Black woman owned by Thomas Jefferson, claimed repeatedly that Jefferson fathered her children. These accounts forwarded by Jefferson's African American descendants were ignored in favor of accounts advanced by his White progeny. Hemmings's descendants were routinely disbelieved until their knowledge claims were validated by DNA testing. (Collins, 2009, p. 270)

One of the criteria for devaluing the knowledge of the oppressed lies in the marginal place given to individual narratives and emotions in methods for studying the experience of oppressed groups. For example, positivist methods of scientific research require by their very structure the exclusion of values and emotions in order to attain objective generalizations. They require, first, that the researchers distance themselves from the "object of study". Secondly, emotions must be absent from the investigation. Such criteria, argues Collins,

> ask African-American women to objectify [themselves], devalue [their] emotional life, displace [their] motivations for furthering knowledge

about Black women, and confront in adversarial relationship those with more social, economic, and professional power. (Collins, 2009, p. 270)

This is not, of course, because Collins would claim that the oppressed are more emotional than others, or that they're incapable of attaining scientific knowledge. Such claim would reinforce the ways in which racially and sexually oppressed groups have been denied a rational capacity, by being portrayed as having an animal-like predominant emotionality and an underdeveloped intellect. By contrast, Collins' claim consists in noting the epistemic value that emotion plays in how Black women produce and validate knowledge, which is connected to their lived experience of oppression: "lived experiences as a criterion for credibility frequently is invoked by U.S. Black women when making knowledge claims." (Collins, 2009, p. 276) This is also something that feminist scholars have analysed as a problem faced by women in general:

> Some feminist scholars claim that women as a group are more likely than men to use lived experiences in assessing knowledge claims. For example, a substantial number of the 135 women in a study of women's cognitive development were "connected knowers" and were drawn to the sort of knowledge that emerges from firsthand observation (Belenky et al., 1986). (Collins, 2009, p. 277)

Moreover, Collins points out how the articulation between personal experience and an "alternative epistemology" is often connected to an *ethic of caring*, in which emotions play a central role:

> 'Ole white preachers used to talk wid dey tongues widdout sayin' nothin', but Jesus told us slaves to talk wid our hearts' (Webber 1978, 127). These words of an ex-slave suggest that ideas cannot be divorced from the individuals who create and share them. This theme of talking with the heart taps the ethic of caring, another dimension of an alternative epistemology used by African-American women. Just as the ex-slave used the wisdom in his heart to reject the ideas of the preachers who talked 'wid dey tongues without sayin' nothin',' the ethic of caring suggests that personal expressiveness, emotions, and empathy are central to the knowledge validation process. (Collins, 2009, p. 282)

According to Collins, an important element of the ethic of caring is to consider emotions as appropriate when communicating knowledge: "Emotion indicates that a speaker believes in the validity of an argument" (Collins, 2009, p. 282). The greater place given to emotions in African-American communities echoes feminist analysis that highlight the role of personality in *connected knowing* which, although not gender specific, appears to be more widespread among women: "connected knowers see personality as adding to an individual's ideas and feel that the personality of each group member enriches a group's understanding" (Collins, 2009, p. 282). By contrast, *separate knowing* characterizes traditional methods of scientific knowledge where personality is deemed a distorting factor that ought to be put aside: "Separate knowers try to subtract the personality of an individual from his or her ideas because they see personality as biasing those ideas" (Collins, 2009, p. 283). In so far as those who are traditionally devoted to labours of care are women, and women of colour in particular, connected knowing may be a salient feature of their epistemic practice. Thus, the higher value given to emotions for constructing and assessing knowledge is not due to a pseudo innate or natural intellectual deficiency that would characterize women and people of colour in general. It may be that, in virtue of being marginalized from mainstream definition and production of knowledge, emotions tend to be more freely accepted as part of what counts as knowledge than in traditional white and male dominated scientific practices.

An important reason for basing our investigation on oppression on what the oppressed say about it finds its justification in the fact that such first-person accounts have remarkable epistemic value for members of oppressed groups themselves[12]. Furthermore, if we discard the

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[12] Collins points out the contradictions in which African-American men are situated with respect to predominant "unemotional" definitions of masculinity: "White women may have access to women's experiences that encourage emotion and expressiveness, but few White-controlled U.S. social institutions except the family validate this way of knowing. In contrast, Black women have long had the support of the Black church, an

emotional content as inessential to gaining knowledge about how oppression works, we may fail to understand some of its key aspects:

> Consider Ntozake Shange's description of one of the goals of her work: 'Our [Western] society allows people to be absolutely neurotic and totally out of touch with their feelings and everyone else's feelings, and yet be very respectable. This, to me, is a travesty… I'm trying to change the idea of seeing emotions and intellect as distinct faculties' (Tate 1983, 156). The Black women's blues tradition's history of personal expressiveness heals this binary that separates emotion from intellect. For example, in her rendition of 'Strange Fruit', Billie Holiday's lyrics blend seamlessly on Southern lynching. Without emotion, Aretha Franklin's (1967) cry for 'respect' would be eventually meaningless. (Collins, 2009, p. 282)

Considering emotions as devoid of epistemic value constitutes therefore rather a disadvantage for the knower, a disadvantage to which the dominant (White, male) may be more prone.

The narrative approach is all the more essential, given that the epistemic value of first-person narratives does not merely count as "theoretical" knowledge. The oppressed have developed knowledge by documenting and transmitting interpretations of their oppressors (their character, their habits) and by detecting the mechanisms of domination. As Collins highlights, the practical dimension of this form of knowledge has been crucial for resisting and surviving oppression. This aspect is captured through the distinction between "knowledge" and "wisdom":

> Mabel Lincoln eloquently summarizes the distinction between knowledge and wisdom: 'To black people like me, a fool is funny – you know, people who love to break bad, people you can't tell anything to, folks that would take a shotgun to a roach' (Gwaltney 1980, 68). African-American women need wisdom to know how to deal with the 'educated fools' who would 'take a shotgun to a roach'. As members of a subordinate group, Black women cannot afford to be fools of any type, for our objectification as the Other denies us the protections that White

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institution with deep roots in the African past and a philosophy that accepts and encourages expressiveness and an ethic of caring. Black men share in this Black cultural tradition. But they must resolve the contradictions that confront them in redefining Black masculinity in the face of abstract, unemotional notions of masculinity imposed on them (Hoch 1979)." (Collins, 2009, pp. 283–284)

skin, maleness and wealth confer. This distinction between knowledge and wisdom, and the use of experience as the cutting edge in dividing them, has been key to Black women's survival. (Collins, 2009, p. 276)

Therefore, taking the voices of the oppressed as the basis for a philosophical investigation of oppression is also crucial if we aim to understand how the knowledge gathered by the oppressed about their own condition, and about the character of the oppressors, has been a key element for developing strategies of resistance and survival.

2.2.3 Some limitations

I have argued so far that narrative testimonies should inform philosophical theorizing on oppression because: (1) narratives show that oppression has a strong emotional content that analytical accounts tend to neglect; (2) narratives and emotions have been part of the theoretical arsenal of oppressed groups, on the basis of which they theorize about oppression and gather instrumental knowledge for resisting and surviving oppression. Refusing to engage with this material therefore risks (a) producing an etiolated account of what oppression is; (b) reproducing oppressive methods that silence or devalue the voices of the oppressed; (c) failing to understand that the key value of this material for the oppressed themselves is indicative of an essential feature of oppression, namely, its emotional component.

Insofar as I interpret some of the narratives to show how they reveal an emotional content of oppression, I am engaging in a form of discourse that involves speaking for and about others. As Linda Alcoff (1991) has argued, this entails

> engaging in the act of representing the other's need, goals, situation, and in fact, who they are. I am representing them *as* such and such, or in post-structuralist terms, I am participating in the construction of their subject positions. This act of representation cannot be understood as founded on an act of discovery wherein I discover their true selves and then simply relate my discovery. I will take it as a given that such representations are in every case mediated and the product of

interpretation (which is connected to the claim that a speaker's location has epistemic salience.) (Alcoff, 1992, p. 4)

When I present narrative material as evidence of the role played by emotions in oppression, my reading and interpretation of it will, inevitably, have its insights and limitations (as would anyone's). Although, as Alcoff argues, some people take these to be reasons for rejecting the legitimacy of speaking for others, I, like her, do not consider disengaging from speaking about the oppression of others to be a defensible position:

> We certainly want to encourage a more receptive listening on the part of the discursively privileged and discourage presumptuous and oppressive practices of speaking for. But a retreat from speaking for will not result in an increase in receptive listening in all cases; it may result merely in a retreat into a narcissistic yuppie lifestyle in which a privileged person takes no responsibility for her society whatsoever. (Alcoff, 1991, p. 17)

This being said, members of a group of oppressors may encounter many obstacles when interpreting what the oppressed say, not least because they will have internalized multiple prejudices that are not easily overcome. As George Yancy argues in the case of racial oppression, to be white *is* to be racist insofar as there is never an "arrival" at a pure, non-racist state of mind. Yancy "critique[s] the performance metaphor of "undoing" whiteness, arguing that this process does not culminate in a white person's having "arrived" to a form of a static anti-racist identity" (Yancy, 2017, p. xxxviii). Anti-racism in this sense is not an identity, but an always ongoing effort. As an example of the obstacles it faces, Yancy shows how some ways of resisting oppression went undetected by oppressors, insofar as they were "beyond [their] cognitive range":

> According to Jenkins, 'Although Blacks showed humble and meek behavior in interracial situations historically, the intent of such behavior was often quite at variance with such a demeanor. Thus, at times Blacks intended in their meekness to act out of a conception of personal (Christian) dignity ('turn the other cheek') and/or moral superiority'. Where whites could only see meek or obsequious forms of comportment, Blacks *intended* the very opposite of such constructions.

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(...) In short, Black people engaged in acts of resistance from a hidden transcript that was beyond the cognitive range of white oppressors. (Yancy, 2017, p. 118)

Therefore, even when arguing from a perspective opposed to oppression, there may be multiple ways in which our interpretations, our "speaking for others", fail to do justice to their voices. However, the fact that our socio-political situations are "epistemically salient", as Alcoff contends, does not entail a complete inability to understand essential aspects of the experience of those who live different situations of oppression from ours. Following Alcoff, situatedness in a particular social position must not be understood in a reductionist and essentialist sense:

> To say that location *bears* on meaning and truth is not the same as saying that location *determines* meaning and truth. And location is not a fixed essence absolutely authorizing one's speech in the way that God's favor absolutely authorized the speech of Moses. Location and positionality should not be conceived as one-dimensional or static, but as multiple and with varying degrees of mobility. What it means, then, to speak from or within a group and/or a location is extremely complex. To the extent that location is not a fixed essence, and to the extent that there is an uneasy, under-determined, and contested relationship between location on the one hand and meaning and truth on the other, we cannot reduce evaluation of meaning and truth to a simple identification of the speaker's location. (Alcoff, 1991, p. 17)

The argument against a reductionist and essentialist understanding of social location is connected to the claim that we are not grounded in our location in isolation from others:

> there is no neutral place to stand free and clear in which one's words do not prescriptively affect or mediate the experience of others, nor is there a way to decisively demarcate a boundary between one's location and all others. (Alcoff, 1991, p. 20)

In a similar vein, Yancy argues that

> Black communities' perceptions are not in principle inaccessible to those not from them. In short, we can communicate the shared experiences, conceptual frameworks, and background assumptions to others if they

are open to instruction and willing to take the time to listen. (Yancy, 2017, p. 25)

Insofar as my account draws on the voices of oppressed groups, my hope is that some of the problematic practices that may be adopted when speaking for/about others are here at least reduced. But this does not entail that I will not, in a way, speak for and about them, as my account will provide some of my own interpretations.

I do not pretend to claim with the former remarks that my approach fully overcomes the limitations mentioned above by merely declaring an awareness of their existence[13]. My point is precisely to argue in favour of speaking for others, despite the risks and limitations inherent to this endeavour. I aim to inscribe this work in the continuous effort that anti-racist and anti-sexist commitment requires, namely, in an effort "to forge new ways of seeing, knowing and being." (Yancy, 2017, xxxviii). I will however make a choice as to which testimonies I'm using for my account. These are narratives of particularly skilled writers, who are eloquent in the rendition of the emotional dimensions of oppression. It may be objected that this choice implies a potential double-silencing of the oppressed: those who fail to articulate such powerful narratives do not inform my account. I do not deny that this is a problem and that, when attending to the voices of the oppressed, we need to bear in mind that these limitations exist. Not only is there a problem in not hearing those who cannot speak, but also in the fact that those who have spoken are in many ways marginalized from mainstream theoretical production. Much work needs to be done to avoid a situation where these voices

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[13] As Sara Ahmed has noted, "declarations of whiteness" are non-performative and function often to conceal the perpetuation of oppression: "The declarative mode, as a way of doing something, involves a fantasy of transcendence in which 'what' is transcended is the very thing 'admitted to' in the declaration: so, to put it simply, if we admit to being bad, then we show that we are good (...). So it is in this specific sense that I have argued that anti-racism is not performative" (Ahmed, 2004). See also Alcoff: "Clearly, the problematic of speaking for has at its center a concern with accountability and responsibility. Acknowledging the problem of speaking for others cannot result in eliminating a speaker's accountability". (Alcoff, 1991, p. 16)

remain unheard. The account I articulate aims to contribute to this debate.

There is, of course, no perfect method for theorizing on this matter, and it would be naive to look for one. I here take up the challenge of attending to the voices of the oppressed and interpreting them as revealing essential emotional components of oppression. Doing so, though not without its pitfalls, seems to me as at least one of the best ways of reducing practices of "epistemic oppression" (Dotson, 2012) that typically silence and objectify the oppressed. Whether I avoid such pitfalls or not will be a matter of continuous critical revision and rectification.

2.2.4 Remarks about the choice of the narrative material

Before moving on to discussing the narratives that I present as evidence for the main claims of my thesis, a few remarks about the choice of this material and about the way I read it are in order.

First, some of the narratives were chosen in virtue of their authoritative character within a tradition that has recognised them as a referent in the way oppressed people have sought to make sense of the experience of oppression. They have acquired, in this sense, a particular standing as narratives of oppression. Such is the case of W. E. B. Du Bois's, Frederick Douglass's and Audre Lorde's autobiographical narratives, which are particularly relevant as accounts of the lived experience of oppression. Other texts that also combine first person narrative and philosophical analysis, such as Gloria Anzaldúa's, have equally been recognised as a referent within a tradition that seeks to understand experiences of uprootedness, racism and sexism, although they are less commonly used in the context of Anglo-analytic philosophy. Works of fiction are included when they provide particularly illuminating accounts of the alienating effects of extreme oppression, as is the case with Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. Morrison's fiction

attempts to make sense of the experience of those "who collapse, silently, anonymously, with no voice to express or acknowledge it." (Morrison, 1992, p. viii). Her story gives voice to those who cannot express their own condition. As she describes it, her fiction is her "attempt to shape a silence while breaking it." (Morrison, 1992, p. xi)

In highlighting the standing of these narratives, I am not making simple "appeal to authority". Rather, these texts have exceptional relevance because they constitute the cultural ground in which a tradition of resistance to oppression has anchored its roots. Familiar as they may be, these texts are key resources through which oppressed people comprehend and articulate their experience. In a future, longer work, it would be good to include other less well-known narratives that would also offer evidence for the main arguments of this thesis. In the present context, however, I will mainly draw on better known narratives that clearly reveal the phenomenon with which I am concerned.

Although these narratives are part of a classical body of literature on first person accounts of oppression, the use I make of them is less common in Anglo-Analytic philosophy. While I use narrative material to illustrate some of the theoretical claims of my thesis, I do not proceed in the way philosophers sometimes tend to do it, i.e., by first developing an abstract theoretical argument and subsequently illustrating it through relevant concrete examples. Rather, in starting by discussing these texts, I aim to show how the narratives themselves throw light on the problem with which I am concerned. It is not as though we have, on the one hand, a body of data or a conceptual analysis about the emotional experience of oppression, and on the other hand a series of narrative illustrations of it. Rather, as I seek to show, the two are intertwined. Works of autobiography, biography and fiction provide some of the most important materials on which theorists of oppression base their conclusions. We shall see this, for example, in Sara Ahmed's use of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, and in my own approach.

The debate about the frontiers between autobiographical narrative and fiction, and about their different methods of interpretation is an extremely complex one, and its examination is beyond the scope of the philosophical work I undertake in this thesis. Similarly complex is the question of what distinguishes literary autobiography from fiction and from "lived experience". In a longer work, it would be useful to frame the differences between these genres in more detail. However, in the context of this thesis, I will treat them homogeneously as one of the best ways to get at the phenomena that I intend to shed light upon. I shall read these various narratives as revealing key elements of the lived experience of oppression, without implying that the multifaceted aspects of lived experience are *exhausted* through these narratives, and without contending that lived experience is simply delivered through them as a "pure", unmodified product. Lived experience of oppression is always to some extent 'theorised', if only through its use of language, and attempts to theorise oppression are bound to draw more or less heavily on this lived experience.

In subsequent chapters, some of these narratives will recur, as they will allow me to highlight other dimensions of the emotional phenomena that, I contend, play a significant role in the reproduction of oppression. As I shall argue, the points I have just made are also applicable to the situation and understanding of oppressors. Narratives of oppression also provide vital insights into their emotions.

2.3 Oppression is an emotional matter: an illustration

In this section, I move on to present some narratives that illustrate the main claims of my thesis, namely that oppression partly shapes the emotional lives of oppressed and oppressors[14], and that emotions play a role in sustaining and reinforcing oppression. More precisely, I aim to show that emotions play a crucial role in the *internalization* of oppression; how emotions are involved in *alienation*; and how, through emotional mechanisms*, resistance* to oppression is made more difficult.

2.3.1 Internalization of oppression through emotions

I begin my exploration of oppression as an emotional phenomenon with two narratives that describe early memories of experiencing racism in childhood. The first is narrated by the African-American lesbian poet Audre Lorde, the second by the nineteenth-century African American writer W.E.B. Du Bois. Often, narratives that account for the lived experience of oppression identify a particular event as the origin of a more acute awareness of oppression, an awareness that is first emotional rather than conceptual, but that is decisive for the writer's development.

2.3.1.1 Feeling defective

Lorde's narrative presents one of her first experiences of being on the receiving end of White people's racial hatred, an experience that she presents as preceding any form of linguistic or conceptual grasp of the meaning of this violence:

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[14] I will focus on the emotional patterns of oppressors in future chapters.

The AA subway train to Harlem. I clutch my mother's sleeve, her arms full of shopping bags, christmas-heavy. The wet smell of winter clothes, the train's lurching. My mother spots an almost seat, pushes my little snowsuited body down. On one side of me a man reading a paper. On the other, a woman in a fur hat staring at me. Her mouth twitches as she stares and then her gaze drops down, pulling mine with it. Her leather-gloved hand plucks at the line where my new blue snowpants and her sleek fur coat meet. She jerks her coat closer to her. I look. I do not see whatever terrible thing she is seeing on the seat between us – probably a roach. But she has communicated her horror to me. It must be something very bad from the way she's looking, so I pull my snowsuit closer to me away from it, too. When I look up the woman is still staring at me, her nose holes and her eyes huge. And suddenly I realize there is nothing crawling up the seat between us; it is me she doesn't want her coat to touch. The fur brushed past my face as she stands with a shudder and holds on to strap in the speeding train. Born and bred a New York City child, I quickly slide over to make room for my mother to sit down. No word has been spoken. I'm afraid to say anything to my mother because I don't know what I've done. I look at the sides of my snowpants, secretly. Is there something on them? Something's going on here I do not understand, but I will never forget it. Her eyes. The flared nostrils. The hate. (Lorde, 2017, pp. 135–136).

The painful experience is remembered as something that was felt before it could be properly understood or named. In this case, first memories of the harms of oppression are recognized through their strong emotional impact, before they could be even analysed or put into words:

I don't like to talk about hate. I don't like to remember the cancellation and hatred, heavy as my wished-for death, seen in the eyes of so many white people from the time I could see. It was echoed in newspapers, and movies and holy pictures and comic books and Amos 'n Andy radio programs. I had no tools to dissect it, no language to name it. (Lorde, 2017, p. 135)

After narrating this early memory of confused feelings of inadequacy and fear ("I'm afraid to say anything to my mother because I don't know what I've done"), Lorde recounts a series of similar episodes in which the hatred and contempt of the white world was communicated to her:

> My three-year-old eyes ache from the machinery used to test them. (...) [A] group of white men in white coats discuss my peculiar eyes. Only one voice remains in my memory. "From the looks of her she's probably simple, too". They all laugh. (Lorde, 2017, p. 136)

Further on:

> The Story Hour librarian reading *Little Black Sambo.* Her white fingers hold up the little book about a shoebutton-faced little boy with big red lips and many pigtails and a hatful of butter. I remember the pictures hurting me and my thinking again that there must be something wrong with me because everybody else is laughing and besides the library downtown has given this little book a special prize, the library lady tells us: 'So what's wrong with you, anyway? Don't be so *sensitive!*' (Lorde, 2017, p. 137. Italics in the original)

Lorde's text shows how quick the step can be between being the target of racial hatred and incorporating it so that it comes to be felt as belonging to a defective self: "I'm afraid to say anything to my mother because *I don't know what I've done*. I look at the sides of my snowpants, secretly. Is there something on them?"; "I remember the pictures hurting me and my thinking again that *there must be something wrong with me*" (my italics): through this account of painful childhood memories of racial abuse, Lorde points at how being the target of racial oppression may lead to internalizing the oppressor's gaze. Her narrative shows therefore how structures of oppression are internalized through emotional mechanisms, such as shame, guilt, or similar emotional states through which the self appears as defective.

Lorde also expresses how, while hurt by the racial stereotypes in the story of *Little Black Sambo*, she has also internalized the White oppressors' punitive voice, a voice that does not allow her to *feel* the effects of oppression, that de-legitimizes the emotions of those who are the target of violence: "So what's wrong with you, anyway? Don't be so *sensitive!*" Even justified pain can be immediately

perceived as a sign of defectiveness for which the oppressed are to blame. This is a first example of how in narrative accounts of oppression, emotions have a salient role: the wrongs of racial oppression are here recounted as producing a cluster of negative, disempowering emotional effects such as shame, fear, and a sense of being deficient or inadequate. The wrongs are amplified by the fact that the workings of oppression, its mechanisms, come to be integrated by the oppressed, who tend to reproduce them, like an echo. For the child, racial oppression's first meaning is emotional, but by internally replicating the censoring, self-blaming voice, the mechanisms are already in place to work against recognizing these wrongs for what they are. Racial oppression is shown here as harming in at least a double way: by producing negative disempowering emotions, and by denying the oppressed even the right to feel such effects. One ought to remain unaffected, not to complain, not to resist. Perhaps, then, this is an indication of the fact that, because resistance to oppression requires the ability to *feel* such emotions and recognize them as the effect of oppressive structures of power, it's in the interest of these same structures to blame the oppressed for the emotions they experience.

Lorde's narrative shows how oppression is a strongly emotional experience, but her account is of course also testimony of her resistance. Her writings reveal how, precisely because power circulates through emotions, it takes resolute emotional work to push against it. Lorde recounts how *anger*, one of her mother's emotional legacies, was crucial for pushing against the deleterious effects of racial oppression:

> My mother taught me to survive from a very early age by her own example. Her silences also taught me isolation, fury, mistrust, self-rejection, and sadness. My survival lay in learning how to use the weapons she gave me, also, to fight against those things within myself, unnamed.

And survival is the greatest gift of love. Sometimes, for Black mothers, it is the only gift possible, and tenderness gets lost. My mother bore me into life as if etching an angry message into marble. Yet I survived the hatred around me because my mother made me know, by oblique reference, that no matter what went on at home, outside shouldn't oughta be the way it was. But since it was that way outside, I moved in a fen of unexplained anger that encircled me and spilled out against whomever was closest that shared those hated selves. Of course I did not realise it at the time. The anger lay like a pool of acid deep inside me, and whenever I felt deeply, I felt it, attaching itself in the strangest places. Upon those powerless as I. (Lorde, 2017, pp. 138–139)

Resistance, therefore, required not only anger, but learning to *train* this emotion to make it more effective: "How to train that anger with accuracy rather than deny it has been one of the major tasks of my life." (Lorde, 2017, p. 133)

2.3.1.2 Feeling divided and disoriented

A second example of how oppression is internalized through an emotional process is narrated by W.E.B. Du Bois in an early memory of rejection. Du Bois recounts a shocking event which revealed White children's perception of him:

> (…) being a problem is a strange experience, — peculiar even for one who has never been anything else, save perhaps in babyhood and in Europe. It is in the early days of rollicking boyhood that the revelation first bursts upon one, all in a day, as it were. I remember well when the shadow swept across me. I was a little thing, away up in the hills of New England, where the dark Housatonic winds between Hoosac and Taghkanic to the sea. In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards – ten cents a package – and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card, — refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. (Du Bois, 1994, p. 2)

Although he was structurally oppressed, Du Bois hadn't experienced this dimension of himself as different and as unworthy of the White children's appreciation. This shocking episode is at the origin of what he will later theorize as the phenomenon of *double-consciousness*:

> this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (Du Bois, 1994, p. 2)

The experience of double-consciousness is analysed by Ami Harbin as an emotional process, as a form of *disorientation* constituted by a variety of feelings:

> Du Bois describes the feelings of double consciousness as conflictedness, a lack of effective strength, being weighed down or handicapped while needing to run, despair and helpless humiliation. Du Bois describes how oppressive identification – the simultaneous identification and marginalization as "other" – introduces a tension between who one wants to be (someone who "sits with Shakespeare"; Du Bois 1996, 90) and who one is allowed to be. Seeing oneself through two visions at once makes for a lack of ease and a struggle to proceed in making plans and relating to others. In other words, double consciousness, as Du Bois identifies it, is a kind of disorientation. (Harbin, 2016, p. 72)

In Du Bois' case, it seems that feelings of shame were counteracted by contempt for the White world. Du Bois describes how he didn't seek to tear down the veil that separated him from the other children, but "held it all beyond it in common contempt, and lived above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows" (Du Bois, 1994, p. 2). But the power of contempt fades with the years, when the opportunities to which he aspired are eventually out of reach. Still, Du Bois tells his determination:

> But they should not keep these prizes, I said; some, all, I would wrest from them. Just how I would do it I could never decide: by reading law, by healing the sick, by telling the wonderful tales that swam in my head, — some way. (Du Bois, 1994, p. 2).

For others, however, "the strife was not so fiercely sunny". The "dead weight of social degradation" burdened the lives of those for whom resistance was unavailable:

> (…) their youth shrunk into tasteless sycophancy or into silent hatred of the pale world about them and mocking distrust of everything white; or wasted itself in a bitter cry, *Why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in mine own house*? The shades of the prison-house closed round about us all: walls strait and stubborn to the whitest, but relentlessly narrow, tall and unscalable to sons of night who must plod darkly on in resignation, or beat unavailing palms against the stone, or steadily, half hopelessly, watch the streak of blue above. (Du Bois, 1994, p. 2. Italics in original)

In these cases, a cluster of disempowering feelings erode the capacity for resistance: the "silent hatred", we may suspect, is all the more corrosive that it remains repressed ("silent"); cynicism ("mocking distrust"), hopelessness and bitterness makes them sink deeper into impotence.

Both Lorde and Du Bois recount these transformative experiences as 'structuring shocks'[15] which configure the emotional topography of their lives. Their strong emotional impact is remembered as the way in which racial oppression was early on signified to them. The cluster of disempowering emotions (feeling defective, painfully divided, hopeless and bitter) reported through these accounts suggests that said emotions are significant features of oppression.

The two examples I have offered have to do with experiences of violent exclusion and double-consciousness in the context of the

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[15] I borrow this expression, dear to my Literature Professor in hypokhâgne, Mme. Andrau.

racial oppression that operates along the Black/White binary. But there's also a particular form of emotional phenomenon that characterizes the oppression of those who experience the difficulties of being in-between cultures, and of not belonging to any culture in particular. This is the phenomenon described by Gloria Anzaldúa (1999) as the "*mestiza* consciousness", which captures the migrant experience across the border between the United States and Mexico. This experience of oppression has to do with cultural imperialism, racism and economic exclusion:

Una lucha de fronteras/ **A Struggle of Borders**:

Because I, a *mestiza,*
continually walk out of one culture
and into another,
because I am in all cultures at the same time,
alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro,
me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio.
estoy norteada por todas las voces que me hablan
simultáneamente.

The ambivalence from the clash of voices results in mental and emotional states of perplexity. Internal strife results in insecurity and indecisiveness. The *mestiza's* dual or multiple personality is plagued by psychic restlessness.
In a constant state of mental nepantilism, an Aztec word meaning torn between ways, *la mestiza* is a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another. Being tricultural, monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual, speaking a patois, and in a state of perpetual transition, the *mestiza* faces the dilemma of the mixed breed: which collectivity does the daughter of a darkskinned mother listen to? (…)
Within us and within *la cultura chicana*, commonly held beliefs of the white culture attack commonly held beliefs of the Mexican culture, and both attack commonly held beliefs of the indigenous culture. Subconsciously, we see an attack on ourselves and our beliefs as a threat and we attempt to block with a counterstance. (Anzaldúa, 1999, pp. 99–100)

This feeling torn is made even more painful by the fact that it is often even difficult to identify the composition of this mixed heritage:

***El camino de la mestiza/* The Mestiza Way**

> Caught between the sudden contraction, the breath sucked in and
> the endless space, the brown woman stands still, looks at the sky.
> She decides to go down digging her way along the roots of trees. (…)
> Her first step is to take inventory. *Despojando, desgranando,
> quitando la paja.* Just what did she inherit from her ancestors? This
> weight on her back – which is the baggage from the Indian mother,
> which the baggage from the Spanish father, which the baggage from
> the Anglo? (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 104)

In this context, the experience of exclusion and the shame that it
produces is expressed through what Anzaldúa calls "linguistic
terrorism": "Chicanas who grew up speaking Chicano Spanish have
internalized the belief that we speak poor Spanish. It is illegitimate,
a bastard language." (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 80). Chicanas are therefore
not recognized by other Spanish-speaking Latinas: "If a person,
Chicana or Latina, has low estimation of my native tongue, she also
has a low estimation of me." (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 80). On the White,
Anglo-world side, this negation of cultural and linguistic identity is
seen by Anzaldúa as one of the factors for economic disadvantage:
"Chicanos and other people of color suffer economically for not
acculturating. This voluntary (yet forced) alienation makes for
psychological conflict, a kind of dual identity (…)" (Anzaldúa, 1999, p.
85). This suggests that the experience of economic and racial
oppression is significantly intertwined with emotional elements.

2.3.1.3 Alienation and self-loathing

The contrast between Lorde's and Du Bois' ability to use,
respectively, anger and contempt to resist the debilitating effects of
racial violence, and those who sink into hopelessness and despair,
points in the direction of other possible ways of internalizing
oppression through emotion. For Lorde and Du Bois, recognizing the
connection between their feelings of shame, guilt or inadequacy and

the political structures that oppress them seems essential for developing strategies for resistance. However, in some cases, oppression is internalized without filter, as it were, when the self becomes unable to affirm itself by defying the series of representations and norms that the "white epistemic regime", as Yancy puts it, aims to impose. We may conceptualize such cases, as Fanon does, as instances of alienation, in the Marxian sense (Marx, 1975)[16], i.e., as being separated from one's *species-being*. The alienated subject relates to herself almost exclusively through the oppressor's representational framework, which results in her being internally divided and unable to develop a loving relationship with herself.

An example of this form of alienation can be found in Toni Morrison's (2016) novel *The Bluest Eye*. In this fiction, Morrison explores "Not resistance to the contempt of others, ways to deflect it, but the far more tragic and disabling consequences of accepting rejection as legitimate, as self-evident" (Morrison, 2016, p. VII). While most victims of racial contempt are able to "grow beyond it", Morrison notes,

> there are some who collapse, silently, anonymously, with no voice to express it or acknowledge it. They are invisible. The death of self-esteem can occur quickly, easily in children, before their ego has "legs", so to speak. Couple the vulnerability of youth with indifferent parents, dismissive adults, and a world, which, in its language,

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[16] "Marx distinguishes four results of the 'national-economic fact' of alienated labor: alienated labor alienates the worker, first, from the product of his labor; second, from his own activity; third, from what Marx, following Feuerbach, calls species-being; and fourth, from other human beings. Alienation, then, can be understood as a disturbance of the relations one has, or should have, to oneself and to the world (whether the social or natural world). (…) [As] alienated one does not *possess* what one has oneself produced (…); one *has no control over,* or power to *determine*, what one does and is therefore powerless and unfree; at the same time, one is unable to *realize oneself* in one's own activities and is therefore exposed to meaninglessness, impoverishes, and instrumental relations with which one cannot identify and in which one experiences oneself as internally divided" (Jaeggi, 2014, pp. 11–14)

laws, and images, re-enforces despair, and the journey of destruction is sealed. (Morrison, 2016, p. VIII)

The Bluest Eye tells the story of a young Black girl, Pecola, who has so deeply internalized the "white gaze" that she becomes obsessed by her desire to have blue eyes. The story is based on an autobiographical event, a conversation that the author had as a child with a friend, as they were starting elementary school: "She said she wanted blue eyes. I looked around to picture her with them and was violently repelled by what I imagined she would look like if she had her wish." (Morrison, 2016, p. VIII). The novel is the author's attempt to make sense of that desire: "Implicit in her desire was racial self-loathing. And twenty years later, I was still wondering about how one learns that. Who told her? Who made her feel that it was better to be a freak than what she was?" (Morrison, 2016, p. IX)

Although Pecola's story is, according to Morrison, not representative of most of the experiences of Black girls, she nevertheless posits that "some aspects of [Pecola's] woundability were lodged in all young girls", in the multiple ways that racial self-contempt is systematically enforced by racial and sexual standards of beauty where whiteness is the desirable norm:

> "Please, God," she whispered into the palm of her hand. "Please make me disappear." She squeezed her eyes shut. Little parts of her body faded away. Now slowly, now with a rush. Slowly again. Her fingers went, one by one; then her arms disappeared all the way to the elbow. Her feet now. Yes, that was good. The legs all at once. It was the hardest above the thighs. She had to be real still and pull. Her stomach would not go. But finally it, too, went away. Then her chest, her neck. The face was hard, too. Almost done, almost. Only her tight, tight eyes were left. They were always left.
> Try as she might, she could never get her eyes to disappear. So what was the point? They were everything. Everything was there, in them. All of those pictures, all of those faces. She had long ago given up the idea of running away to see new pictures, new faces, as Sammy had so often done. (...) It wouldn't have worked anyway. As long as she looked the way she did, as long as she was ugly, she would have to stay with these people. Somehow she belonged to them. Long hours she sat, looking in the mirror, trying

to discover the secret of the ugliness, the ugliness that made her
ignored or despised at school, by teachers and classmates alike. She
was the only member of her class who sat alone at a double desk.
(...) Her teachers had always treated her this way. They tried never
to glance at her, and called her only when everyone was required to
respond. (...)

It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes,
those eyes that held the pictures, and knew the sights — if those
eyes of her where different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself
would be different. Her teeth were good, and at least her nose was
not big and flat like some of those who were thought so cute. If she
looked different, beautiful, maybe Cholly would be different, and
Mrs. Breedlove too. Maybe they'd say, "Why, look at pretty-eyed
Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty eyes."

> *Pretty eyes. Pretty blue eyes. Big pretty blue eyes.*
> *Run, Jip, run. Jip runs, Alice runs. Alice has blue eyes.*
> *Jerry has blue eyes. Jerry runs. Alice runs. They run*
> *with their blue eyes. Four blue eyes. Four pretty*
> *blue eyes. Blue-sky eyes. Blue-like Mrs. Forrest's*
> *blue blouse eyes Morning-glory-blue-eyes.*
> *Alice-and-Jerry-blue-storybook-eyes.*

Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes. Fervently,
for a year she had prayed. Although somewhat discouraged, she was
not without hope. To have something as wonderful as that happen
would take a long, long time. (Morrison, 2016, pp. 43–44)

The Bluest Eye is the story of an eye that not only internalizes the
white gaze but assimilates it so deeply that it ends up being dazzled
by it. The kind of double-consciousness that Du Bois presents
presupposes subjects' ability to distance themselves from the *Black
imago* (Yancy, 2017) that the white world aims to impose on them.
The white imaginary refuses, for example, the intellectual
aspirations of a Black man, but this does not inevitably lead subjects
to renounce imagining themselves in ways that challenge
reductionist and dehumanizing representations. Therefore, while for
Du Bois the suffering of double-consciousness stems from feeling
divided between how the world looks at the subject and how the
subject sees itself, in Pecola's case the tragedy consists in the
impossibility of resisting and challenging the white norm, accepted

as an absolute. Pecola does not only suffer because her desire to be *seen* as capable, lovable and beautiful is systematically denied to her. Her tragedy is, more radically, that she cannot "invest any narcissistic libido in [her] body image" (James S. , Feminism in Philosophy of Mind. The Question of Personal Identity., 2000), i.e., she cannot see herself as worthy of appreciation and love.

This idea of alienation from the body, in the form of a radical rejection of the self when subjects adhere to the norms of the dominant group, is discussed by Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008). In the chapter "The Woman of Color and the White Man", Fanon presents the autobiographical text of Mayotte Capécia, *Je suis Martiniquaise,* as an exemplary case of psychic alienation, as a "vast delusion": "Mayotte loves a white man to whom she submits in everything. He is her lord. She asks nothing, demands nothing, except a bit of whiteness in her life." (Fanon, 2008, p. 29). Through Capécia's own account, we may see how powerfully the emotion of shame can function as the channel of oppressive structures of power that disempower the self. Oppression may lead the oppressed to feel shame/guilt as if it was something they *should* feel, as the natural response to their inadequacy:

> Among André's colleagues, who like him marooned in the Antilles by the war, some had managed to have their wives join them. I understood that André could not always hold himself aloof from them. I also accepted the fact that I was barred from this society because I was a woman of color; but I could not help being jealous. It was no good explaining to me that his private life was something that belonged to him alone and that his social and military life was something else, which was not within his control; I nagged so much that one day he took me to Didier. We spent the evening in one of those villas that I had admired since my childhood, with two officers and their wives. The women kept watching me with a condescension that I found unbearable. I felt that I was wearing too much makeup, that I was not properly dressed, that I was not doing André credit, perhaps simply because of the color of my skin — in short, I spent so miserable an evening that I decided I would never again ask André to take me with him. (Capécia, M. 1948, p. 150, as cited in Fanon, 2008, p. 29)

Insofar as they radically affect one's self-image and self-esteem, shame and guilt appear here as very effective tools of domination. Fanon sees this case as exemplary of how the dominated become haunted by feelings of inferiority which "have a compulsive quality" (Fanon, 2008, p. 35), and for which they attempt to overcompensate. In Capécia's case, this overcompensation takes the form of a search for "lactification" (Fanon, 2008, p. 33) through the blue-eyed French White man's love. We can see the narrative as showing how mechanisms of power penetrate the person's sense of self-worth by dictating how they "should" be, and how they should feel, in a world that defines them as defective.

Furthermore, the shame caused by oppression has alienating, depersonalizing effects insofar as it deprives the self of a certain set of capacities. One of the dimensions of this is the infantilization manifest in Capécia's narrative. Capécia does not display an ability to vindicate her rights and assert her self-worth on an equal footing with André. Although she expresses her wish to exist in a society that excludes her, and resents André for it, she despises her claims as those of a capricious child unwilling to understand reasonable explanations ("It was no good explaining to me that his private life was something that belonged to him"). Instead of righteous anger or indignation, Capécia is consumed with jealousy. In her protests, she does not perceive herself as demanding what is just; rather, she disqualifies her insistence as childish "nagging".

Capécia mainly blames herself for the humiliation she endured at *Didier's*. Rather than placing the blame on the way the oppressors contemptuously gaze at her, and on the oppressive character of the racist society in which she lives, she considers herself to be the problem. The shame felt after being the object of the contemptuous gaze of White women is assumed as a failure attributable to herself (wearing too much makeup; not properly

dressed). The passage shows the collaboration between oppressive structures and feelings of shame and guilt. It illustrates how, because of the shame-inducing structures of power, oppressed subjects may come to develop an image of the self as inherently defective.

Moreover, Capécia seems to perceive herself as a sort of shame-transmitting agent, as she feels that her mere presence negatively taints André's status ("I felt (…) that I was not doing André credit"). Shame may be here combined with a sense of guilt for failing to uphold the higher social status of her lover. Finally, the conclusion of the episode shows that Capécia moves from the feelings of shame and guilt to a resigned acceptance of her inferior position: "I decided I would never again ask André to take me with him".

The shame that Capécia expresses in her narrative is all the more disempowering because it remains unrecognized as the effect of racial oppression. This lack of recognition undermines Capécia's capacity to effectively challenge the status quo. Like Morrison's Pecola, Mayotte Capécia's desire for a form of emancipation takes a self-destructive turn. She embraces the terms of a racist ideology by seeking to "whiten" her "race" through André[17].

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[17] Fanon also notes how Capécia's occupation is intertwined with this desire: she works as a *blanchisseuse,* a laundress, which in French is literally a "whitener". She takes pride in being the best *blanchisseuse* in her town: "From the first this is how the problem appears to Mayotte — at the fifth year of her age and the third page of her book: 'She took her inkwell out of the desk and emptied it over his head'. This was her own way of turning whites into blacks. But she quite soon recognized the futility of such attempts; and then there were Lou-louze and her mother, who told her that life was difficult for a woman of color. So, since she could no longer try to blacken, to negrify the world, she was going to try, in her own body and in her own mind, to bleach it. To start, she would become a laundress: 'I charged high prices, higher than elsewhere, but I worked better, and since people in Fort-de-France like their linens clean, they came to me. In the end, they were proud to have their laundry done by Mayotte.'" (Fanon, 2008, p. 31)

2.3.1.4 Alienation and isolation

So far, I have aimed to show how a cluster of feelings of inadequacy, hopelessness, bitterness, fear, shame and guilt disempower oppressed subjects by making it difficult – in some cases, impossible – for them to challenge and resist the impositions of the white imaginary on their self-image, with profound consequences for the development of self-esteem and self-confidence. I discussed extreme cases of alienation as being radically disaffected from one's own body, and therefore, as being incapable of having a loving and caring relationship with oneself. But alienation in the sense of being estranged and isolated from others may also be one of the debilitating effects of oppression. Disempowering emotions such as shame, guilt, or fear may act as eroding forces that weaken people's capacities for challenging power. In a more crucial sense, given that long-lasting forms of domination, such as sexism and racism are not effectively challenged at an individual level but require collective action, the abilities for resisting are even more undermined when structures of oppression wear down the possibilities of establishing bonds of solidarity with those who face the same or similar situations of oppression.

Capécia's narrative shows that she becomes incapable of developing a sense of solidarity and love for other Black people. When learning in her youth that her grandmother was Canadian and White, her opinion of her own mother grows. Realizing that her mother was a *métisse* (mixed-race), she finds her even more beautiful, more "refined" and "distinguished":

> So my mother, then, was a mixture? I should have guessed it when I looked at her light color. I found her prettier than ever, and cleverer, and more refined. If she had married a white man, do you suppose I should have been completely white? And life might not have been so hard for me? (Capécia, p.59, as cited in Fanon, 2008, p. 32)

In this same sense, she finds it unconceivable that a White woman could ever develop feelings of love for a Black man:

> How could a Canadian woman have loved a man of Martinique? I could never stop thinking of our priest, and I made up my mind that I could never love anyone but a white man, a blue-eyed blonde, a Frenchman." (Capécia, p. 59, cited in Fanon, 2008, p. 32).

Perhaps because oppression often debilitates by isolating the oppressed from others, some of the strategies for countering racial and sexual oppression involve collective affective work. Consciousness-raising groups are a clear example of this. During the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, and during the feminist movements of the 1960 and 1970 in Western societies, consciousness-raising groups often enabled people to establish connections that were crucial for their emancipation. For example, women have often told how in such groups they were able to see their own experiences, which they had thought private and idiosyncratic, in a truer light, i.e., as part of the shared experiences faced by women in virtue of being oppressed. Ami Harbin discusses the life-changing consequences of affective work in such groups for (primarily White, middle-class) women:

> In the consciousness-raising groups of the 1960s, many individuals experienced major shifts in their understanding of their social roles and relationships. In the context of the women's movement, consciousness-raising groups were groups of (primarily) women who gathered to discuss their home, relationship, and workplace experiences. Consciousness-raising groups were in many cases characterized by uncomfortable discussions, during which participants encouraged each other to recognize both the ways they were experiencing oppression and the ways they had benefited from privilege. Groups made efforts to address interpersonal conflicts and experiences of anger. Experiences of unease, discomfort, and fear were thus not merely accidental features of participation in such groups, but expected, meaningful components of efforts to confront internalized oppression. Participation in the groups also sometimes triggered major shifts in women's lives. (Harbin, 2016, pp. 78–79)

In the case of Chicanos in the United States, the organization of a collective movement of resistance and the affirmation of a collective identity, in which the articulation of a *narrative* had a powerful role, is highlighted by Anzaldúa:

> Chicanos did not know we were a people until 1965 when Cesar Chavez and the farmworkers united and *I am Joaquín* was published and *la Raza Unida* party was formed in Texas. With that recognition, we became a distinct people. Something momentous happened to the Chicano soul –we became aware of our reality and acquired a name and a language (Chicano Spanish) that reflected that reality. Now that we had a name, some of the fragmented pieces began to fall together – who we were, what we were, how we had evolved. We began to get glimpses of what we might eventually become. (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 85)

In the poem *I am Joaquín* (Gonzales, 1967), the "I" is a collective one ("I am the masses of my people") that reclaims its identity with pride ("I refuse to be absorbed / I am Joaquín. /The odds are great /But my spirit is strong"). The fact that a narrative seeking to mobilize resistance exploits the discourse of pride is not accidental; it is a further indication of how dependent oppression is on the cluster of emotions that we have identified.

2.4 Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that philosophical discussion of oppression can be enriched by giving narrative testimonies a more central role. First, from an epistemological perspective, if oppression is a lived reality, then taking a "bottom up" approach seems warranted. There are good reasons to suspect that narratives of the lived experience of oppression might pick on essential features that theories based on abstract thought experiments fail to grapple with. In addition, when attending to the content of these narratives, we can see that their emotional component is salient. This is a further indication that oppression has an emotional nature.

Second, from an ethical point of view, attending to the voices of the oppressed should be a priority if we aim to approach the topic in a way that can at least attenuate the reproduction of some of the mechanisms through which oppression is reproduced. This need is made even more evident by the fact that the narrative accounts we have considered, along with their emotional components, play a key role in how the oppressed they themselves have historically produced and assessed knowledge, including knowledge of how to resist oppression.

In the last part of the chapter, I offered a series of examples that illustrate one of the main claims of my thesis, namely that oppression has a strong emotional dimension. Feelings of disorientation, inadequacy, shame and guilt are central in testimonies and analyses of oppression. These feelings are disempowering insofar as they make resistance more difficult. In some extreme cases of alienation, resistance becomes practically impossible. Therefore, there seems to be an intricate relationship between oppressive structures and affective phenomena. Some emotions are not only the effects of oppression; they appear as instruments through which oppression is sustained and reinforced. In the next chapters I shall explore in more detail the nature of the relationship between oppression and particular emotional phenomena.

Although I have so far mainly focused on narratives of racial oppression, I shall also go on to analyse the emotional components of gender oppression, as well as some of the intersections between race, gender, and to a lesser degree, other categories of oppression, such as sexual orientation and class.

In this chapter I have offered evidence in support of my contention that, if we want to understand what oppression *is*, we should pay attention to what oppression *does*. The emotional workings of oppression provide that explanation.

3. How to understand emotions?

3.1 Introduction

In the two preceding chapters I gave a preliminary defence of the importance of attending to emotions in order to understand how structures of oppression are enforced and sustained. But how should these emotions be conceptualised? In this chapter I develop an answer to this question, which I shall use to support the main claims of my thesis. I take issue with some traditional approaches to emotions. I contend that they are unsatisfactory, because they offer too simplified a view of our affective life. As I shall show, some accounts tend to reduce emotions to disruptive, short-lived episodes that disturb an affective equilibrium or neutral state. Moreover, some of the same approaches also fail to capture the entanglements between emotions and structures of oppression. I focus on Gabrielle Taylor's (1985) account of shame as an example of such an account.

In the second part of the chapter, I argue that Sandra Bartky's (1990) notion of "emotional attunement" and Peter Goldie's (2012) conception of "emotional patterns" allow us to account for the ways that emotions endure over time. These notions offer an alternative and more fruitful way of thinking about the interconnections between affects and structures of power.

Finally, I argue that Sara Ahmed's (2004a; 2004b) account of emotions as "relational" is helpful for understanding their collective dimension. Arguing that emotions are neither primarily internal to the individual mind nor fundamentally "external" features of the social world, Ahmed's model allows us to see how emotions mediate and at the same time reveal relations of power. It is through emotion that social relations – the very distinctions between "I" and "we"; the "us" and "them" – are delineated. This perspective opens the possibility of

exploring how, in the context of relations between oppressors and oppressed, emotions function as channels of power.

3.2 What emotions are: a familiar picture

As I argued in Chapter 2, some of the emotions that occupy a central place in many narratives of the lived experience of oppression are affections such as shame and guilt, which arise from injuries to a subject's self-esteem. In this section, I will consider how these emotions tend to be conceptualized in mainstream philosophical psychology by focusing on Gabriele Taylor's influential account of shame as an "emotion of self-assessment". I shall then point out the limitations of this approach, following Sandra Bartky's critique of some of its main assumptions.

3.2.1 The case of shame

According to Taylor, shame is an emotion of self-assessment because it requires a self-directed adverse judgement in order to be experienced. As such, it is constituted by a set of beliefs. The person who experiences shame "feels herself degraded, not the sort of person she believed, assumed or hoped she was or anyway should be" (Taylor, 1985, p. 68). Taylor takes issue with Sartre's picture of shame as an emotion that is, primarily, felt *before the Other*. For Sartre, whilst shame is a painful emotion in which the self feels diminished, the image of an Other who observes the self plays a fundamental role in its structure:

> A man makes a vulgar gesture. He then realizes that he is being observed. This realization makes him look at what he is doing through the observer's eyes. Seeing it from that point of view he realizes that what he is doing is vulgar, and he feels shame. (Taylor, 1985, p. 57)

For Taylor, however, the real or imagined presence of an Other is not a necessary feature of shame. Against Sartre's view, Taylor imagines the case of a craftsman who is ashamed of the quality of his work and/or of himself. She contends that in this case shame does not require the presence of a real or imagined audience. The adverse self-directed judgement that is needed in order to feel shame just requires a *shift* in the individual's viewpoint on himself, "a sophisticated type of self-consciousness" through which the agent becomes dramatically self-aware of being defective:

> It is certainly true that to feel shame a craftsman need not think i.e. either believe or imagine, *that there is* another craftsman looking at his work. He need not imagine an actual observer, and that there is such an observer need not be part of the content of his thought. All that seems necessary is that he shift his viewpoint from that of the creator of the work to that of the critical assessor, and he himself can fulfil both these functions. (...) The shift is not only in the view the craftsman takes of his work, it is also in the view he takes of himself. (Taylor, 1985, p. 58)

An additional characteristic of shame, according to Taylor, is that it involves "an element of drama" (Taylor, 1985, p. 67). The person who feels shame sees herself as defective and degraded

> because she is presented with a contrast, where the contrast is between her unselfconscious state, what she thought or hoped or unthinkingly assumed she was, or was doing, and what she has now under the observer-description turned out to be (Taylor, 1985, p. 66).

The *shock* that this contrast or discrepancy produces in the self is the effect of the "sudden realization of one's changed position", a realization that comes as a "revelation". In Taylor's view, this dramatic element of shock is one of the features that distinguish shame from simple embarrassment.

In Taylor's example, feeling shame depends on a change of position, from "creator" to "critical assessor". While carving a wooden table, the creator-craftsman may not always be critically assessing

his work. The business of creating it may require some kind of suspension of critical assessment. But at some point, he pauses, takes a look at the product of his labour and at the skill at producing it. This shift whereby he becomes a critical spectator of his skills and work, is, according to Taylor, a necessary condition for feeling shame: "the person concerned believes of herself that she has deviated from some norm and that in doing so, she has altered her standing in the world" (Taylor, 1985, p. 1, as cited in Bartky, 1990, p. 93). Ridding oneself of shame therefore requires either modifying one's standards of judgement or changing one's behaviour. The craftsman may for example realize that his standards of judgement are too demanding. Lowering his expectations may be a way of ridding himself of shame. Or he may keep the standard and decide to take an intensive workshop that will allow him to perfect his craft and therefore feel satisfied with himself.

We can however imagine a case where the craftsman notices that the work isn't as good as he thought, and concludes, without feeling shame, that he just needs to keep working in order to achieve a better result. Noticing that the table is not as good as he initially believed may not affect his sense of self-worth or self-esteem. In other words, noticing that one has deviated from some norm does not necessarily lead to believing that one's standing in the world has changed. Therefore, shame does not necessarily result from such changes in beliefs. If shame is to result from critical self-assessment, a negative critical analysis must insert the dagger deeply enough to wound the craftsman's self-esteem. We may thus think that the craftsman will only feel shame if his sense of self-esteem is closely tied to the exercise of his skill.

To use an image, feeling shame requires that the craftsman's self-esteem and the perception of his talent be linked like two muscles attached to the same nerves; to negatively touch the perception of talent is to simultaneously hurt his self-esteem. If we

endorse Taylor's assumption that shame can be analysed in terms of belief, the core belief would have to be that one's self-worth is essentially attached to not deviating from a particular norm. Not deviating from this norm would be part of what makes us feel worthy, or of what we think are essential capacities for our personal flourishing. Without this core belief, merely noticing deviations from a norm may not result in shame.

3.2.2 Shame, self-esteem and the Other

3.2.2.1 Bodily and psychic manifestations of shame

However, if we think that shame is constituted by the core belief that one has deviated from a norm connected to self-worth, we may ask if this reflects our experience of shame. Even if such belief were constitutive of shame, Taylor's cognitivist view seems overly individualistic. She may be right to point out that not every single discrete episode of shame requires consciously imagining an audience, but this does not mean that shame is not felt *as if* there were an imaginary audience witnessing our failures, whether one actually imagines an audience or not. The bodily and psychic manifestations of shame are indicative of this: when we feel shame, our bodily gestures signal a desire to hide or disappear. We may avoid eye-contact, cover our face with our hands, or fantasize about being swallowed by the Earth. Even in the case of the solipsistic craftsman, who feels shame only through his negative self-directed judgement, this emotion may manifest in a desire to avoid contact with others. The craftsman may only need his own judgement to feel shame, but the experience of shame makes him want to hide *as if* some Other were witnessing his failure.

Moreover, even if we concede that one does not need to consciously imagine an Other to feel unworthy in every single

instance of shame, the Other is always already partly involved in our sense of worthiness. In order to understand this, let's try to make sense of what goes on in the craftsman's mind when he feels shame, i.e., when his sense of self-worth is wounded. If to be hurt in one's self-esteem is to feel *unworthy*, the sense of worthiness is experienced as connected to others: one may feel unworthy of other people's respect, admiration, or affection. Feeling *worthy* or valuable cannot be easily separated from what is socially valued. Our sense of self-worth is based on an image of ourselves that has been partly informed by the perspectives of others.

These thoughts direct us to the limitations of approaches such as Taylor's. The wound that shame inflicts on our self-esteem is never purely a matter of individual critical self-assessment. What seems essential in shame is not – or not only – the belief that our self-worth is tied to a particular abstract norm, but the sense that we have lost other people's respect, appreciation or love. Even in Taylor's cases, though the craftsman does not need to imagine an Other to feel shame, if he feels that he has lost his standing *in the world* this is likely experienced *as if* he had lost his standing in the eyes of others. To rid oneself of shame can therefore be more difficult than Taylor implies, insofar as it involves untangling a complicated knot which ties our self-esteem to what others disapprove of, appreciate or disdain, encourage or discourage in us. Taylor's individualistic picture does not seem to do fully justice to the role played by real or imagined Others in the experience of this emotion.

3.2.2.3 Shame and power

Furthermore, the tendency to feel shame and the capacity to rid oneself of shame may depend on the kind of power or authority that certain others possess. Consider children and parental figures: children may be more vulnerable to feeling shame in a context where

they are surrounded by parental figures who play an important role in their sense of self-worth, than adults surrounded by a group of children. In the case of young children, parental figures play a decisive role in the structuring of a child's self-image and self-esteem. While this has enabling effects, insofar as it is one of the bases of the development of personality, the child initially lacks the resources to clearly distance themself from some of the parental narratives that build their sense of self. Such resources will be developed throughout childhood, and personality probably involves a never-ending interplay between integrating, rejecting and/or readapting the image of ourselves that we find reflected in others. But if, from a very early age, a child is surrounded by figures of authority who send them back a devalued self-image, they will likely struggle to challenge this image in later life.

We may think here of the character of Pecola in Morrison's novel, discussed in Chapter 2. The adults and peers who surround her make her feel ugly and invisible. As a result, Pecola is haunted by shame. The violence of the world in which she is immersed is such that she becomes unable to develop the resources that would allow her to build a more positive and empowering self-image[18]. As we noted in chapter 2, although Pecola's case is exceptional, Morrison presents her struggle and her difficulties in resisting as common to all of those who are oppressed. This indicates that social power plays

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[18] This contrasts with the case of the narrator, Claudia, who, as a child, feels the violence that the white norms of beauty inflict on her. As a strategy to challenge the violence of this racist imaginary, Claudia dismembers the blue-eyed Baby Dolls given to her as a gift: "'Here,' they said, 'this is beautiful, and if you are on this day worthy you may have it.' I fingered the face, wondering at the single-stroke eyebrows; picked at the pearly teeth stuck like two piano keys between red bowline lips. Traced the turned-up nose, poked the glassy blue eyeballs, twisted the yellow hair. I could not love it. But I could examine it to see what it was that all the world said was lovable." (Morrison, 2016, p. 19). Dismembering blue-eyed Baby Dolls is Claudia's attempt to make sense to the mystery behind the adult's loving fascination for little white girls, a fascination that is denied to her: "To discover what eluded me: the secret of the magic they weaved on others. What made people look at them and say 'Awwwww', but not for me?" (Morrison, 2016, p. 20).

an important role, not only in one's vulnerability to feel shame, but in one's capacity to rid oneself of this emotion. Taylor's exploration of shame does not seem to take these elements enough into consideration.

3.2.3 The young girl's shame

To develop our understanding of shame in relation to power, it may be helpful to take two other examples, the first drawn from Simone de Beauvoir's analysis of the young girl who "does not accept the destiny assigned to her by nature and by society; and yet she does not repudiate it completely". Her early experiences of pleasure at arousing sexual desire in men are conflicted:

> With the coming of puberty she has become acquainted with shame; and the shame lingers on, mingled with her coquetry and her vanity. Men's stares flatter and hurt her simultaneously; she wants only what she shows to be seen: eyes are always too penetrating. (…) [S]he displays her *décolleté*, her legs, and when they are looked at she blushes, feels vexation. She enjoys inflaming the male, but if she sees that she has aroused his desire, she recoils in disgust. Masculine desire is as much an offence as it is a compliment; in so far as she feels herself responsible for her charm, or feels she is exerting it of her own accord, she is much pleased with her conquests, but to the extent that her face, her figure, her flesh are facts she must bear with, she wants to hide them from this independent stranger who lusts after them. (Beauvoir, 1956, pp. 347–348)

Beauvoir's vignette illustrates how the shame women suffer as a result of being reduced to sexual objects by the male gaze is importantly connected to a feeling of powerlessness. Pleasure in being desired is present when there is a sense of agency ("in so far as she feels herself responsible for her charm"); but as soon as the young girl is reduced to a prey or an object, and feels that her body is under the controlling gaze of the man who chooses to see what she does not want to be seen, she is overwhelmed by shame.

Or take a second case explored by Beauvoir, this time relating to menstruation:

> In his tale *Old Mortality*, C. A. Porter relates how young American girls in the South, about 1900, made themselves sick eating mixtures of salt and lemon to halt menstruation when they were going to a ball; they were afraid that the young men might discover their condition from the appearance of their eyes, contact with their hands, or possibly an odour, and this idea horrified them. It is not easy to play the idol, the fairy, the faraway princess, when one feels a bloody cloth between one's legs; and, more generally, when one is conscious of the primitive misery of being a body. The modesty that is spontaneous refusal to admit one's carnal nature verges on hypocrisy. (Beauvoir, 1956, p. 354)

Beauvoir's examples indicate how the gendered experience of shame is grounded on the power-relations between men and women. For women, ridding themselves of shame is therefore more than a matter of changing their individual beliefs or behaviour. Beauvoir's young woman cannot simply rid herself of shame as of a momentary episode through the modification of her behaviour or judgement. As long as the imbalance of power between men and women has implications for women's self-esteem, shame will be a part of women's emotional repertoire.

3.3 Bartky's critique

Through these examples, we can see that for an oppressed person, – in this case, for women – even realizing the unfairness of the social stigma associated with female sexuality and menstruation, and even modifying one's standards of judgement, may be insufficient to rid oneself of shame. In many cases, the oppressed may reject the standards of judgement that are being imposed upon them, and nevertheless be affected by persistent patterns of shame. This is one of the critiques that Sandra Bartky levels against accounts such as Taylor's. Taylor's approach to shame, Bartky contends, presents a

common set of assumptions that tend to inform philosophical theorizing about emotions, which prove to be insufficient for understanding the emotional lives of the oppressed.

3.3.1 An insufficient model

A first common assumption is that, as just sketched, the subject experiencing shame tends to be thought of as *an abstract individual*, whose situation with respect to social power is not taken into consideration:

> The moral agent who is standardly the focus of moral psychology is everyone and anyone, no one in particular, i.e., an abstract individual. The fact that certain sorts of agents find themselves routinely in specific social locations, e.g., in relationships of subordination to other persons, is not regarded as germane to the analysis of moral emotion *per se.* (Bartky, 1990, p. 95)

As a result, an emotion such as shame tends to be thought almost exclusively "in its relationship to individual failure and wrongdoing, never in its relationship to oppression." (Bartky, 1990, p. 97)

Furthermore, the individual agent who typically feels shame in the cases examined by moral psychologists seems to occupy a *sovereign* position:

> This agent feels shame or judges himself guilty when he perceives that his behaviour has fallen short of standards that are importantly his own. This agent is lucid; he knows what he has done and why it is wrong. Moreover, insofar as he sits in judgement upon himself, gives the law unto himself, as it were, he is autonomous. Because his guilt or shame mark his investment in moral norms, these painful emotions are occasions for moral reaffirmation. (Bartky, 1990, pp. 95–96)

For this abstract individual, shame is thought as a *discrete episode* that marks a disruption in his "moral equilibrium": if the agent X has acted in a wrongful way, his feeling shame is therefore seen as warranted and useful for improving his moral behaviour. Once the

agent acknowledges his fault, feels shame and corrects his behaviour, he returns to his usual "moral commitments" (Bartky, 1990, p. 96). Shame is thus "typically construed as a specific episode in the agent's history, an intrusion in daily life that brings in its wake an altered understanding of the self" (Bartky, 1990, p. 96)

In consequence, accounts such as Taylor's privilege cases in which the emotion in question is *short-lived*. An instance of shame will be analysed as a single, discrete episode happening within distinct temporal limits and fading away once the circumstances that produced it have changed – as in the case of the craftsman, once his relevant beliefs or behaviour have been modified.

This picture, Bartky argues, seems very reductive as it cannot account for cases in which shame seems to be more regular, continuous and long-lived, rather than episodic, disruptive and short-lived. Such is the case of people who are oppressed and who therefore do not fit the ideal abstract individual discussed by moral psychologists. For the oppressed, Bartky contends, shame "is not a blip across the face of an otherwise undisturbed consciousness". Rather, it is "the pervasive affective taste of a life" (Bartky, 1990, p. 96).

3.3.2. Not episodes: "attunements" or patterns

Bartky uses the Heideggerian metaphor of "emotional attunement" to account for important features in the emotional experience of the oppressed. If, Bartky contends, oppressed people are already affected by the harms of oppression, their experience of negative emotions such as shame and guilt will likely be different from that of an abstract, universal agent. For oppressed people, shame, guilt, fear, low self-esteem, etc., are not short-lived, discrete episodes that burst in on an empty mental scene like the characters in a theatre, dashing behind the stage once the play is over. Rather, such emotions are

characterised by their pervasiveness; they "may color a person's entire emotional life" (Bartky, 1990, p. 97)

To continue the musical metaphor, being emotionally *attuned* is to experience life in a particular emotional *key*. Bartky argues that the emotional life of the oppressed is not played out against a neutral ground but is already informed by the ways in which they inhabit the world. Bartky's elaboration of the metaphor stresses the role that socio-political structures play in how emotions take shape.

To illustrate how shame is not just an isolated, ephemeral episode for the oppressed but, to use Matthew Ratcliffe's expression, an "existential feeling" (2016), Bartky presents some examples drawn from her experience as a professor at a suburban school for High-School teachers. She describes how women were often quieter than men in class discussions; their way of speaking was in most cases hesitant, marked by self-denigrating comments. Women's speech and body language would also frequently signal shame:

> They would offer heartfelt apologies and copious expressions of regret for the poor quality of their work – work which turned out, most of the time, to be quite good. While apologizing, a student would often press the edges of her manuscript together so as to make it literally smaller, holding the paper uncertainly somewhere in the air as if unsure whether she wanted to relinquish it at all. Typically, she would deliver the apology with head bowed, chest hollowed, and shoulders hunched slightly forward. The male students would stride over to the desk and put down their papers without comment (Bartky, 1990, p. 89)

As members of an oppressed group, this emotional attunement to shame in the case of the female students is, according to Bartky, partly the result of receiving contradictory messages under an oppressive system. Whilst being given the formal right to education, arguably as the equals of men, women are often the target of demeaning treatments, often insidious ones such as tones of voice, lack of eye contact, sexist humour, omission of perspectives of women in academic curricula, etc. This ambivalence produces in women a disempowering internal division that, according to Bartky, has dehumanizing effects:

An ambiguous situation, affirming women in some ways and diminishing them in others, holding itself out as fair while oftentimes violating its own standards of fairness, tends to produce in women a confused and divided consciousness: Believing themselves to be fully the competitive equals of men, many women yet feel somehow diminished and inadequate, this in the absence of any actual evidence of the failure. (Bartky, 1990, p. 94)

This points in the direction of another limitation of cognitivist accounts such as Taylor's. Whilst the latter contends that shame is constituted by a set of fundamental beliefs, Bartky argues that the kind of shame experienced by her female students cannot be properly understood in terms of propositional beliefs:

Because the sexist messages of the classroom are transmitted in a disguised fashion or else both sent and received below the level of explicit awareness, what gets communicated to women does not take the form of propositional meaning and what they take away from the situation is not so much a belief as a *feeling* of inferiority or a *sense* of inadequacy. (Bartky, 1990, p. 94).

For Bartky, the feelings of inadequacy and shame that are part of women's emotional attunement do not attain the status of "fully formed beliefs". These feelings remain in contradiction with some beliefs, "for example, that, like men, they enjoy 'equality of opportunity'" (Bartky, 1990, p. 95). Could this tension between beliefs and feelings of shame be explained as a case of "false shame", i.e. "when a person evaluates her behavior in line with commitments which are not really her own" (Bartky, 1990, p. 94)? Bartky rules out this possibility as well: if false shame presupposes a cognitive error, then the female students in her example would have to constantly judge themselves according to standards that are not their own. This explanation does not allow for the possibility of them having "genuine standards" of their own:

> To be falsely shame-prone or shame-ridden, on Taylor's analysis, would be to employ alien standards consistently. But if people were to employ alien standards consistently, how could they be said to *have* genuine standards at all? (Bartky, 1990, p. 95)

More importantly, thinking this kind of shame merely in terms of a mistake made by individuals distracts us from the main problem, namely, that these feelings reveal "women's subordinate status in a hierarchy of gender" (Bartky, 1990, p. 95). In other words, the persistent shame that women feel cannot be explained by just pointing out that they are wrong or mistaken in their beliefs; it is important to attend to how this feeling is connected to structures of oppression.

What the image of "emotional attunement" aims to capture is not only the fact that negative emotions such as shame are pervasive for the oppressed, but also that they diminish and disempower the self. A circular process seems therefore to be in place. Not only is shame pervasive in virtue of oppression, but oppression is sustained and reinforced by the shame it produces.

Bartky also uses the notion of "pattern" as an analogue of "attunement". The same notion is also used by Peter Goldie, who echoes aspects of Bartky's critique by signalling the inadequacy of reducing emotions to disruptive episodes. I will briefly present Goldie's objections to the episodic model, in order to show how conceiving emotions as patterns may be helpful for my account.

3.4 Goldie: emotional patterns

In *The Mess Inside: Narrative, Emotion and the Mind* (2012), Peter Goldie identifies three influential accounts of emotion: the feeling theories; the judgement-based cognitive theories; and the perception-based cognitive theories. Whilst holding different views regarding the cognitive or non-cognitive nature of emotions, all these theories share two main presuppositions:

- Emotions are mental states or events
- Emotions are short-lived and situated, occurring at a particular time

Goldie argues, however, that some emotional phenomena are more adequately conceived as *processes* extended over time than as short-lived states or events with distinct temporal limits. Such is *grief*. As an emotional *process*, and unlike episodes and mental states, grief unfolds according to characteristic patterns:

> Grief is a process, and is experienced as a process. It is a kind of process which, borrowing again from Wittgenstein (1958: 174) I will call a pattern; he said, "'Grief' describes a pattern which recurs, with different variations, in the weave of our life'. The pattern has certain features. It includes characteristic thoughts, judgements, feelings, memories, imaginings, actions, expressive actions, habitual actions, and much else besides, unfolding over time, but none of which is essential at any particular time. It involves emotional dispositions as well as particular experiences, and there will be characteristic interactions between these. (...) The pattern is understandable as grief because it follows a characteristic shape, although it will be individual and particular to the person, and will no doubt be significantly shaped by cultural as well as biological influences. (Goldie, 2012, p. 62)

In this account, the pattern of an emotion is understood in a dynamic way as the particular shape of an unfolding process. The salient feature of a pattern is that it involves both repetition and change of a sequence. The way in which the sequence is repeated and altered is what gives the pattern its particular configuration. To experience emotional patterns means that certain kinds of affects will be recurrent, as Wittgenstein puts it, "with different variations" (Wittgenstein, 1958, p. 174, as cited by Goldie, 2012, p. 62). However, an emotional pattern does not merely consist in a succession of events or episodes. The pattern describes a particular repetition, but its singularity lies in the fashions the repetition takes.

In order to understand the functioning of an emotional pattern, let's take a closer look at Goldie's characterization of grief. Grief is not an emotion that we can adequately describe as a single event; it's not identifiable as a mere disruptive moment. The emotions that take place during grieving are not isolated episodes but come to be understood as the stages of a process that unfolds over time in a characteristic way.

Goldie also points out that processes and events differ in that we don't use the same explanatory models to account for them. In the case of an event, we look for the *trigger* that caused it. In the case of processes, we also try to find out what *sustains* them over time. For Goldie, since grief is a complex process which unfolds over time and demands a more complex explanation than a simple triggering cause, it is best accounted for through a *narrative*. A narrative gives a better account of that "blend of activity and passivity" (Goldie, 2012, p. 64) that characterizes an emotional process such as grief. Through a narrative, the causal relations at play in emotional reactions are revealed, but so are other elements that allow us to understand emotions: multiple perspectives can be included, thus revealing the existence of different emotional elements within a wider pattern. A particular emotional stage of grief cannot be adequately understood by merely citing its cause (what triggered it?). A more complex narrative account is needed. One may ask, for example, not only what triggered an emotion, but why it takes this particular shape in relation to other elements, relating, for example, to the history of the subject who experiences it, or the nature of the bond that united the subject to the object of grief.

According to Goldie, in grief, the emotional process is "ontologically and epistemologically prior" to the different episodes or stages that are part of it. This means that the intelligibility of each episode or stage is dependent upon the broader context in which it takes place. Only by clarifying the relation between the single

emotional event and the larger pattern will it become comprehensible as an instance of grief. Causal accounts may also show the causal continuity of an emotional process, but Goldie contends that narrative accounts are better suited to capturing its unfolding:

> (…) narratives have much in common with causal accounts. Like a causal account, a narrative is idiographic: it is concerned with particular facts, events, and individuals. Like a causal account, a narrative cannot be concerned with just a single simple event or state; it must be about one thing happening after another, and the notion of coherence is concerned with how these things happening after another hold together in some way. Narratives, like causal accounts, are interest-relative. And causal relations play a central part in the coherence of a narrative. However, in addition (…), relations other than causal ones can constitute part of a narrative. First, narratives can exploit multiple perspectives in a way that gives them evaluative and emotional import of a kind that causal accounts lack. This import is revealed, or expressed, in the narrative in two kinds of perspective: internal perspectives, which are the perspectives of those individuals who are internal to the narrative; and external, which are the perspectives of the narrator, and also of the author where those two individuals are different. Secondly, narratives are better places to explain general events, by locating them within part of a larger pattern (Goldie, 2012, pp. 64–65)

The notion of an emotional process therefore allows us to grasp something that the episodic model of emotions does not, namely the fact that some emotional phenomena are sustained over time, and that emotions can be part of a process which has a particular way of unfolding.

Whilst Goldie is concerned with the case of grief, and his argument regarding the limitations of the episodic model aims at privileging explanatory models that are better fitted to do justice to this emotional process, we can extend some of his critical insights to the kind of phenomena with which we are concerned. Following Goldie's critique, I contend that the predominant philosophical view of emotions as primarily episodic, disruptive, and triggered by discrete events that can be relatively clearly situated in time and

space, also has important limitations for the kind of emotional experience involved in oppression[19].

We now have two alternative ways of conceiving emotions against their reduction to disruptive episodes. Bartky's and Goldie's accounts of emotions in terms of attunement, and as processes unfolding in characteristic patterns are better suited to showing how oppression can shape people's emotional experiences and character. By focusing on emotional attunements or patterns, we may be able to explain how emotions are connected to structures of power.

3.5 Relational aspect of emotions

So far I have argued that, in order to understand the emotional experience connected to oppression, we need to think of emotions in a less reductive way than approaches such as Taylor's allow. This is not to say that emotions are never experienced as discrete episodes. Oppressed or privileged individuals may often experience episodes of shame, guilt, or fear that correspond to the picture drawn by Taylor. However, my claim is that the kind of affective experience that oppression involves cannot be reduced to isolated episodes; rather, we need alternative models such as the ones previously presented in order to understand how affects such as shame and guilt and the very phenomenon of oppression are significantly connected.

Continuing Bartky's critique of the individualistic picture of emotion, Sara Ahmed (2004a) offers a further challenge to the views I have been criticizing. Bartky argued that an individualistic model is insufficient because it presupposes an agent who seems disconnected from structures of oppression. It presents as universal what seems to correspond to a privileged individual who is autonomous, rational, and not otherwise burdened by structures of power. Sara Ahmed's

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[19] Insofar as Martha Nussbaum's (2006) account of shame privileges this episodic and cognitivist model, Goldie's and Bartky's critique apply to her view as well.

account of the relational nature of emotions highlights their connection with structures of power.

3.5.1 The "inside out" and "outside in" models of emotion

The individualistic picture often presents emotions as states that "happen" to an individual or that an individual mind "possesses", and which become "shared" in the social domain through expression. This is what Sara Ahmed has named "the inside out" or "psychological model" of emotions:

> In a psychological model, I have feelings, and they are mine. I may express my feelings: I may laugh, cry, or shake my head. Once what is inside has got out, when I have expressed my feelings in this way, then my feelings also become yours, and you may respond to them. (Ahmed, 2004a, p. 8).

This picture suffers from some of the limitations we have sketched earlier. It presents emotions as primarily belonging to the individual private sphere in a way that depoliticizes them and marginalizes their collective dimension. Insofar as Taylor's account thinks of emotions as deriving from the set of beliefs that an individual has in their mind, she fits the "inside out" picture critiqued by Ahmed.

An alternative way of thinking about the relationship between individual and collective affects consists in understanding emotions as living in the social and becoming absorbed, as it were, by individuals. As Ahmed points out, a rich tradition of anthropologists and sociologists has contended that "emotions should not be regarded as psychological states but as social and cultural practices". One of the main representatives of this view is Émile Durkheim: "Most of our ideas and our tendencies are not developed by ourselves but come to us from without. How can they become part of us except by imposing themselves upon us?" (Durkheim, 1966, p. 4, as cited in Ahmed, 2004a, p. 9) However, this tradition gives rise to a problem symmetrical with the one that plagues the

psychological model: "The 'inside out' model has become an 'outside in' model. Both assume the objectivity of the very distinction between inside and outside, the individual and the social, and the 'me' and 'we'." (Ahmed, 2004a, p. 9)

In order to challenge both the "inside out" psychological account and the "outside in" sociological one, Ahmed offers an alternative "model of the sociality of the emotions" (Ahmed, 2004a, p. 10). Emotions are not simply something "I" or "we" have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: "the 'I' and the 'we' are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others." (Ahmed, 2004a, p. 10)

By attempting to think about the "outside" and the "inside" Ahmed aims to overcome the deficiencies of theories that privilege one over the other. In the following sections, I will show how, through her analysis of one of Lorde's passages (discussed in Chapter 2), Ahmed's account of "collective feelings" (Ahmed, 2004b) can capture the emotional experience of oppression. In her analysis of collective affects, Ahmed argues that emotions have a *mediating* role. It is through emotions that social relations are delineated.

3.5.2 The sociality of emotions

In Ahmed's analysis, emotions are not merely located "inside" the mind of the individual, nor do they live "outside", in the social world. Rather, emotions are that which "'mediates' the relationship between internal and external, or inside and outside." (Ahmed, 2004b, p.29) Ahmed's account of collective emotions aims to show "how feelings make 'the collective' appear *as if* it were a body in the first place." (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 27)

> Rather than locating emotion in the individual or the social, we can see that emotionality – as a responsiveness to and openness towards the worlds of others – involves an interweaving of the personal with the social, and the affective with the mediated (...): it is through the

> movement of emotions that the very distinction between inside and
> outside, or the individual and social, is effected in the first place.
> (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 28)

Emotions have, on this account, not only a mediating character, but also a *revelatory* one: they make visible, or palpable, what connects us to others. It's as if emotions acted as the chemical solution of the photographic developer that brings a latent image into salience. Ahmed uses Butler's (1993) distinction between "materialization" and "intensification" to develop this idea: "It is through the intensification of feeling that bodies and worlds materialize and take shape, or that the effect of boundary, fixity and surface is produced" (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 29). In other words, if it weren't for the intensification of feeling, the effects of "boundary, fixity and surface" (Butler, 1993, p. 9, as cited in Ahmed, 2004b, p. 29) would not be *felt,* and thus, would not be known.

To illustrate this last point, Ahmed argues that the bodily skin is *felt* as a surface – and so as that which signals at the same time a separation and a connection to others – "only in the event of being 'impressed upon' in the encounters we have with others." (Ahmed, 2004b, p.29) From a rudimentary sensation (such as walking barefoot and feeling the difference between the sand and the grass) to more elaborate emotions loaded with evaluative judgments and interpretations (when, for example, someone signals to us that they dislike something we have done and we feel discomfort, shame or resentment), we become aware of our bodies and of others through the way we are affected by, or, as Ahmed puts it, *impressed upon* by others.

Ahmed locates her perspective in the tradition of Descartes and Spinoza in that "we don't have feelings for objects because of the nature of the objects. Feelings instead take the 'shape' of the contact we have with objects." (Ahmed, 2004b, p.29) Objects affect us not only in virtue of their intrinsic features, but because we have particular ways of reacting to them. And in these ways of reacting, the environment, and more precisely what Ahmed calls "histories of contact", play a crucial role. We

have ways of reacting to others, and others react in particular ways to us, in virtue of past histories of contact that follow particular *scripts*. In this sense, racism can be understood as "a particular form of intercorporeal encounter" that has been shaped by past histories:

> A white racist subject who encounters a racial other may experience an intensity of emotions (fear, hate, disgust, pain). That intensification involves moving away from the body of the other, or moving towards that body in an act of violence, and then moving away. The 'moment of contact' is shaped by past histories of contact, which allows the proximity of a racial other to be perceived as threatening, at the same time as it reshapes the bodies in the contact zone of the encounter. (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 31)

Insofar as past histories of contact contribute to the shaping of our emotions, our ways of reacting emotionally follow particular patterns of repetition and change; they are *habitual* in that they follow particular paths that have been opened and practiced by these past histories of contact:

> The perception of others as the origin of danger is shaped by histories of racism (in which the presence of others is already read as an invasion of bodily territory as well as the territory of the nation). The repetition of signs is what allows others to be attributed with emotional value: as being hateful in the first place (see Fanon, 1986). Hence the contact both depends on histories of association, at the same time as it generates its object: the mixed-race couple, the immigrant, etc. In this way, emotions can be theorized as performative: they both repeat past associations as well as generating their object (Butler, 1993) (...) Hate may generate the other as the object of hate insofar as it repeats associations that already read the bodies of others as being hateful. (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 32)

We see here how emotions are thought as inscribed in long-lived patterns. In Ahmed's account, the pattern is not only about the repetition of emotions themselves (as, throughout one's life, one may experience recurrent patterns of shame, fear, guilt, etc.) but also about the reiteration of a history that has contributed to their formation. In their pervasive recurrence, emotions also repeat something of the history that initially generated them. To continue Bartky's musical metaphor of

"emotional attunement": if we picture emotions as waves of sound, we could say that in their echo, they replicate past histories that have given them their particular tonality or frequency. For example, in the context of racism, there are certain emotional patterns that White subjects display in reaction to non-White others, just as non-White others develop some emotional ways of reacting to being affected by White oppressors, in virtue of these past histories of contact. These emotional patterns are not, if we follow Ahmed, simply internal to the oppressed and to the oppressors. Rather, they help constitute a sort of web (or, if we stay in the musical domain, a sort of sonorous field) through which the social distinctions between "I" and "we", "us" and "them", are delineated.

Ahmed's model of the sociality of emotions shows how the latter have a relational character. Whilst her analysis shows that relations of oppression such as sexism and racism are inscribed in what we had characterized as long-lived patterns of emotion, we now see this is not only true in the sense that these patterns are dispositions that "belong" to the subjects affected by them. It is also that the patterns of emotion mediate relations of power, which have a long history.

3.5.3 An example

Ahmed argues that the relational aspect of emotions is visible in narratives of an imaginary that conveys a particular "emotional reading of others". Emotional patterns or attunements are therefore not things that merely "belong" to individuals but can be understood as indicative of, and expressing structures of power. This aspect of emotion is not only visible in narratives of oppression produced by the oppressed, but also in the narratives that oppressors produce in order to sustain their power. We can see how this plays out in the following example of white supremacist propaganda, extracted from the Aryan Nation's Website and quoted by Ahmed:

The depths of Love are rooted and very deep in a real White Nationalist's soul and spirit, no form of 'hate' could even begin to compare. At least not a hate motivated by ungrounded reasoning. It is not hate that makes the average White man look upon a mixed race couple with a scowl on his face and loathing in his heart. It is not hate that makes the White housewife throw down the daily jewspaper in repulsion and anger after reading of yet another child-molester or rapist sentenced by corrupt courts to a couple of short years in prison or parole. It is not hate that makes the White workingman curse about the latest boatload of aliens dumped on our shores to be given job preferences over the White citizen who built this land. It is not hate that brings rage into the heart of a White Christian farmer when he reads of billions loaned or given away as 'aid' to foreigners when he can't get the smallest break from an unmerciful government to save his failing farm. No, it's not hate, It is Love (*Aryan Nation's Website*, as quoted in Ahmed, 2004b, p. 25)

This narrative, as Ahmed analyses it, works to sustain a collective identity (the one that embodies the "White Nationalist's soul and spirit") through the vilification of the Other, using emotions that unite a group against other people. Through a simplistic dichotomy of hate and love, hatred is justified as the natural and legitimate response to the perceived threat of the non-White other. It is a hatred redeemed by the "love of White". As Ahmed notes:

> *It is the emotional reading of hate that works to stick or to bind the imagined white subject and nation together.* The 'average White man' feels 'fear and loathing'; the 'White housewife', 'repulsion and anger'; the 'White workingman' 'curses'; the 'White Christian farmer' feels 'rage'. The passion of these negative attachments to others is redefined simultaneously as a positive attachment to the imagined subjects brought together through the capitalization of the signifier, 'White'. It is the love of 'White', or those that are recognizable as 'White', which supposedly explains this shared 'communal' visceral response of hate. *Together we hate and this hate is what makes us together*. (...) The ordinary white subject is a fantasy that comes into being through the mobilization of hate, as a passionate attachment tied closely to love. (...) Hate is *distributed* in such narratives across various figures (...) all of whom come to embody the danger of impurity, or the mixing or taking of blood. They threaten to violate the pure bodies; indeed, such bodies can only be imagined as pure by the perpetual re-staging of the fantasy of violation. (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 26. Italics in original)

By these means, emotions function as the mechanisms through which relations of power are enforced and sustained, so that they act as prostheses for power structures and at the same time as that which makes visible the relations of power that support our relations to others. Relations of power are mediated and revealed through the anger, hatred, repulsion and fear that negatively attach White subjects to Others. Ahmed notes that this negative emotional attachment to others ("them") is at the same time redefined as an emotional positive attachment (Love) towards those imagined as White ("us"). There is therefore an inter-dependence between two emotional attachments: the picture of the menacing Other (the "brown invader", the "foreign rapist") that threatens to destroy "us" is indispensable for the love of the imagined White Nation, a love that is often presented in nationalist narratives as "protection". Without the picture of a menacing Other, there would be no "us" to "love", i.e., to protect and defend. Hate, anger and repulsion become justified as legitimate defensive reactions as if they were derived from the love of White ("we hate *because* we love"), when instead, in Ahmed's view, they simultaneously generate each other and their objects.

Moving on from the narrative of the White nationalist website to one that is instead articulated from the perspective of those oppressed by white supremacy, Ahmed finds in one of Audre Lorde's essays another example of how emotions are not simply "inside" the individual or "outside", in the social, but are instead mediations that make an "inside" and an "outside" visible. Ahmed stresses the role played by hate "in the redefinition of social as well as bodily integrity" in Audre Lorde's narrative, quoted in Chapter 2 (Lorde, 2017, p. 135):

> The emotion of hate aligns the particular white body with the bodily form of the community – the emotion functions to substantiate the threat of invasion and contamination in the body of a particular other who comes to stand for, and stand in for, the other as such. In other words, the hate encounter aligns not only the 'I' with the 'we' (the white

body, the white nation), but the 'you' with the 'them' (the black body, Black people). (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 33)

Ahmed's analysis bears directly on my argument about the emotional character of oppression. If, as I have argued, the narratives that highlight the lived experiences of oppression reveal emotional patterns that become part of the character of the oppressed, they also reveal some of the emotional features of the oppressors. Through these narratives we come to understand how the emotional patterns of oppressors and oppressed exist in relation to one another. For example, internalized oppression, or the image that the oppressed form of themselves as shameful (dirty, ugly, inadequate, incapable), is an effect of the deployment of fantasies whereby the privileged build a self-image that allows them to assert their domination (White people as a cleaner, more beautiful, virtuous, capable "race"). In other words, the pervasive patterns of shame that are part of the lived experience of the oppressed are a function of the fears and anxieties that the privileged attempt to eject from themselves[20]. The former cannot be adequately understood without the latter, and vice versa.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have challenged five central presuppositions that underlie many of the most influential theories of emotions found in contemporary moral psychology. I have proposed a richer and more fruitful way of conceiving emotions which makes it easier to see how they are integral to structural oppression. Drawing on Bartky, I have shown that emotions need not be *episodic* and *short-lived*; cannot always be tidily analysed in terms of conscious *beliefs*; do not necessarily *disrupt* a state of moral "balance", and must be understood in connection with *political structures*. I have argued that we need to think about emotions

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[20] This point will be the focus of a more detailed analysis in chapters 5 and 6.

as "attunements" and long-lasting "patterns" to show how structures of power contribute to their formation, and how they in turn play a role in enforcing and sustaining these structures. Finally, I have begun to sketch an account of how an emotion might be a relational thing, both fed by and feeding a social structure. Having a given preliminary sketch of the relations between emotions and social structures, I shall now examine this connection in greater detail.

4. How are some emotions connected to oppression?

4.1 Introduction

I have contended that definitional approaches to oppression do not offer a rich enough account of what oppression is (Chapter 1). As we have seen, narratives and phenomenological descriptions of the lived experience of oppression provide compelling evidence of the strong emotional component of oppression; but definitional accounts fail to engage with it in a satisfactory fashion (Chapter 2). My aim is therefore to give a richer explanatory account of the relationship between oppression and emotion. The narrative evidence indicates that emotions play an essential role in oppression, and my inquiry aims to make sense of this fact. To do so, as I have argued, we need a model of emotions that is capable of capturing their entanglements with structures of oppression (Chapter 3). Taylor's account of shame is an example of a model of emotions that is unequal to this task. The kind of phenomena that I aim to explain are better grasped through concepts that highlight the longevity of emotions and their connection to socio-political structures, such as Bartky's notion of "emotional attunement" and Goldie's account of "emotional patterns". Moreover, against the individualistic assumptions of some traditional models in moral psychology, I have followed Ahmed in suggesting that emotions must be conceived as having a *relational* dimension.

Throughout these chapters, I have shown that there is a *significant* connection between emotions and oppression, worthy of greater exploration. I have argued, first, that people who are subject to oppression experience particular emotional patterns. Secondly, I have argued that the emotional patterns experienced by members of oppressed groups, and by their oppressors, are shaped by structures of oppression, so that there seems to be a significant causal connection between forms of structural oppression, forms of structural privilege and

affective configurations. Thirdly, I have argued that the patterns of emotion at issue become *instrumental* to the reproduction of the structures of power involved in their formation. Oppression is therefore sustained and reinforced via emotional mechanisms.

In this chapter I address these claims more directly by exploring the nature of the connection between structures of oppression and the emotional patterns of the oppressed.

4.2 Are some emotions "constitutive" of oppression?

In this section I shall elaborate and analyse the claim that oppression is first and foremost an embodied emotional experience. I will do so by considering the precise nature of the connection between oppression and the patterns of emotion I have been discussing. How exactly are these patterns related to oppression? I shall begin by considering the view that the relation between them can be spelled out in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Let me start by setting out these two conditions.

If certain patterns of emotion are *necessary* for oppression, the relation between the two will take the following form:

> *Necessary Condition (NC): Fs are oppressed as Fs iff they experience a cluster of disempowering emotions such as shame, guilt and fear.*

For example, we might incorporate this condition into Haslanger's definition as follows:

> *Fs* are oppressed (as *Fs*) by an institution *I* in context *C* iff$_{df}$ in($\exists$R) (being an *F* nonaccidentally correlates with being disadvantaged by standing in an unjust relation *R* to others) and I creates, perpetuates, or reinforces *R*), *[and Fs experience negative emotions such as shame, guilt, and fear as a result of being oppressed]*

But what would this commit us to? There seem to be two main ways of interpreting the claim that a certain pattern of emotion is a necessary condition of oppression:

NC.1 In order to be oppressed, Fs must *consciously* experience emotions that belong to a pattern characteristic of people who are oppressed. Conversely, those who do not subjectively recognize that they feel these emotions are not oppressed.

NC. 2 In order to be oppressed, Fs must experience, consciously or unconsciously, relevant patterns of emotion. Conversely, those who do not experience (consciously or unconsciously) these emotions are not oppressed.

A further possible relation between the phenomena we are considering is one of sufficiency:

Sufficient Condition (SC): It is enough for Fs to experience a cluster of disempowering emotions such as shame, guilt and fear to be oppressed.

This relation, too, can be interpreted in two ways:

SC1: It is enough for Fs to be oppressed if they are subjectively aware of having emotions that belong to a pattern characteristic of people who are oppressed.

SC1: In order to be oppressed it is enough for Fs to experience relevant patterns of emotion, even if Fs are not aware of experiencing these emotions.

4.2.1 The Necessity Condition

4.2.1.1 A too demanding condition

As it stands, the Necessity Condition seems too demanding and highly counterintuitive. One difficulty is that, if the NC1 is fulfilled, it does not allow to account for cases where these emotional patterns are not consciously felt but could nevertheless be present unconsciously. We could take here as an example the case of women trapped in an abusive relationship. Some women may suffer forms of gender oppression, and yet they may think of themselves as not experiencing these disempowering emotions. They might struggle to be aware of the emotional harms that this relationship produces. This suggests that *consciously* experiencing a certain pattern of emotion is not after all a necessary condition of oppression.

In this sense, the NC 2 seems a more plausible option, insofar as it includes the possibility of unconscious or repressed emotions. The NC2 states that if F is materially systematically disadvantaged (in line with Haslanger's definition) but does *not* consciously *or* unconsciously experience any of the emotional patterns that tend to accompany oppression, F will not count as oppressed. However, the NC2 runs into another problem. It runs the risk of trivialising the seriousness of important and systematic forms of disadvantage that are normally considered to be oppressive in their own right. For example, in a hypothetical scenario where a group of materially disadvantaged people do not feel ashamed in the manner we have described, it seems highly counterintuitive to deny that they are oppressed. In order to be oppressed it is enough to be materially or politically disadvantaged, for instance in the fashion specified by Haslanger. The presence of certain patterns of emotion is not invariably a feature of oppression.

As indicated above, it is not uncommon for oppressed people to fail to recognise the link between their patterns of emotion and their oppression. Think back, for example, to the childhood experiences of Lorde and Du Bois. But this is not enough to show that patterns of emotion (whether recognised or not) are necessary for oppression. We do not so far have a satisfactory argument for this claim.

4.2.1.2 Further difficulties

The suggestion that certain patterns of emotions (whether recognised or not) are necessary for oppression runs into further difficulties. For one thing, NC implies that if certain patterns of emotion cannot be detected, there is no oppression. If, for example, people appear to be happy, it follows that they are not oppressed. The claim that certain emotional patterns are necessary conditions for oppression – and the correlative claim that when these emotions are absent so too is oppression – can help the powerful to deny the existence of oppression.

A common ideological subterfuge of structures of domination is to substitute a positive picture for the wrongs and sufferings of oppression by associating obedience with emotional wellbeing. The image of the "happy American housewife", which Betty Friedan analysed as an example of the *mystique* that sustained (White, middle-class) women's oppression[21], and the image of the "happy slave", so prominent in nineteenth-century narratives of slavery in the United States, are clear examples of this. In these cases, the view that certain emotional patterns are necessary conditions of oppression is implicitly used to

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[21] "In 1960, the problem that has no name burst like a boil through the image of the happy American housewife. In the television commercials the pretty housewives still beamed over their foaming dishpans… But the actual unhappiness of the American housewife was suddenly being reported… although almost everybody who talked about it found some superficial reason to dismiss it" (Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, in Ahmed, 2010, p. 50).

mask systematic forms of harm by giving them an appearance of legitimacy. Here, then, we have one risk associated with the NC.

A more complex strategy for justifying oppression also rests on the assumption that certain emotional patterns are NC of oppression. Historically, systems of oppression have sometimes relied on the assumption that oppressed groups have different emotional dispositions and capacities from their oppressors, and that their allegedly "bestial" nature makes them unable to access the full range of human emotions. The denial that the oppressed have the capacity to feel has been an important tool for enforcing domination. As George Yancy argues, for example, it played a role the treatment of captured African peoples during their infamous Middle Passage to slavery: "In the eyes of the enslaver, the captured African became a tool devoid of reason, human feeling and will. The 'will of the captured' was the will of the white captor" (Yancy, 2016, p. 131). Or to take a related example, Joanna Bourke argues that the interpretation of the non-White body as incapable of feeling had a strong influence on medical practice with respect to the recognition and alleviation of patients' pain. [22] As Bourke writes,

> The need to insist on the physical insensitivity of slaves did not diminish with the end of slavery. Quite the contrary. If hierarchies of labour and citizenship were to be retained, belief in the insensitivity of Black bodies was more necessary than ever. A year after Abraham's Lincoln Emancipation Proclamation (...) anthropologist Karl Christoph Vogt provided a physiological justification for their continued abuse. Vogt's *Lectures on Man* (1864) informed readers that 'the Negro stands far below the white race' in terms of the 'acuteness of the senses'. (...) As one Howard University surgeon claimed in 1894, the 'Negro' possessed a 'lessened sensibility of his nervous system' or, in the words of a gynaecologist in 1928, forceps were rarely needed when 'colored women' were giving birth because 'their lessened sensibility to pain makes them slower to demand relief than white women'" (Bourke, 2014, p. 194)

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[22] "It took until the 1980 for the routine underestimation of the sufferings of certain groups of people to be deemed scandalous and, even today, the under-medicalization of certain categories of patients continues to harm people in pain" (Bourke, 2014, p. 192)

In all these examples, the NC is at work. If certain patterns of emotion are a necessary condition of oppression, and if certain groups who might be considered oppressed fail to display them, it follows that they are not oppressed after all. They fail to exhibit one of the defining conditions of oppression.

Summing up, the NC does not appear to be a plausible way of thinking about the connection between certain emotional patterns and oppression. The NC would force us to accept its corollary, that if these emotional patterns are absent there is no oppression. This seems unwarranted for two main reasons. Firstly, we would have to rule out what we ordinarily regard as cases of economic and political oppression, thus denying that they constitute serious harms in their own right. Secondly, appeals to the NC can be used to legitimate domination – as it has in fact happened. Therefore, it seems that we should reject the claim that certain emotional patters are a necessary condition of oppression.

4.2.2 The Sufficiency Condition

As for the SC, it seems at face value to be false. The main objection to it is that it does not allow us to distinguish real cases of oppression from false ones. A group of people could experience an emotional pattern, *feel* oppressed, and nevertheless be wrong in thinking that they are oppressed.

Let's take the example of Men's Rights Activists (MRA), who consider themselves oppressed by women and by feminists in particular. Members of MRA groups could feel persistently humiliated and ashamed of losing power in a society that they perceive as favouring women. However, even if they were to suffer such emotional harms, it would be wrong to conclude that they are oppressed by feminists. A loss of social status may diminish people's self-esteem in cases where they are not oppressed.

We seem, then, to have good grounds for rejecting both the view that certain patterns of emotion are sufficient for oppression, and the claim that they are necessary for it. The patterns of emotion we have identified are therefore not *constitutive* of oppression in the sense of being necessary or sufficient conditions for it.

4.3 An explanatory account

The difficulty in characterizing the connection between particular emotional attunements and oppression via necessary and sufficient conditions suggests that this may not be the best way to account for the link. Perhaps, then, we can make sense of the connection in some other way.

While we cannot give a plausible account of a necessary connection between oppression and particular patterns of emotion, and while the existence of a pattern of emotion is clearly insufficient for oppression, we nevertheless have strong grounds for thinking that the link is not fortuitous. If the emotional patterns we have identified were merely accidental, we should not expect them to occupy such a persistent and central place in narratives of oppression. Nor should we expect oppressors to take the trouble to deny or misrepresent them.

The attempt to give a logically oriented account of the link between patterns of emotion and oppression in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions therefore proves unfruitful. Instead, a bottom-up approach, based on the evidence offered by narratives of oppression, is arguably more illuminating. I propose the following hypothesis: the emotional patterns that are salient in narratives of oppression are *non-accidentally* connected to oppression. Rather than trying to build my hypothesis into a formal definition, I will aim to provide an explanatory account of the non-accidental link between oppression and certain patterns of emotion.

Before I move on to show in more detail how certain patterns of emotions are non-accidentally connected to structures of oppression, I need to add a further remark about this non-accidental link. Since oppression is a complex phenomenon, since it intersects with other social categories such as religion and language, and since patterns of emotion are also far from simple, one might object that non-accidental links between patterns of emotion and oppression are too multifaceted to capture. This may be partly true, but it should not deter us from trying to analyse the connection, even if we are constrained to approach it in relatively general terms. Inevitably, I shall have to focus on the broad brush-strokes that organise the picture and will not be able to take account of its finer details. The account I am going to offer should be understood as an attempt to identify certain general features of the link between a pattern of emotion and oppression. It comes with the kind of warning that Lisa Tessman (2005) offers when introducing her investigation of oppression and systemic luck:

> Because social positioning is complicated and very few people can be described as fully occupying a position of dominance or alternatively as being subordinated in every possible way, analysis of how systemic luck affects any given person will be complex (...). Groups of people will be composed of individuals who differ from each other in socially significant ways, and generalizations about the group's luck will be like any other generalizations about a social group, namely, they will probably fail to accurately apply to many group members. (...) However, *that there is complexity to a society structured by multiple oppressions does not suggest that there is any randomness or lack of pattern to people's experiences in the society*. Thus, without necessarily being able to name the features of the patterns except through over generalizing, one can still assume the presence of patterns or systemic sources for experiences that have formative effects on the characters of people whose social positions are hard to capture by broad labels such as "working class", "Asian-American", "gay", "able-bodied", and so on (...). (Tessman, 2005, p. 5. My italics)

The same point applies to my account. Whilst it is true that the emotional experiences I am concerned with are extraordinarily complex, I nevertheless contend that it is possible to use narratives and

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phenomenological accounts to identify salient patterns of emotion that are *non-accidentally* connected to oppression. This non-accidental correlation should be understood in a flexible, non-deterministic way, allowing not only for exceptions, but also for variations in the way patterns of shame, guilt, fear, etc. are felt.

By claiming that some emotions are non-accidentally connected to structures of oppression, I do not mean that *all* oppressed people experience them, without exception and in identical ways, or that if *some* oppressed people do not experience these emotions it follows that they are not oppressed (as the attempt to define necessary and sufficient conditions suggests). Rather, the notion of a non-accidental connection can be used to account for a general, non-deterministic tendency, which takes as a starting point the evidence presented in Chapter 2. If narratives of oppression have such a strong emotional content, and if, when accounting for the harm of oppression, its emotional element is so salient, we have reasons to conclude that these emotions are a *characteristic* feature of oppression, and that people who are oppressed tend to be emotionally attuned in particular ways. This non-deterministic understanding of the link is closely tied to the nature of our object of study: if relations of oppression are historically changeable, the non-accidental correlations between oppression and emotion are likely to reflect those changes.

4.3.1 Difficult cases: when emotions are thwarted

As I have shown, the attempt to specify the relation between patterns of emotion and oppression in terms of necessary conditions runs into difficulty when faced with cases where emotional responses to oppression are impeded or blocked. To sustain the claim that an apparently absent pattern of emotion is a necessary condition of oppression, the theorist is forced to argue that, despite appearances, the pattern is present, although the subject is unable to recognise it. There may of course be

instances where this is true; but the claim that the concealed pattern of emotion *must* be present in all cases of oppression is, as I have argued, implausibly strong. The absence of the relevant pattern of emotion is not enough to rule out a case of oppression.

The view that the connection between patterns of emotion and oppression is neither necessary nor sufficient, but is nevertheless non-accidental, offers a more flexible way to understand the link, capable of accommodating exceptions and variations. As we shall see, there are undoubtedly exceptional cases that pose problems for any account. In the remainder of this chapter, however, I aim to show that these cases are less widespread than one might think. Some apparently exceptional cases are susceptible to explanation in the terms I am proposing, and illustrate the presence of a non-accidental connection between certain patterns of emotion or emotional attunements, and oppression.

The difficult cases where a pattern of emotion is not acknowledged as such, or is unrecognised as contributing to a harm, can be spelled out as follows. A person may:

- feel X and not recognise that she is feeling is X, as when someone is unaware of their shame, fear, guilt
- feel X, recognise X, but not know *why* she feels X
- feel X, recognise X, and know some, but not all of the salient reasons why she feels X

I aim to show that my explanatory account provides the means to analyse these cases. Rather than constituting objections that might invalidate my claim, or random cases that fall outside its explanatory scope, cases such as these provide further evidence for it.

4.3.1.1 A reduced awareness

When oppression involves harm, it is extremely difficult, as we have seen, to understand how the harm can remain completely *unfelt*. But it can be relatively unfelt in various ways. For example, the feeling that one is being harmed may be made less painful by a compensating circumstance, such as the fact that the oppressive situation intersects with a privileged one that brings with it a range of benefits. Or the feelings associated with being harmed may be impeded, or too confused to recognise, as when they are denied, repressed, or ideologically redescribed. In such cases, theorists are sometimes inclined to say that agents lack emotional awareness of their own oppression.

The apparently paradoxical condition of being oppressed and not being aware of one's oppression has been accounted for in several ways throughout the history of political thought. In the Early Modern period and during the eighteenth century, oppressed people's ignorance of their own condition was sometimes attributed to "prejudice" (for instance by Mary Wollstonecraft, Gabrielle Suchon and Poullain de la Barre). In the Marxian tradition, this lack of awareness is explained as an alienating effect of the *ideology* that sustains relations of domination in capitalism, and one aspect of this alienation is accounted for through the notion of "false consciousness". (When presenting the case of Mayotte Capécia, Franz Fanon characterises it as a case of alienation and mystification.) Feminist and Critical Race theories have also paid attention to mechanisms of *internalisation* – the process through which the oppressed internalise the oppressors' norms and beliefs (for example the male gaze and/or the White gaze).

Where some theorists argue that members of oppressed groups are not really oppressed because they do not think of themselves as oppressed, theories of domination have shown that one characteristic of oppression is precisely that it is often cognitively unavailable to those

who suffer it. In other words, what seems a paradox of oppression is entailed by the very logic of domination. The same is true, I shall argue, of the emotional aspects of oppression. Just as members of oppressed groups may have a reduced *cognitive* awareness of their oppression, so they may also exhibit forms of emotional unawareness or insensitivity. In the next section I shall examine cases where oppressed people can be described as partly *unattuned* to some of the emotional patterns that we have identified as typical of oppression. I shall show how these failures of attunement can be shaped and reinforced by ideological constructs that operate at the service of oppression.

4.3.1.2 Compensatory mechanisms

The failure of oppressed people to experience the patterns of emotion typical of oppression may sometimes be a strategy, consciously or unconsciously adopted in order to survive an oppressive situation, or in order to cope with it while preserving some degree of psychic integrity. The paradigmatic example of this kind of case is Stockholm syndrome, where the victim appears neither to hate or fear the aggressor, but instead develops feelings of love and gratitude towards them. It would be wrong, surely, to argue that since the victim feels love she is not really oppressed. Instead, love can be seen as a coping strategy for guaranteeing the victim's mental and physical preservation.

Stockholm syndrome is a relatively temporary compensatory strategy adopted in extreme situations involving an aggressor and a victim. It aims to explain an interpersonal dynamic between two individuals rather than the more extensive social and political forms of oppression with which I am concerned. However, in these latter cases, we also find shared coping strategies involving the denial, repression, or even transmutation of painful emotions in order to preserve the subject's psychological balance. More radically, these strategies may serve to make a person's material conditions endurable. For example, a woman

who lacks economic autonomy may repress some of her emotions in order to endure a marriage on which her physical survival depends.

In her essay "Feeding Egos and Tending Wounds", Bartky (1990) analyses the dynamic of unequal heterosexual relationships through Arlie Hochschild's (2012) notion of "emotional labour". Within the heterosexual couple, women are typically placed in the role of caregiver: they provide their male partners with emotional support and care that is usually not reciprocated. By contrast, men absorb and use women's care in order to devote themselves to socially and economically rewarding activities. Such unreciprocated emotional work typically has disempowering effects for women[23]. Bartky, however, describes some of the strategies through which "women's provision of emotional sustenance to men may *feel* empowering and hence contradict, on a purely phenomenal level, what may be its objectively disempowering character" (Bartky, 1990, p. 114).

These strategies are not entirely unlike Stockholm syndrome, insofar as many women live their situation in a mystified way by adhering to "the world according to him":

> To support and succour a person is, typically, to enter feelingly into that person's world; it is to see things from his point of view, to enter imaginatively into what he takes to be real and true (Bartky, 1990, p. 111)

Thus, some women may find satisfaction in feeling pride for their male partner's achievements, to which they have contributed through caregiving and self-sacrifice:

> Women have responded in a number of ways to men's refusal of recognition. A woman may merge with her man psychologically to such an extent that she just claims as her own the joys and sorrows he narrates on occasions of caretaking. She now no longer needs to resent

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[23] We may think here of the cases of now well documented depression and alcoholism that many housewives suffered during the 1950, whose experience Betty Friedan picks up in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963).

his indifference to her doings, for his doings have just *become* her doings. (Bartky, 1990, p. 110)

Or again,

(...) it is worth asking to what extent the merging of the consciousness of the woman with the object of her emotional care may be a strategy adopted in adult life to avoid anger and the disruption of a relationship (...) (Bartky, 1990, p. 110)

Living in "the world according to him" may have been a particularly pervasive compensatory mechanism among White, middle-class women during the 1950 and 1960s, when the imperative to be a "good happy housewife" became particularly strong. It is part of the phenomenon that Betty Friedan described as "the feminine mystique". Looking back at the years and experiences that motivated her famous study, Betty Friedan (1998) gives some examples of how the image of the "happy housewife" was used to repress expression of sadness and other negative, disempowering emotions, to which this way of life "condemned" women:

In March 1949, the *Ladies' Home Journal* printed the prototype of the innumerable paeans to "Occupation: Housewife" that were to flood the women's magazines into the sixties. It began with a woman complaining that when she has to write 'housewife' on the census blank, she gets an inferiority complex. ("When I write it I realize that here I am, a middle-aged woman, with a university education, and I've never made anything out of my life. I'm just a housewife"). Then the author of the reply, who somehow never is a housewife (in this case Dorothy Thompson, newspaperwoman, foreign correspondent, famous columnist), roars with laughter. The trouble with you, she scolds, is that you don't realize that you are an expert in a dozen careers, simultaneously. (...) But still, the housewife complains, I'm nearly fifty and I've never done what I hoped to do in my youth -music. I've wasted my college education.
       Ho-ho, laughs Miss Thompson, aren't your children musical because of you, and all those struggling years while your husband was finishing his great work, didn't you keep a charming house on $3,000 a year and paper the living room yourself, and watch the market like a hawk for bargains? (...) "But all that's vicarious living-through others" the housewife sighs. "As vicarious as Napoleon Bonaparte", Miss Thompson scoffs, "or a queen. I simply refuse to share your self-pity. You are one of the most successful women I know" (Friedan, 1998, p. 10)

Miss Thompson's way of dismissing the housewife's feelings of low self-esteem is one of the many instruments serving gender oppression. On this note, Friedan narrates another example of hostile or angry reactions to her *Feminine Mystique* (1963). In a television program called *Girl Talk*, the hostess of the program, Virginia Graham, encouraged women to keep fulfilling the role of wives and mothers without aspiring to more: "What better things can we do with our lives than to do the dishes for those we love?" (Friedan, 1998, p. 20) Friedan describes Graham as invested in enforcing a form of sexism from which she does not suffer insofar as she is not a housewife, and from reaping certain benefits by sustaining oppression. Participating in the program, Friedan turns to the camera and challenges Graham's message: "Women, don't listen to her. She needs you out there doing the dishes, or she wouldn't have the captive audience for this television program". As she adds in her essay, "I realized then that this kind of 'career woman' didn't really identify with other women at all. For her, there were three kinds of people in the world – men, other women, and herself." (Friedan, 1998, p. 20)

Whilst her critique of the disempowering myth of the happy housewife was recognised and joyfully received by a vast number of women, there were also people who perceived it as a threat. It prompted anger and defensiveness in women who had – exceptionally – escaped the "mystique", and in housewives who denied being burdened by their social roles.

> The emotions that book stirred up in women were not simple. In addition to the dozens, then hundreds, by now thousands of letters of relief, I received many angry letters from women. In fact, I would hear of cocktail parties being broken up by women arguing over my book who hadn't even read it, who in fact seemed afraid to read it. I would hear later that such a woman, attacking me as a destroyer-of-the-family, an enemy-of-motherhood, a betrayer-of-femininity, would finally be driven by her own problems that she hadn't dare face before to go back to school, or to look for a job – and she would be passing my book around to her neighbors. I decided that women were sitting on such painful feelings that they didn't dare open the lid unless they knew that they were going to be able to do something about them. (Friedan, It Changed My Life: Writings on the Women's Movement, 1998, p. 20)

The kind of cases that exemplify Bartky's analysis of living in "the world according to him", and those described by Friedan as part of the "feminine mystique" may therefore involve explicitly denying that one feels emotionally disempowered by oppression. Disempowering emotions may be blocked through compensating mechanisms such as taking pride and satisfaction in the success and happiness of others. The mobilization of figures within the social imaginary (such as the "happy housewife" or the "happy slave") may function as a screen that prevents the oppressed from recognizing their own social and emotional *malaise.*

Systems of oppression are also sustained by mechanisms of punishment and reward designed to obtain voluntary obedience. In his autobiographical narrative, Frederick Douglass analyses how this way of distributing privileges among the oppressed may alter the quality of their emotional experience of oppression:

> Few privileges were esteemed higher, by the slaves of the out-farms, than that of being selected to do errands at the Great House Farm. It was associated in their minds with greatness. A representative could not be prouder of his election to a seat in the American Congress, than a slave on one of the out-farms would be of his election to do errands at the Great House Farm. They regarded it as evidence of great confidence reposed in them by their overseers; and it was on this account, as well as a constant desire to be out of the field from under the driver's lash, that they esteemed it a high privilege, one worth careful living for. (...) The slaves selected to go to the Great Farm House, for the monthly allowance for themselves and their fellow slaves, were peculiarly enthusiastic. While on their way, they would make the dense old woods, for miles around, reverberate with their wild songs, revealing at once the highest joy and the deepest sadness. They would compose and sing as they went along, consulting neither time nor tune. (...) Into all of their songs they would manage to weave something of the Great House Farm. Especially would they do this, when leaving home. They would then sing most exultingly the following words:
>
> > *"I am going away to the Great House Farm!*
> > *O, yea! O, yea! O!"* (Douglass, 2016, p. 12)

As Douglass shows, a slaveholder or someone interested in maintaining slavery could take those songs and their expressions of pride, joy and

enthusiasm as evidence that the oppressed are *happy*, that they are not burdened by sad and disempowering emotions such as shame, fear, guilt, or hopelessness. Douglass is well aware that this is how the oppressors instrumentalize slaves' expressions of emotion:

> I have often been utterly astonished, since I came to the north, to find persons who could speak of the singing, among slaves, as evidence of their contentment and happiness. It is impossible to conceive of a greater mistake. Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy. The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears. At least such is my experience. I have often sung to drown my sorrow, but seldom to express my happiness. Crying for joy, and singing for joy. Were alike uncommon to me while in the jaws of slavery. The singing of a man cast away upon a desolate island might be as appropriately considered as evidence of contentment and happiness, as the singing of a slave; the songs of the one and of the other are prompted by the same emotion. (Douglass, 2016, p. 13)

If, as these examples suggest, the oppressed repress or compensate for their negative emotions – by taking pride in the joy of others, for instance, or in the crumbs of privilege handed out to them – their own shame and fear may remain in important ways unconscious or unacknowledged. The extent to which such patterns of emotion are repressed may vary depending on the circumstances. In some cases, they may be buried deeply in the psyche, in others they may lie near the surface. In either case, they can be suppressed by the mechanisms we've discussed.

4.3.1.3 Raising awareness and the intensification of emotions

The image of bringing patterns of emotion to the surface offers a familiar way to think about resistance to oppression. One of the practices that relies on it is *consciousness-raising*, which aims to enhance a groups' collective awareness of their oppression. Consciousness-raising groups, which were an important part of anti-sexist and anti-racist struggles during the 1960, were not only about becoming "cognitively aware" of

oppression. Gaining knowledge of oppression also meant learning to recognize the emotional experience it involved and learning to resist it through "affective work".

The forms of emotional unawareness we have discussed help to explain why oppression is not always felt as an emotional burden. As a result, gaining consciousness of one's oppression may be initially felt as an intensification of the feeling of oppression. One may experience an increasing sense of shame or fear, for example, and thus of sadness:

> We could describe consciousness raising as raising consciousness of unhappiness. As Gayle Greene argues, "For though education raised women's expectations, it *also made them unhappy*, creating ambitions that were frustrated by the rigid domestic ideology that urged them back into the home" (1991: 9; emphasis added). Indeed, you have to experience limitations *as* limitations; the act of noticing limitations can actually make life seem more rather than less limited. If the world does not allow you to embrace the possibilities that are opened up by education, then you become even more aware of the injustice of such limitations. (...) There can be sadness simply in the realization of what one has given up. Feminist archives are thus full of housewives becoming conscious of unhappiness as a mood that seems to surround them: think of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. (Ahmed, The Promise of Happiness, 2010, p. 70)

Gaining awareness of oppression may be gaining awareness of sad, disempowering emotions. Up to that point, the person concerned need not have thought of herself as "happy"; but she will also not have thought of herself as "unhappy", "sad", "ashamed", "fearful" or "hopeless". Rather, the disempowering feelings of oppression may "surround" the subject before she is able to recognize her suffering. Consider the case of Mrs Dalloway as it is analysed by Sara Ahmed:

> The feeling [of unhappiness] is certainly around, almost as a thickness in the air. We sense the unhappiness seeping through the tasks of the everyday. There she is, about to get flowers, enjoying her walk in London. (...) For Clarissa this rather uncanny sensation of becoming Mrs Dalloway as a loss of possibility, as an unbecoming, or becoming "nothing at all" does not enter her consciousness in the form of sadness *about* something. The sadness of the book (...) is not one expressed as a point of view. Instead, each sentence of the book takes thoughts and

feelings as if they are objects in a shared world: the streets of London, the very oddness of the occasion of passing others by, a feeling of that oddness. (Ahmed, 2010, p. 71)

Mrs Dalloway is unaware of her sadness, busily distracted with preparing a party. But it is during that party that she becomes dramatically aware of her own unhappiness. The death of Septimus, a man unknown to her, irrupts into her life as a revelation of her own suffering:

> What is striking about Mrs Dalloway is how suffering has to enter her consciousness from the edges, through the arrival of another, another who is an intruder, who has not been invited to the party. It is the suffering of an intruder that exposes the emptiness of life's chatter. Suffering enters not as self-consciousness – as a consciousness of one's own suffering – but as a heightening of consciousness, a world consciousness in which the suffering of those who do not belong is allowed to disturb an atmosphere. Even when unhappiness is a familiar feeling, it can arrive like a stranger, to disturb the familiar or to reveal what is disturbing in the familiar. (Ahmed, 2010, p. 75)

Perhaps if one could have asked Mrs Dalloway if she felt oppressed, sad, unhappy, or limited by the constraints of her life before that revelatory moment, she would have denied this. The way in which her unhappiness is revealed to her through the death of a stranger, notes Ahmed,

> might teach us about the difficulty of becoming conscious of suffering or teach us about our own resistances to recognizing those seemingly 'little' uneasy feelings of loss or dissatisfaction *as* unhappiness with one's life. (Ahmed, 2010, p. 75)

Therefore, there are many cases in which those who are oppressed may be unaware of the emotional impact that oppression has. One may repress, deny, participate in forms of reproduction of oppression by policing how other peers should accept their lot, use compensatory mechanisms, or busily distract oneself from life's dissatisfactions, as Mrs Dalloway does. These may all be instances by which people have a reduced subjective experience of oppression in its emotional aspects. So, it is not because people deny having these negative emotional

experiences, or seem to be "happy", that the latter are merely "absent", or that they are not emotionally harmed by oppression.

4.3.1.4 Difficulties connecting the dots

A final case of a variety of "emotional unawareness" has to do more directly with the difficulties of "connecting the dots" between experiencing some of the characteristic emotional aspects of oppression and political structures. The oppressed person may feel fear, shame, or guilt because the oppressive structure provokes those feelings; they may nevertheless be unaware of the relationship between the oppressive structure and those emotions. For example, someone may judge that her feelings are merely private phenomena, independent of political relations and structures of power. We can see this sort of mystification in the way some women narrate how they once perceived their own experiences as something shameful or inadequate, believing their shame was a natural consequence of their personal inadequacy. Once they joined feminist movements that involved consciousness-raising groups, and acquired a fuller sense of the meaning of their experience, the feelings they thought of as merely personal came to be seen as a collective phenomenon, as the product of systematic sexist oppression.

For example, in the documentary *She's Beautiful When She's Angry* (Dore, 2014), some of the women involved in the feminist movement of the 1960 and 1970 explain how important it was for them to recognize their feelings through collective sharing of experiences: "We don't even realize what goes on until we sit and compare with other women", says an unidentified woman during one of those meetings. In the same documentary, the poet Susan Griffin recounts how, in those sessions, listening and telling where emotionally charged: "And we heard each other. We heard each other into speech. You could sense it, you could feel it. You could cut it with a knife, as they say. The room was electric with whatever was going to be shared". In another part of the

documentary, journalist Susan Brownmiller tells how collective sharing was important to "connect the dots" between her experience, her feelings and socio-political structures: "So I said… I've had three abortions. And the last one was within the last year. And I started to cry, because I suddenly understood that I wasn't alone, [and] that what I had considered personal embarrassment was something that was part of this whole larger experience".

These testimonies suggest that the unawareness among oppressed people of the meaning of their emotional patterns is often related to their isolation – to not being part of a community that is aware of common experiences of oppression. In consciousness-raising groups, we also see how gaining awareness of oppression is inseparably cognitive and affective: by relating an experience that was emotionally loaded, by sharing the emotional contents and recognizing that others share one's experiences and feelings, consciousness of the harms of oppression is raised.

The difficulty in connecting the dots – between one's emotional experience and political structures – may also be due to a lack of conceptual tools. The concepts and ideas that enable individuals to make sense of their experiences in moral and political terms may be socially unavailable. Often, the oppressed have had to *create* the concepts that name the harms they felt, before they were able to conceptualise them. (Friedan famously referred to the *mystique* as "the problem that has no name"). Well-known examples of such concepts are "sex discrimination" and "sexual harassment". Before these concepts became socially current, before they captured the collective experiences of abuse suffered by women in the workplace and other areas[24], the emotional consequences of these particular forms of oppression were lived with a mix of denial and confusion. Women would tell themselves, for example, that "boys will be boys", that one ought not to "make a fuss" about it, that it must

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[24] This is what Fricker (2007) conceptualises as "hermeneutic injustice".

be somehow their fault as women. In other words, the emotions remained personalised and individualised in a way that was disempowering:

> Shortly after 1949, I was fired from my job because I was pregnant again. They weren't about to put up with the inconvenience of another year's maternity leave, even though I was *entitled* to it under my union contract. It was unfair, *wrong* somehow to fire me just because I was pregnant, and to hire a man instead. I even tried calling a meeting of the people in the union where I worked. It was the first personal stirring of my own feminism, I guess. But the other women were just embarrassed, and the men uncomprehending. It was my own fault, getting pregnant again, a *personal* matter, not something you should take to the union. There was no word in 1949 for "sex discrimination". (Friedan, 1998, p. 17)

Sara Ahmed notes how consciousness-raising also involves "passing books around". In feminist consciousness-raising groups that were, as noted, primarily White and middle-class, gaining awareness of gender oppression entailed acknowledging the arbitrariness of restrictions of possibility: recognizing oppression, for White middle-class women, often meant recognizing what they could have done or been if they had been men. For Black women, however, recognizing oppression did not merely amount to acknowledging these restrictions. As Ahmed notes, middle-class White women expressed their frustration as women "who should be happy because they have what promises happiness", but Black women were "already imagined as being unhappy, as lacking the very qualities and attributes that would make a life good" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 80). Repression, denial might take here other possible forms, as we have seen with Toni Morrison's character Pecola, which Ahmed also analyses:

> Pecola, in wanting happiness, wants what is attributed as the cause of happiness: the bluest eyes. (...) To be conscious of unhappiness is to be conscious of being 'not', or of being 'un', as lacking the qualities or attributes of happiness. (Ahmed, 2010, p. 82)

Even in the cases above, which appear to give clear evidence that oppression at least *partly* shapes the emotional life of the oppressed, we

can see that recognition of these emotions is not necessarily transparent from the beginning. These testimonies also show how the oppressed sometimes struggle to make sense of these emotions, and that there are social mechanisms internalised by the subjects, as well as forms of self-doubt, which may impede or make recognition of emotions otherwise difficult.

The denial of these emotional aspects, and the fact of gaining awareness of it, is a common feature of the experience of oppression. Even though there may be "sadness in becoming conscious not only of gender as the restriction of possibility, but also of how this restriction is not necessary" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 75), this is not the only emotional outcome of gaining awareness of oppression: the oppressed may feel relief and a joy in knowing that the possibilities of one's world need not be restricted.

These are examples of situations in which the apparent absence of certain emotions, which we take to be typically part of oppression, is to be viewed with suspicion. Rather than presenting an obstacle to my hypothesis, such cases stand as further evidence that oppression requires coping mechanisms, precisely *because* it involves particularly painful emotional experiences. Emotional dynamics can be very complex; consequently, we should be attentive to the risks of producing caricatures or stereotypical accounts of the ways in which oppression is emotionally constituted.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the connection between patterns of emotion and oppression is not to be understood in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. We can conceive of an individual or a group as materially oppressed without feeling the emotional burdens of oppression. Similarly, it is possible to imagine that some people may feel emotionally burdened without actually being oppressed.

However, from the fact that it is possible to conceive oppression without its corresponding emotional aspects, we should not conclude that these emotional aspects are irrelevant. In fact, if we rely on the narratives presented in Chapter 2, we may conclude that the emotional component is a key aspect of oppression. There is, I think, a *non-accidental* correlation between being oppressed and experiencing particular kinds of affective phenomena, where these phenomena are *prevalent* features of oppression. I have given special attention to the complexities of the affective mechanisms at play, where some emotions may be repressed or counterbalanced by others, or are not experienced in a transparent, straightforward way. The phenomenality of emotions requires complex reading. I have aimed to show how these complex cases offer further evidence of the fact that oppression tends to involve negative, disempowering emotions, and that people may therefore develop strategies such as denial, repression, and misrecognition to cope with them.

5. The emotional patterns of whiteness

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the emotional patterns of the oppressed. However, as I argued in Chapter 1, structural oppression cannot be fully understood without its essential counterpart, structural privilege. Just as structures of oppression partly shape the emotional patterns of the oppressed, structures of privilege configure the emotional character of oppressors. In addition to analysing the complicity of the oppressed in perpetuating their oppression, it is therefore necessary, as Barbara Applebaum has argued, to shed light on the processes through which the privileged sustain oppressive structures[25]. Before Applebaum, Toni Morrison (1992) detected an imbalance in the degree of attention given to those who reproduce racism in comparison to those who suffer it:

> A good deal of time and intelligence has been invested in the exposure of racism and the horrific results on its objects. (...) But that well-established study should be joined with another, equally important one: the impact of racism in those who perpetuate it. It seems both poignant and striking how avoided and unanalyzed is the effect of racist inflection on the subject. (...) The scholarship that looks into the mind, imagination, and behavior of slaves is valuable. But equally valuable is a serious intellectual effort to see what racial ideology does to the mind, imagination, and behavior of masters. (Morrison, 1992, pp. 11–12)

Recent work in Critical Philosophy of Race aims to unveil the impact of structural oppression and privilege on patterns of thought and behaviour related to *whiteness*. Under the heading of *white ignorance*

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[25] "In the last several years, the notion of complicity has also been a recurrent theme in critical theories of race and racism, as well as in feminist theory. Questions about complicity have arisen in discussions around 'internalized racism' and, especially, in debates about whether victims of racism can be implicated in their own oppressions. Feminist theorists who have tried to understand how women can perpetuate their own oppression have also turned their attention to questions of complicity. Recently, however, another type of complicity has appeared in the scholarship that focuses on the ways that the systematically *privileged*, rather than the marginalized, are complicit in the perpetuation of systemic injustice". (Applebaum, 2010, p. 2)

(Mills, 1998), epistemologies of ignorance have made an important contribution to identifying the cognitive, conscious and unconscious beliefs of those who are racialized and self-identify as White. However, as Shannon Sullivan (2006) and José Medina (2013a) argue, white ignorance also has affective and embodied dimensions that deserve greater attention. In other words, the ways in which the privileged sustain oppression also has emotional aspects. In this chapter I examine the emotional patterns non-accidentally connected to white privilege.

5.2 Questions of method

In Chapter 2 I argued that narratives and descriptions of experiences of oppression provide substantial evidence for the claim that pervasive patterns of disempowering emotions such as shame, guilt and fear are non-accidentally connected to being oppressed. However, turning to those in positions of privilege, we may also ask ourselves how we are to examine *their* emotional patterns. While the oppressed have profusely documented their experience through written narratives and other forms of expression (music, dance, visual arts), it seems that those in dominant positions do not produce such a rich array of narratives. In general, living a privileged life does not seem to compel the privileged to make sense of their experience in their writings and other cultural creations. As we found in chapters 2 and 3, there are narratives that seek to justify and legitimize domination, such as those produced by white nationalist and masculinist groups. These narratives tell a particular story about the "White Nation", for example, and which bodies are included within, and which deemed to pose a threat. But these narratives do not of course present structures of white and male domination as unfair, or as "privilege". Rather, the narratives produced by white nationalist and masculinist groups often use the language of victimhood and claim that White men are oppressed by those who are actually systematically disadvantaged. Some supremacist groups claim to be oppressed by

affirmative action and political correctness; white masculinist groups see themselves as oppressed by feminism and advances in women's rights. Such people take themselves to be oppressed although objectively they are not. In some cases they *may* be oppressed, but not by the groups they blame for their oppression. These narratives are, therefore, *reactionary*, in the traditional sense of the word; they are articulated in reaction to political and social progress. In Sara Ahmed's terms, they are the expression of a "worrying whiteness", or, we could add, a "worrying heteronormative masculinity", which fears that "'others' may threaten [their] existence" (Ahmed, 2004c)

Apart from these reactionary narratives, it seems that the privileged are, broadly speaking, less compelled to explore the ways their life is shaped by privilege, presumably because this recognition would entail a commitment to dismantling the very system from which they reap benefits. Recognition of this is, of course, not impossible for members of privileged groups, but there may be powerful cognitive and emotional mechanisms that inhibit them from acknowledging, for example, how many positive aspects of their lives are parasitic upon the oppression of others. One of the characteristics of privilege is that it is in many ways *invisible* to those who benefit from it.

5.2.1 What the oppressed tell us about the emotions of oppressors

When the privileged (men or White subjects in general) have produced critical accounts of their own condition, their analyses are often indebted to the critique and resistance articulated by oppressed groups. Sara Ahmed notes that one may trace different genealogies of the relatively recent scholarship on whiteness studies. Noting the narcissistic gesture of recentering whiteness in some streams in whiteness studies, as well as in Whites' anti-racist projects, Ahmed insists on the importance of framing whiteness studies as preceded by the critique of whiteness as articulated, for example, by Black feminists:

Any critical genealogy of whiteness studies, for me, must begin with the direct political address of Black feminists such as Lorde, rather than later work by white academics on representations of whiteness or on how white people experience their whiteness (Frankenburg, 1993; Dyer. 1997). This is not to say that such work is not important. But such work needs to be framed as following from the earlier critique. Whiteness studies, that is, if it is to be more than 'about' whiteness, begins with the Black critique of how whiteness works as a form of racial privilege, as well as the effects of that privilege on the bodies of those who are recognised as black. As Lorde shows us, the production of whiteness works precisely by assigning race to others: to study whiteness, as a racialised position, is hence already to contest its dominance, how it functions as a 'mythical norm' (Ahmed, 2004c, p. 1)

The same observation could be applied to studies of masculinity. Without the feminist and Queer critiques and struggles, the problematization of male privilege and of masculinity as an identity would probably not have been articulated and taken up by a sector of cis-gender, heterosexual men. This points in the direction of what theorists in critical philosophy of race have identified as certain cognitive and affective limitations related to positions of social privilege. In general terms, privileged groups tend to lack lucidity and insight regarding, for example, who the oppressed are; how they, the privileged, are perceived by the oppressed; and what effect their ways of being and behaving tend to have on the oppressed. On the whole, there is therefore a reduced awareness and self-awareness that may be common to privileged groups. While the oppressed are forced to develop a double-consciousness because of the circumstances in which they are placed, the oppressors are liable to have a limited and more distorted perspective on themselves as a result of their privileged position. Charles Mills (2017) has called this "epistemic asymmetry":

In his introduction to a collection of black writers' perspectives on whiteness, David Roediger (1998) underlines the fundamental epistemic *asymmetry* between typical white views of blacks and typical black views of whites: these are not cognizers linked by a reciprocal ignorance but rather groups whose respective privilege and subordination tend to produce self-deception, bad faith, evasion, and misrepresentation, on the one hand, and more veridical perceptions, on the other hand. Thus he

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cites James Weldon Johnson's remark 'colored people of this country know and understand the white people better than the white people know and understand them'. Often for their very survival, blacks have been forced to become lay anthropologists, studying the strange culture, customs, and mind-set of the 'white tribe' that has such frightening power over them, that in certain time periods can even determine their life or death on a whim. (Mills, 2017, p. 53)

In a similar vein, as discussed in Chapter 2, feminist standpoint epistemology and Black feminist theories have theorized the "epistemic advantage" that the oppressed possess in virtue of their social location[26], compared with the relatively impoverished insight of the oppressors, who are less well placed to understand not only the concrete situations faced by the oppressed, but also their world:

> The practices of the dominant groups (for instance, men) govern a society; the dominated group (for instance, women) must acquire some fluency with these practices in order to survive in that society. There is no similar pressure on members of the dominant group to acquire knowledge of the practices of the dominated groups. For instance, colonized people had to learn the language and culture of their colonizers. The colonizers seldom found it necessary to have more than a sketchy acquaintance with the language and culture of the 'natives'. Thus, the oppressed are seen as having an 'epistemic advantage' because they can operate with two sets of practices and in two different contexts. This advantage is thought to lead to critical insights because each framework provides a critical perspective on the other. (Narayan, 1989, pp. 265–266)

However, as Uma Narayan (1989)convincingly points out, claims about the relative epistemic advantages of the oppressed need to be nuanced, and, as I have discussed in previous chapters, there are forms of alienation and mystification in the experience of oppression. She contends that the "double vision" of the oppressed is not a guarantee for lucidity. It may have its downsides and, therefore, claims about

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[26] For a nuanced discussion of the notion of 'epistemic privilege', see (Narayan, 1989): "Our commitment to the contextual nature of knowledge does not require us to claim that those who do not inhabit these contexts can never have any knowledge of them. But this commitment does permit us to argue that it is *easier* and *more likely* for the oppressed to have critical insights into the conditions of their own oppression than it is for those who live outside these structures" (p. 264)

epistemic privilege should be tempered in order not to reify or fetishize the perspective of the oppressed:

> Feminist theory must be temperate in the use it makes of this doctrine of 'double vision' – the claim that oppressed groups have an epistemic advantage and access to greater critical conceptual space. Certain types and contexts of oppression certainly may bear out the truth of this claim. Others certainly do not seem to do so; and even if they do provide space for critical insights, they may also rule out the possibility of actions subversive of the oppressive state of affairs (...). The thesis that oppression may bestow an epistemic advantage should not tempt us in the direction of idealizing or romanticizing oppression and blind us to its real material and psychic deprivations. (Narayan, 1989, pp. 267–268)

Nevertheless, there are good reasons to think that the oppressed have greater insight into the emotional patterns of their oppressors than the oppressors have of their own complicity in sustaining oppression. I shall take the critical perspective of the oppressed as the basis for my analysis of the emotional patterns that are non-accidentally connected to privilege. This material allows us to identify how structural privilege partly shapes the emotional lives of oppressors, and how the emotional investments of the privileged sustain oppressive structures.

5.3 Whiteness and white ignorance

5.3.1 Whiteness

Before I examine the emotional patterns that are non-accidentally linked to white privilege, it is important to specify what I mean by "whiteness". I shall use this term to refer to aspects of racial white privilege. Whiteness does not stand for an essence based on physio-biological phenomena, nor is it a rigid category of identity merely based on skin colour. Although some aspects of whiteness are the object of empirical study "with an approximate date of emergence, a set of ethnic correlations, a history, and various economic and political correlations"

(Alcoff, The Future of Whiteness, 2015, p. 76), I shall focus on *imaginary whiteness* and *subjective whiteness*, drawing on Linda Alcoff's (2015) discussion of these distinctions. Paying attention to imaginary and subjective aspects of whiteness may help us understanding how subjects who are racialized as White – and who therefore have white privilege – are emotionally invested in sustaining oppressive racist structures.

Alcoff uses the notion of *imaginary whiteness* to refer to "the realm of mythic imagery and the relatively unconscious ways in which people have affective and dispositional attitudes about whiteness" (Alcoff, 2015, p. 78). Distancing herself from the Freudian tradition, she draws on the inflexion that feminist philosophers have given this notion:

> I prefer the way that feminist philosophers Michele Le Doeuff (1990) and Moira Gatens (1995) have used the imaginary to denote a collective rather than individual background layer of understandings and dispositions that both enables and constrains our ability to produce new ideas and responses. (Alcoff, 2015, pp. 78–79)

The white imaginary is for example evoked by the US flag:

> To understand the meanings and effects of the stars and stripes, it will never be sufficient merely to detail its history or its current institutional uses; we need also to consider the visual and ideational connotations and affective elements that the flag engenders for diverse groups and individuals. When we see the flag, do we imagine George Washington, or Fort Sumter (the site of the start of the US Civil War), soldiers in World War II or in Iraq, or the flag that flies over various colonial sites, from Guam to Panama to the Virgin Islands? (Alcoff, 2015, p. 79)

Another way that whiteness operates in the cultural imaginary is through notions that contribute to the production of a distorted history, such as the notion of "discovery" when referring to the violent European colonization of America: "What actually occurred was less a discovery than an encounter between several cultures followed rather quickly by invasion, genocide, enslavement, and the annexation of lands" (Alcoff, 2015, p. 82).

Further examples of the white imaginary can be found in aesthetic and commercial productions (advertising for beauty products, cleaning products and skin whitening products[27]) in which whiteness has positive connotations (cleanliness, beauty, moral purity) opposed to negative connotations of blackness[28]. In the literary world, Toni Morrison has analysed how the white imaginary is active, for example, in metaphors and unconscious associations that tie blackness to chaos, and whiteness to order and peace. One of the examples Morrison analyses is Marie Cardinal's description of a panic attack suffered while attending a jazz concert in which Louis Armstrong was performing:

> My first anxiety attack occurred during a Louis Armstrong concert. I was nineteen or twenty. Armstrong was going to improvise with his trumpet, to build a whole composition in which each note would be important and would contain within itself the essence of the whole. I was not disappointed: the atmosphere warmed up very fast. The scaffolding and flying buttresses of the jazz instruments supported Armstrong's trumpet, creating spaces which were adequate enough for it to climb higher, establish itself, and take off again. The sounds of the trumpet sometimes piled up together, fusing a new musical base, a sort of matrix which gave birth to one precise, unique note, tracing a sound whose path was almost painful, so absolutely necessary had its equilibrium and duration become; it tore at the nerves of those who followed it.
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> My heart began to accelerate, becoming more important than the music, shaking the bars of my rib cage, compressing my lungs so the air could no longer enter them. Gripped by panic at the idea of dying there in the middle of spasms, stomping feet, and the crowd howling, I ran

[27] The practice of "skin-bleaching", however, calls for complex readings, according to the sociologist Shirley A. Tate. Tate argues that the practice of skin bleaching/lightening/toning has "complex meanings" among Black women in the Black Atlantic region. The practice has been "racially performative for Black, white and Black-white 'mixed raced' women in a number of sites and historical periods" (Tate, 2016, pp. 6–7). Therefore, its meanings shouldn't always be reduced to forms of self-hatred and low self-esteem. In Tate's analysis, skin-bleaching can be a "race performative decolonizing practice": "libidinal economies of skin transmutation within the Black Atlantic can also be seen as racially positive, as philic rather than phobic. First, bleaching/lightening/toning can be read as oppositional to white supremacy and colourism, and second, as 'post-race', self-affirming aesthetic enhancement and choice, which has nothing to do with a desire to be white or whiteness as an aesthetic ideal." (Tate, 2016, p. 6)

[28] For a condensed historical overview of practices of skin whitening in Europe and "colonial race regimes" see also Tate (2016), Ch. 1.

into the street like someone possessed. (Marie Cardinal, in Morrison, 1992, vi–vii Preface)

Morrison uses Marie Cardinal's description to trace the white imaginary in literature. What interests Morrison is less the question of whether a non-Black musician could have prompted the same effects (in fact, she hypothesizes that they could), than is listening to the particular evocations elicited by encounters with Black people:

> In Cardinal's narrative, black or colored people and symbolic figurations of blackness are markers for the benevolent and the wicked; the spiritual (...) and the voluptuous; of 'sinful' but delicious sensuality coupled with demands for purity and restraint. (Morrison, 1992, ix, Preface)

As part of a complex ideological construction, the white imaginary may also influence people who are not White – as Alcoff indicates. We can see this in the cases of internalized oppression discussed in previous chapters, exemplified dramatically by Pecola, the leading character of *The Bluest Eye*. Morrison notes, however, how her own position as a Black writer plays a role in the fact that she does not spontaneously have the same cultural associations as White writers in her way of conceiving Black characters:

> The principal reason these matters loom large for me is that I do not have quite the same access to these traditionally useful constructs of blackness. Neither blackness nor "people of color" stimulates in me notions of excessive, limitless love, anarchy, or routine dread. I cannot rely on these metaphorical shortcuts because I am a black writer struggling with and through a language that can powerfully evoke and enforce hidden signs of racial superiority, cultural hegemony, and dismissive "othering" of people and language which are by no means marginal or already and completely known and knowable in my work. My vulnerability would lie in romanticizing blackness rather than demonizing it; vilifying whiteness rather than reifying it. The kind of work I have always wanted to do requires me to learn how to maneuver ways to free up the language from its sometimes sinister, frequently lazy, almost always predictable employment of racially informed and determined chains. (Morrison, 1992, xii–xiii, Preface)

We can see from these examples that the white imaginary, as part of the ideological apparatus of whiteness, constitutes a set of racially coded images that operate at many different levels (history, politics, political history, philosophy, aesthetics…). These images are affective in that they mobilize desires and emotions, and play an important role in how people – mainly those who are racialized as White – construct their identities. As Alcoff points out, the white imaginary plays a decisive role in "who we can imagine 'our own kind' to be" (Alcoff, 2015, p. 80). It helps to account for the desire of Whites to be among Whites in spaces dominated by Whites (neighbourhoods, professional environments, nations), even when these desires go against their own rational interests:

> On the one hand, if one feels so strongly about one's connection to white people and to a white dominant community or nation, then it is rational in some sense to make choices that manifest this preference. But, on the other hand, truly rational behavior should not simply pursue one's preferences but should consider how those preferences are produced and whether they conflict with one's other needs and commitments. The concept of imaginary whiteness can thus help to foreground not the empirical or material realities of whiteness, but the falsified grounds for white preferences, self-conceptions, and identifications. (Alcoff, 2015, p. 81)

Although the white imaginary influences Whites and non-Whites in general, it plays a particular role in Whites' subject-formation, and produces what Alcoff calls "subjective whiteness". Those who are racialized as White, and benefit from such racialization, have particular emotional investments in whiteness that are *mediated* by imaginary whiteness. In other words, attention to the white imaginary also allows us to account for "a specifically *white* way of being in the world": "Whites do tend to have (…) their own peculiar inclinations, affects, practices, and modes of perception." (Alcoff, 2015, pp. 83–84)

There are different ways of accounting for the formation of a white subjectivity, which, again, does not stand for an essential category simply defined in terms of skin colour. In some circumstances, non-

White people may also develop aspects of a white subjectivity. I will focus here, however, on ways of accounting for a particularly "white" way of being in the world: that of White people who benefit from white privilege. I shall examine two accounts of how whiteness functions in the constitution of the self: a trend that focuses on the cognitive aspects of white subjectivity through the notion of white ignorance; and an analysis that uncovers its embodied and affective aspects. I contend that some patterns of emotion are non-accidentally linked to white privilege.

5.3.2 White ignorance

So far, I have discussed how whiteness, as an ideological formation, conceals some of the mechanisms through which race-based oppression is reproduced. One aspect of this ideological formation is visible in the white imaginary, around which some of the desires, emotions, identifications and affiliations of White subjects organize. I shall now go on to consider one of the cognitive mechanisms through which the White self relates to whiteness, which Mills describes as "white ignorance".

　　　　White ignorance points to an aspect of white subjectivity – the distinctive epistemic limitations of Whites. It designates a specific kind of "group-based cognitive handicap" (Mills, 2017, p. 51). White ignorance is not any kind of ignorance that people who are White may suffer from. There are, of course, many instances of ignorance that are not causally linked to race. For example, not knowing the exact number of teeth cats have, or whether crows are smarter than foxes. Here, race does not play a determining role. By contrast, white ignorance is non-accidentally linked to white supremacy. It is "an ignorance, a non-knowing, that is not contingent, but in which race – white racism and/or white racial domination and their ramifications – plays a crucial causal role" (Mills, 2017, p. 55).

　　　　Just as whiteness, as an ideology, may influence people who are not White, white ignorance, despite being a group-based cognitive

handicap, is not exclusive to White people, and is not based on physio-biological characteristics. Mills argues that white ignorance needs to be historicized:

> I am taking for granted the truth of some variant of social constructivism, which denies that race is biological. So the causality in the mechanisms for generating and sustaining white ignorance on the macro-level is social-structural rather than physio-biological, though it will of course operate through the physio-biological. Assuming the growing consensus in critical race theory to be correct – that race in general, and whiteness in particular, is a product of the modern period (Frederickson 2002) – then you could not have had white ignorance in this technical, term-of-art sense in, say, the ancient world, because whites did not exist then. Certainly people existed who by today's standards would be counted as white, but they would not have been so categorized at the time, either by themselves or others, so there would have been no whiteness to play a causal role in their knowing or non-knowing. (Mills, 2017, p. 56)

Non-Whites may also be prone to white ignorance when adhering, for example, to claims that in post-racial, colour-blind meritocratic Western societies, race does no longer have any social significance. However, as a group-based cognitive pattern linked with group interests, white ignorance is considered to be more typical of Whites. This is not to say, however, that Whites manifest it in a uniform way:

> Whites are not a monolith, and if the analysis of white ignorance is to be part of a social epistemology, then the obvious needs to be remembered - that people have other identities beside racial ones, so that whites will be divisible by class, gender, nationality, religion, and so forth, and these factors will modify, by differential socialization and experience, the bodies of belief and the cognitive patterns of the sub-populations concerned. But this is, of course, true for all sociological generalizations, which has never been a reason for abandoning them, but one for employing them cautiously. White ignorance is not indefeasible (even if it sometimes feels that way!), and some people who are white will, because of their particular histories (and/or the intersection of whiteness with other identities), overcome it and have true beliefs on what their fellow-whites get wrong. So white ignorance is best thought of as a cognitive tendency – an inclination, a doxastic disposition - which is not insuperable. (Mills, 2017, pp. 58–59)

Mills shows how components of cognitive processes such as perception, conception, memory, testimony, and motivational group interest are significantly affected by social-structural mechanisms of racialization. As Europeans gradually became the dominant force in the world during the Modern period, white supremacy as an ideology became hegemonic. It involved a particular epistemic principle ("white normativity"), which asserted the superiority of the European world. From this normative epistemic principle stemmed a series of distorting epistemic practices and myths that misrepresented and/or suppressed facts about non-White others. For example, the concept of the "Savage" played an instrumental role in justifying imperial European expansionism. This grounding concept then oriented the representations that Whites formed of non-Whites:

> Even a cognizer with no antipathy or prejudice toward Native Americans [would] be cognitively disabled trying to establish truths about them insofar as such a category and its associated presuppositions [would] tend to force his conclusions in a certain direction, will limit what he can objectively see (Mills, 2017, p. 62).

White ignorance therefore encompasses both explicit and implicit racist beliefs and attitudes and, as part of a social-structural phenomenon, does not always rest on ill intent. It can be part of the cognitive habits of Whites even when they consciously reject racism as a form of injustice. However, Mills establishes a distinction between two different historical contexts where white ignorance has been part of the epistemic landscape. In a context of *de jure* white supremacy (such as under Jim Crow legislation in the United States), "racialized causality" will tend to be more direct and the general beliefs of the cognizers will tend to be more explicitly racist. By contrast, in a context of *de facto* white supremacy, where explicit racist beliefs are socially condemned and in which explicit racist laws have been abolished, this racial causality still operates indirectly in individuals who do not embrace explicit racist beliefs:

> The racialized causality I am invoking needs to be expansive enough to
> include both straightforward racist motivation and more impersonal
> social-structural causation, which may be operative even if the cognizer
> in question is not racist. (...) [R]acialized causality can give rise to what
> I am calling white ignorance, straightforwardly for a racist cognizer, but
> also indirectly for a nonracist cognizer who may form racist beliefs (e.g.,
> that after the abolition of slavery in the United States, blacks generally
> had opportunities equal to whites) because of the social suppression of
> the pertinent knowledge, though without prejudice himself. So white
> ignorance need not always be based on bad faith. Obviously from the
> point of view of a social epistemology, especially after the transition
> from *de jure* to *de facto* white supremacy, it is precisely this kind of
> white ignorance that is most important. (Mills, 2017, p. 57).

The kind of white ignorance that is pervasive in a *de facto* white
supremacist context is exemplified by "colour-blindness" as an ideology;
the idea that we live in a world in which race is no longer relevant and
in which Black, Brown and White subjects are formally equal before the
Law and have equal opportunities. The belief that Western democracies
are colour-blind reduces Whites' ability to perceive social-structural
injustice for what it is. Instead, they tend to blame the groups who suffer
racial discrimination for their problems. If we all have equal
opportunities, and if socio-economic "success" is a matter of individual
perseverance and personal hard work, they argue, then those who "fail"
by those standards must do so because they lack the motivation and the
right set of values.

In this context of colour-blindness as the hegemonic ideology,
white ignorance is also manifest in interpersonal relations, through
utterances such as "When I look at you, I do not see color" (Medina,
2013, p. 40). These, often well-intentioned, rejections of racism ignore
the ways that race continues to play an important role in the lives of
those who are racialized as Black or Brown:

> We are certainly better off without such prejudices, but unfortunately
> they do not disappear by fiat. And note that the complete refusal to see
> color in a racist society involves implicitly the refusal to acknowledge
> the force of racist prejudices and their insidious impact on interpersonal
> dynamics: 'I do not see you as affected by racial prejudices, and my

social perceptions and social relations are unaffected by them'. In other words, the disavowal of racialized perception involves distancing oneself from the social reality of racism and failing to properly acknowledge its influence on social cognition. (Medina, 2013, p. 40)

Mills gives other examples of white ignorance sustained by collective amnesia, for example by the denial of crimes (such as the Native American genocide), or by historiographies that produce a "feel-good history for whites". Here, one may think of "the 'magnolia-myth' of paternalistic white aristocrats and happy, singing darkies that dominated American textbooks as late as the 1950s" (Mills, 2017, p. 65). These distorting epistemic practices will produce white ignorance in a form that makes it difficult for most White people to recognize their identities as indissolubly tied to the histories of oppression that have systematically advantaged them. The cognitive processes involved in white ignorance, as a practice that has distorting effects on social cognition, becomes an inability not only to have adequate knowledge of the lived realities of non-Whites, but also, importantly, of White people's own historical and current position of privilege. This entails a form of "moral ignorance" that limits White people's capacity to understand the moral wrongs of oppression:

> Whites… experience genuine cognitive difficulties in recognizing certain behaviour patterns as racist, so that quite apart from questions of motivation and bad faith they will be morally handicapped simply from the conceptual point of view in seeing and doing the right thing. (Mills, *The Racial Contract*, as cited in Sullivan, 2015, p. 128)

5.3.3 A "recalcitrant" ignorance

The "ignorance" in white ignorance does not imply passivity. It is not merely a lack of knowledge. Mills conceives it as

> an ignorance that resists, (...) an ignorance that fights back. (...) an ignorance militant, aggressive, not to be intimidated, an ignorance that stays active, dynamic, that refuses to go quietly (...) presenting itself unblushingly as knowledge" (Mills, 2017, p. 49).

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How should we account for the "dynamic", "militant" nature of white ignorance? As one of the mechanisms for reproducing ideological formations tied to white domination, which becomes part of white subjectivity, white ignorance is difficult to eradicate because it is embedded in complex patterns of thinking, perceiving and behaving. José Medina also highlights this active dimension of white ignorance, which does not merely consist in the absence of belief or in false beliefs: "It is a recalcitrant ignorance, hard to eradicate, that is rooted in active patterns of cognitive interaction and in habitual ways of perceiving, listening, talking, thinking, and acting" (Medina, 2013, p. 39).

One of the categories of analysis that, according to Mills, plays a causal role in white ignorance is "the dynamic role of white group interests" (Mills, 2017, p. 70). Mills notes that an analysis of the links between group interests and cognition is lacking in the scholarship of social epistemology. Whilst in the Marxist tradition it has been broadly accepted that "if exploitative socio-economic relations are indeed foundational to the social order, then this is likely to have a fundamental shaping effect on social ideation", the same kind of phenomenon needs to be recognized with respect of matters of race: "vested white group interest in the racial *status quo* (…) needs to be recognized as a major factor in encouraging white cognitive distortions of various kinds" (Mills, 2017, p. 70). Mills argues that Whites' perception of their own group interests as threatened by Black interests drives their preferences and shapes their cognitive practices. Therefore, white group interests may play an important role in the recalcitrant aspect of white ignorance, along with the other elements identified by Mills, such as "the refusal to perceive systemic domination, the convenient amnesia about the past and its legacy in the present, and the hostility to black testimony". (Mills, 2017, p. 70)

5.4 Embodied and emotional aspects of white ignorance

White ignorance is one of the forces that sustain white privilege insofar as it allows privilege to remain unacknowledged, and thus unchallenged, by those who benefit from it. Mills analyses white ignorance as a primarily *cognitive* phenomenon, but as José Medina and Shannon Sullivan argue, white ignorance has important affective and physiological dimensions. Medina and Sullivan contend that white ignorance does not simply operate at the level of belief. White ignorance is not completely explained by the suppression or distortion of facts, by collective amnesia and systematic "testimonial injustice" (Fricker, 2007), but is also embedded in the emotional and physiological habits that characterize whiteness as an embodied experience. In her phenomenological analysis of whiteness, Sara Ahmed also highlights how the latter is an orienting process of bodies. From these analyses we can identify a series of physiological and emotional patterns that are non-accidentally correlated with white privilege.

5.4.1 Affective numbness

José Medina characterises the ideology of colour-blindness as carrying a particular kind of insensitivity to matters of race:

> Racial ignorance involves both cognitive and affective attitudes and meta-attitudes with respect to racial others. This is why I think it is important to think of this peculiar kind of blindness as a form of *insensitivity* or *numbness*, for being insensitive or numbed conveys a lack of receptivity that is simultaneously both cognitive and affective. For example, (...) racial insensitivity may involve the failure to see the social *relevance* of race in one's interactions, and this failure is not simply a cognitive deficit, but an affective failure: it involves the inability to *feel* concerned and to have an entire array of *emotions* such as empathy, sympathy, compassion, etc. This is why those who do not see the social relevance of racial aspects of social experience often charge those who do as being *oversensitive*, as having a thin skin or feeling too much when racial elements are present in social interactions. (Medina, 2013, p. 49)

Medina identifies different kinds of affective numbness linked with racial insensitivity. A first consists in feeling indifferent or apathetic in relation to a particular social group. This may be linked to other phenomena in the cognitive realm that Medina identifies as "epistemic laziness", a group-based lack of curiosity (Medina, 2013, p. 33) that produces narrow-mindedness and arrogant patterns of behaviour. It is the indifference or apathy characteristic of racist ethnocentrism, which María Lugones (2003) also links to laziness and arrogance:

> (...) the disrespectful, lazy, arrogant indifference to other cultures that devalues them through not seeing appreciatively *any* culture or cultural ways except one's own when one could do otherwise; or the disrespectful, lazy, arrogant indifference that devalues other cultures through stereotyping them or through non-reflective, self-satisfied acceptance of such stereotypes. (Lugones, 2003, p. 44)

A second kind of affective numbness identified by Medina consists not in being indifferent, but rather in feeling concerned by issues of racial injustice in the abstract, and not knowing how to engage with them, i.e., being *affectively blocked* in one's concrete responses to racial injustice. An example of this may be found in what Lugones calls "infantilization of judgement" – the tendency of White people to take refuge in their good, innocent intentions when challenged about their participation in racism, and their general inability to take responsibility for their actions when these display signs of ethnocentrism and racism:

> I have encountered this phenomenon so many times and in so many people of good judgement in other matters that it is frequently disconcerting. (...) They have turned into children, incapable of judgement, avoiding all commitment except against racism in the abstract, *paralyzed as responsible beings, afraid of hostility and hostile in their fear, wedded to their ignorance and arrogant in their guilty purity of heart.*
>   Infantilization of judgement is a dulling of the ability to read critically, and with maturity of judgement, those texts and situations in which race and ethnicity are salient. It appears to me as a flight into a state in which one cannot be critical or responsible: a flight into those

characteristics of childhood that excuse ignorance and confusion, and that appeal to authority. (...) If a child, the white/Angla can be guilty of racism and ethnocentrism innocently, unmarked and untouched in her goodness, confused with good reason, a passive learner because she cannot exercise her judgement with maturity. (...) Infantilization of judgement is a form of ethnocentric racism precisely because it is a self-indulgent denial of one's understanding of one's culture and its expressing racism. (Lugones, 2003, pp. 48–49. My italics)

What Lugones describes are forms of affective blockage: a paralyzing fear of being challenged in one's racism, an attachment to forms of ignorance as a way to deflect responsibility for a particular behaviour ("But I did not *know*!"), and the arrogance implied in claiming that, if one's intentions are good and pure ("I am a *good* person! I am not racist!"), one cannot be challenged for one's participation in racism.

Medina's discussion of the simultaneously cognitive and affective aspects of white ignorance highlights the emotional deficiencies that privileged subjects may display. White ignorance in the form of a reduced sensitivity, such as an atrophied emotional capacity for empathy, translates into a diminished moral capacity, insofar as insensitive subjects lack the tools for properly understanding how their own behaviour, perceptions, and ways of interacting perpetuate forms of racial harm. Furthermore, inconsistencies or tensions between some forms of knowledge and affective dis/engagement are often at the source of "failures in responsible agency":

(...) the cognitive and the affective are not always congruent elements; they can pull apart and fall into tension with each other: one may know about a social harm and not care (as it happens in the case of knowledgeable insensitivity[29]), and one may also care (i.e. be affectively

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[29] By *knowledgeable insensitivity*, Medina refers to cases in which the subject is not simply insensitive to particular injustices due to the kind of recalcitrant mechanisms involved in white ignorance at a meta level; these are cases where subjects feel explicit contempt or resentment for particular issues: "Those who feel contempt or resentment for certain problems, concerns, or forms of suffering are not ignorant about them; and I don't think they can be said to be numbed or desensitized to them either (as it happens with meta-blindness): they register the problem or harm in question, but they do not feel it as a legitimate concern or as an undeserved mistreatment or injustice" (Medina, 2013, p. 65n7)

open) and not know enough to do anything with that sensitivity. (Medina, 2013, p. 50)

The cognitive and emotional limitations of privileged subjects may translate into moral failings, which is why Medina argues that part of addressing racial injustice consists in being attentive to the ways in which "cognitive and affective structures work together, or fail to work together" (Medina, 2013, p. 50).

Following Fanon, Medina notes that many aspects of the cognitive and affective insensitivities displayed by White subjects are closely linked to the particular ways in which, in Western cultures, white is the homogenous invisible norm, "the color of the unmarked mainstream subject" (Medina, 2013, p. 50). In the white imagination, whiteness is experienced by White subjects as absence of colour. Furthermore, the mechanisms through which racialized perception is produced also tend to be invisible. Therefore, when White persons experience themselves as completely free from racial prejudice ("I don't see race, you are my equal; my perception is unaffected by difference of skin colour"), and see themselves as *unraced*, it is not only that many socially relevant aspects of race tend to remain unseen/unfelt in the ways that Medina describes. More than that, the very processes through which such ways of seeing (or unseeing) are structured are made invisible: "Racial seeing as such is not open to view; the processes of racialization that come to structure our social perceptions are not seen, and yet our perceptual habits and our field of vision cannot escape them" (Medina, 2013, p. 54). To take Toni Morrison's image, colour-blindness structures one's ways of (un)knowing, (mis)perceiving and (un)feeling rather as though we were looking at a fishbowl: "The glide and flick of the golden scales, the green tip, the bolt of white careening back from the gills; the castles at the bottom, surrounded by pebbles and tiny, intricate fronds of green; the barely disturbed water, the fleck of waste and food, the tranquil bubbles traveling to the surface" is made possible by the bowl, "the structure that transparently (and invisibly) permits the ordered life it contains to

exist in the larger world" (Morrison, 1992, 17). It matters therefore to *see the bowl*, i.e., to make this racial seeing *visible*, to *unmask* its hidden mechanisms. Alcoff, Sullivan and Medina point out that these mechanisms are not only cognitive. They are also "inscribed in the body": "The racial meanings inscribed in the body become part of the underlying structure of our perceptual habits, that is, part of the taken-for-granted background against which our social perceptions take place" (Medina, 2013, pp. 54–55).

I will now turn to examine some of the ways in which white ignorance has embodied dimensions that are connected to patterns of emotions, such as disgust, contempt and fear.

5.4.2 White privilege as an embodied unconscious habit

Sullivan analyses unconscious habit[30] as a structure of white privilege. The notion of "habit", Sullivan contends,

> helps explain how white privilege often functions as if invisible. Habits are the things that we do and say 'without thinking.' They are the mental and physical patterns of engagement with the world that operate without conscious attention or reflection. (Sullivan, 2006, p. 4)

Habits, Sullivan argues, are "environmentally constituted". They are ways of "transacting with the world" that become constitutive of the self:

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[30] Sullivan's exploration of the notion of 'unconscious habit' pursues a path opened by W.E.B. Du Bois but which occupied a rather marginal place in his work: "Du Bois's concept of unconscious habit combines a Freudian idea of the unconscious with a pragmatist understanding of habit to posit an unconscious formed by socially inherited customs and attitudes that resists its transformation. As such, the concept broadens Freud's idea of the unconscious beyond its focus on the Oedipalized nuclear family and deepens pragmatism's concept of habit by connecting it with activities of repression and resistance to change that the psyche often employs. For Du Bois, a significant part of the constitution of unconscious habits involves active mechanisms and strategies for blocking access to them by conscious inquiry. That habits are dynamically constituted through transaction with the socio-cultural world rather than fixated by biology or psychology does not change the fact that transforming them will take a great deal of patience and time, in large part because of habit's ability to actively undermine its own transformation" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 22).

> If the self can be understood as a complex tapestry of woven fibers, habits are the various threads that make up the tapestry itself. Or, to stretch the metaphor, habits are the various threads that help constitute each other as they also make up the tapestry as a whole (Sullivan, 2006, p. 2).

This means understanding habit as *ontological*, where ontology is thought as historical – and therefore, capable of transformation – rather than as the "eternal, unchanging, and essential characteristics of a being" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 3).

In what sense are habits formed in transactions with the environment? Sullivan examines the way the body, the psyche and the world have "co-constitutive transactions" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 23). The body and the psyche are constituted by the environment and simultaneously productive of the environment. In order to understand this transactional aspect of the constitution of habits, Sullivan imagines habit as a machine:

> [H]abit can be thought as a machine: a relatively stable, complex process of change that produces certain effects through its transactions with other machines. (...) Machines are never isolated; they are always being plugged and detached from other machines (for example, printers, modems, electric outlets, battery packs, etc.) (Sullivan, 2006, p. 89)

Another example used by Sullivan to capture the transactional nature of habits is Deleuze and Guattari's image of the interaction between the tick and its environment. In habit, body, mind and world co-constitute one another just like the tick biting a human comes to form a particular kind of "machinic alliance" affecting what the tick and the human are:

> (...) what the tick is are its connections with the branch on which it hangs, the passing human whose sweat it smells, and the skin onto which it latches to suck blood. The tick is constituted by what it does with and to the world around it, just as the human onto which it drops is constituted in part by the tick-world in which it has entered. In the becoming-tick of the human and the becoming-human of the tick, there is an alliance of tick and human that is machinic in that it involves a non-representational, dynamic transformation of each of them. (Sullivan, 2006, p. 89)

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We can find another example of the transactional aspect of habit in the image of a pair of old, used shoes. If I wear the same pair of shoes for years for my daily stroll in the forest, the cadence of my step will be, with the passing of time and use, reflected in their shape. The constant contact with the path of the forest will smooth their soles, bend their tip, and scrape their heels in a particular way. But my steps – along with all of those who take the same path – will also leave their trace, and contribute to giving to the path its characteristic shape. My body as a whole may be modified by this daily stroll as well, including by the shoes I wear. If, as it turns out, the shoes were not adapted to walking in the forest, I may end up with a chronic tendinitis or back pain. My old shoes were *constituted by* the environment in which they were used (my feet, my steps, the forest path), but they were also *constituting of* the environment (they gave me back pain; they helped smooth the path of the forest, etc.).

Habits are "styles" of engaging with the environment, ways of *being* and *doing* that constitute who we are. They are characterized, to some degree, by their stability, but this need not imply rigidity or fixedness. Habits can be modified. However, their unconscious[31] dimension is one of the factors that help explain their *resistance* to change: "As unconscious, habits of white privilege do not merely go unnoticed. They actively thwart the process of conscious reflection on

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[31] Sullivan prefers to think of habits of white privilege as *unconscious*, rather than simply nonconscious or preconscious, because the latter notions do not fully account for habits' "strong resistance to conscious recognition": "White privilege goes to great length not to be heard. Habits of white privilege are not merely nonconscious or preconscious. It is not the case that they just happen not to be the object of conscious reflection but could relatively easily become so if only they were drawn to one's attention. This overly optimistic picture implicitly denies the possible existence of formidable obstacles to the conscious acknowledgement of certain habits". (Sullivan, 2005, p. 6). With respect to how accessible to consciousness the unconscious is, Sullivan prefers to remain "agnostic": "Whether and to what degree unconscious habits can be examined and possibly reworked can be found out only in practice." (Sullivan, 2006, p. 7)

them, which allows them to seem non-existent even as they continue to function." (Sullivan, 2006, pp. 5–6) As a way of capturing both the stability and the relative flexibility of habit, Sullivan refers to it as a "malleable structure" and as a "structured transformation". As an example of the transactional nature of psychosomatic habits – of how they are a complex transaction between body, mind and social environment – Sullivan offers the stereotypical case of the under-confident female student, reminiscent of the women who illustrate Bartky's notion of *emotional attunement* in shame (described in Chapter 3):

> Functional distinctions can be made between mental habits, such as a female's student's tendency to present her views in class apologetically, and physical or bodily habits such as the same student's tendency to contract her body inward as she sits. (...) As in the case for many women, the student in my example has an inhibited style of engaging with the academic world that is inseparably psychical and bodily. Her transaction with a sexist world creates particular psychosomatic predispositions for engaging with it that cannot be chopped up into separate realms of body and mind. (Sullivan, 2006, p. 24)

Understanding race as *habitual* means that "in a raced and racist world, human beings will be raced and racist, albeit often in very different ways depending upon the particular environments they inhabit" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 3). Given that habits are constituted in a dynamic transaction with the environment, habits of white privilege will naturally differ depending on whether the context is marked by more conscious and deliberate forms of racism, and more unconscious and implicit manifestations of this phenomenon.

Sullivan's case study focuses on the United States. In her view, transformation from a *de jure* ("Jim Crow") to a *de facto* racism (in twenty-first-century United States) goes with a transformation of the ways in which white domination operates. In a *de jure* white supremacist context, the patterns of domination are more conscious, explicit, visible and deliberate. In a *de facto* racist context, the forms of

white domination tend to be invisible, implicit and unconscious. Whilst white domination is always a mixture of white supremacy and white privilege, white domination's current *modus operandi* is a combination in which white privilege is present in higher proportions:

> The shift from *de jure* to *de facto* racism corresponds with a related shift from habits of white supremacy to ones of white privilege. As I use the term "white supremacy", it refers to conscious, deliberate forms of white domination, such as those found in the law but also in informal social mores. Although racist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and Aryan Nation offer some of the most obvious examples of white supremacy, one need not be a member of them to be a white supremacist. All one needs, so to speak, is a style of transacting with the world in which white domination is consciously embraced and affirmed. White supremacy has not disappeared with the shift from *de jure* to *de facto* racism. As long as white domination endures, there probably always will exist a mix of white supremacy and white privilege, on both the micro level of the person and the macro level of societies, cultures, and nations. But that mix is one with increasingly high proportions of unconscious white domination. (Sullivan, 2006, p. 5)

A crucial characteristic of white domination in the context of colour-blindness is that it operates while, and all the more effectively *because*, it makes itself invisible. This is why, Sullivan contends, unconscious habits of white privilege need to be brought to visibility, analysed, challenged, so as to be potentially disrupted or modified.

In order to have a clearer grasp of the difference between psychosomatic habits linked to white supremacy and those linked to white privilege, Sullivan contrasts what was a common practice in the United States under "Jim Crow" legislation with today's attitudes towards race:

> In the early twenty-first century, white domination increasingly gains power precisely by operating as if nonexistent. This has not always been the case. One hundred years ago, for example, when Jim Crow reigned in the United States, white domination tended to be fairly easily visible to all. Lynchings were well-attended social affairs for white people, who openly celebrated the vicious hangings of black people with picnics and photographs to proudly send to friends and family. After the civil rights movements of the 1960s, the move from *de jure* to *de facto* racism meant not the end of white domination, but a significant shift in its

predominant mode of operation. It was no longer socially acceptable in most white circles and institutions to openly proclaim racist beliefs. The 'good' (= nonracist) white person was supposed to treat everyone equally, which was taken to mean not noticing a person's race at all. In this atmosphere of alleged colorblindness, racism continued and continues to function without the use of race-related terms. Race supposedly is not an issue in a society that obsesses over urban ghettoes, crime, the resale value of one's house, welfare queens, the drug war, the death penalty, and a massively growing prison industry. (Sullivan, 2006, p. 5)

Psychosomatic habits and their related emotional phenomena have therefore changed. Drawing on the work of Cinthya Willett (2001), Sullivan explores the connection between habits of white supremacy[32] and forms of psychological pleasure derived from the humiliations that White people inflicted on Black people:

> (...) recognition of a slave's humanity can be used to increase her demoralization. Drawing from a scene in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* in which a slave woman overhears her master's teachings to white pupils about the differences between masters and slaves, Willett explains how racial hubris operates precisely by using the division of the African person into human and subhuman parts to produce maximal psychological pleasure for the white slaveholder. Seeing the slave as part human enabled the slaveholder to assault the slave even more ferociously than if the slave were assumed to be wholly animal. If the slave is part human, then using him or her like a brute is humiliating in a way that it could not be if the slave were fully nonhuman. The slaveholder in this case recognized a part of the slave that deserved dignity and respect only to ensure that the humiliating insult of slavery was felt that much more strongly. (Sullivan, 2006, p. 42)

If, as Sullivan argues, in the context of white supremacy, racism is consciously and explicitly embraced by most White people (supported institutionally, legally, economically and culturally), one may expect that White people, in general, will display patent patterns of emotions that, by the moral standards of today's allegedly "colour-blind" U.S.

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[32] Sullivan refers to these as habits of *white privilege*. However, she uses an example that corresponds to the context of nineteenth-century United States, that is, to a *de jure* white supremacist context. I think it would be more consistent to think of these as *habits of white supremacy,* following the meaning she gives to the distinction between white supremacy and white privilege.

society, would be deemed unacceptable, such as the cited pleasure taken in acts of humiliation and cruelty, as well as overt patterns of contempt, disgust and hatred. Such patterns of behaviour are described in slave narratives, for example in Frederick Douglass' description of an act of torture as "the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which [he] was about to pass"[33].

Feelings and expressions of disgust and contempt were common currency in a *de jure* white supremacist context, and the psychosomatic habits of White people were importantly shaped by it. The transaction between bodily and mental habits and the environment can be identified, for example, in widespread unwillingness to eat with Black people:

> Lillian Smith provides a powerful example of how white racism has a deep impact in the body itself. Describing a moment in Southern history where a few white women decided to break the taboo against eating with Black women, Smith writes, 'One of these church women told me of her first eating experience with colored friends. Though her conscience was serene, and her enjoyment of this association was real, yet she was seized by an acute nausea which disappeared only when the meal was finished. She was too honest to attribute it to anything other than

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[33] Douglass, 2016: "Master, however, was not a humane slaveholder. It required extraordinary barbarity on the part of an overseer to affect him. He was a cruel man, hardened by a long life of slaveholding. He would at times seem to take great pleasure in whipping a slave" (Ch. 1, p. 8); "My new mistress proved to be all she appeared when I first met her at the door, -a woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings. She had never had a slave under her control previously to myself, and prior to her marriage she had been dependent upon her own industry for a living. She was by trade a weaver; and by constant application to her business, she had been in a good degree preserved from the blighting and dehumanizing effects of slavery. I was utterly astonished at her goodness. I scarcely knew how to behave towards her. She was entirely unlike any other woman I had ever seen. I could not approach her as I was accustomed to approach other white ladies. My early instruction was all out of place. The crouching servility, usually so acceptable a quality in a slave, did not answer when manifested toward her. Her favor was not gained by it; she seemed to be disturbed by it. (...) Her face was made of heavenly smiles and her voice of tranquil music. But, alas! This kind heart had but a short time to remain such. The fatal poison of irresponsible power was already in her hands, and soon commenced its infernal work. That cheerful eye, under the influence of slavery, soon became red with rage; that voice, made all of sweet accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and that angelic face gave place to that of a demon." (Douglass, 2016, ch.4, p. 23).

anxiety welling up from the 'bottom of her personality', as she expressed it, creeping back from her childhood training.' (Yancy, 2017, p. 48n45)

Such expressions of disgust were not exceptional, isolated incidents. George Yancy refers to another example given by Kristina DuRocher (2011) in her book *Raising Racists: The Socialization of White Children in the Jim Crow South*:

> DuRocher notes that Alice Harris Kester, the wife of Howard Kester, a prominent white preacher who was influenced by the Social Gospel movement, "confronted one of the southern 'sins', at a Negro Baptist Publishing House lunch. She tried to eat at the same table as African Americans, but could not keep her food down, running home in tears." Both white women appear to be sincere in their efforts at political activism. Yet, their bodies responded in ways contrary to their intentions. (Yancy, 2017, pp. 245–246)

If the environment plays an important role in the way habits are constituted, and if modifications in the environment produce transformations in habits, one might think that in today's alleged colour-blind "regime", such psychosomatic phenomena would have disappeared. But Sullivan aims to show how, on the contrary, some of these habits have become *unconscious* in the passage from a white supremacist context to one dominated by white privilege. Something of the old habits remains, despite modification. As mentioned above, it is not that white domination has ceased, but that it has transformed its modes of operation[34]. Many of the psychosomatic habits of white privilege have become "woven into the fabric of [White people's] unconscious" (Yancy, 2017, p. 34). The legacy of the "old-fashioned" Jim Crow era racism still acts in White people's bodies.

The particular habits of white privilege do not merely take their shape from processes of internalization of particular beliefs of the

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[34] The distinction between a white supremacist regime where racist beliefs, behaviour, laws etc. are consciously held does not mean, of course, that there are not unconscious habits or mechanisms particular to that era. Sullivan's argument consists in thinking the passage from white supremacist (*de jure* racist regime) to white privileged (de facto racism) as involving particular forms of repression through which many of those explicit, overt patterns have become unconscious.

propositional and representational kind. Rather, Sullivan argues, unconscious racial habits are produced *through the body*. Sullivan gives some examples of how embodied racial habits are transmitted through bodily actions and reactions in ways that manifest and perpetuate a racial and racist imagination. Drawing on Jean Laplanche's (1989) theory of seduction, which she interprets as "a process of unconscious habit formation" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 64), Sullivan extends the theory so that it does not only focus on sexuality, but also on race and racism. The unconscious, she contends, is "initially and continually formed in relationship with concrete others in a sociopolitical world." (Sullivan, 2006, p. 64) Laplanche's theory explains the role of adult's seduction[35] in the constitution of the infant's unconscious[36]:

[35] As Sullivan notes, the use of the term "seduction" does not characterize an abusive sexual act from a parent to a child: "I immediately must clarify the term 'seduction' since it does not mean that a sexually abusive act takes place between adult and infant. This was the central component of the seduction theory that Freud entertained early in his career to explain his patients' hysterical symptoms and then abandoned to develop his well-known theory of infant sexuality. Adult seduction of the infant is a real event, and in that sense, the early Freud was on to something that unfortunately was lost in his move away from the seduction theory. But what Freud did not see is that the event of seduction involves the transference of enigmatic messages about sexuality from adult to child, not a sexual act in the customary sense of the term." (Sullivan, 2006, p. 64)

[36] It may be pertinent to clarify now that the notion of the *unconscious* that Sullivan uses is importantly informed by Laplanche's theory of seduction, which she views as more adequate than a traditional psychoanalytic notion of the unconscious, insofar as it helps to account for the process of habit formation as bodily and mental at the same time: "It is at this point that the psychoanalytic term 'the unconscious' becomes an obstacle to understanding the process of seduction. Because it tends to imply something psychical separate from, even if in connection with, the body, 'the unconscious' interferes with an appreciation of seduction as a simultaneously somatic and psychical event. *More helpful is to think 'the unconscious' as unconscious habits that are inseparably bodily and psychical.* Seduction is the process of the formation of unconscious habits involving the transference of enigmatic messages from adult to child via the adult's unconscious modes of transacting with the world, and especially the child. A child is not born with unconscious psychosomatic habits; this complexity is developed through transactional relationships with adults. Initially, enigmatic messages play along the child's body and become properly unconscious once attempts to understand them have failed. Unbeknownst to the child, these failed attempts at translation help shape her subsequent responses to the world and, through those transactions, constitute her self. Her unconscious habits are the result of the body's development of the psyche." (Sullivan, 2006, p. 67. My italics)

By means of bodily expressions such as gestures or grimaces—and also, though rarely for babies, by means of spoken words—the adult implants a message about sexuality in the child's body, at least a portion of which child cannot comprehend. The child tries to understand the message, and indeed sometimes succeeds in part. The parts that she does not understand are repressed. These remainders of the attempted translation of the message form the child's unconscious. The etymology of the verb "to seduce" (*séduire*) helps indicate why the process is seductive: in seduction, an adult draws an infant into the adult world in an irresistible fashion, captivating the child in way that he or she does not know how to respond to. (Sullivan, 2006, pp. 64–65)

Sullivan adapts this view in order to show how children's unconscious is shaped by the adult world through bodily signals, using a passage from Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*:

Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* provides a helpful illustration of the process of seduction. Morrison demonstrates how the narrator of the novel, a nine-year-old black girl named Claudia, and her older sister, Frieda, are tuned into the adult world around them, receiving its messages even though they do not fully understand them:

Frieda and I are washing Mason jars. We do not hear their [the adults in the other room] words, but with grown-ups we listen to and watch out for their voices... The edge, the curl, the thrust of their emotions is always clear to Frieda and me. We do not, cannot, know the meanings of all their words, for we are nine and ten years old. So we watch their faces, their hands, their feet, and listen for truth in timbre.

Morrison reveals an adult world full of unintended bodily gestures and tones that communicates a great deal of enigmatic meaning to the children in it. From the sound of parents' and neighbors' voices, Claudia and Frieda know that something is up, but they do not fully understand the edgy mood that filters from the living room into the kitchen. The incomprehensible portions of the adults' message—which, in this case, involve the yearning and later angry revulsion generated by a newly arrived boarder in Claudia's home—will become part of each girl's unconscious. (Sullivan, 2006, p. 65)

Sullivan also links some of the passages of the same novel, discussed in Chapter 2, to processes of seduction in Laplanche's sense, which show the processes involved in the shaping of the raced unconscious. For example, Claudia describes the particular intonations in the voice of adults evoking blue-eyed dolls or blue-eyed White girls:

> What made people look at them and say, 'Awwwww,' but not for me?
> The eye slide of black women as they approached them on the street,
> and the possessive gentleness of their touch as they handled them
> (Morrison, 1994, pp. 20–21).

Similarly, the emotion conveyed by adults in reaction to Claudia's dismembering of the doll is part of a similar process of transmission of enigmatic signals to the child about the higher aesthetic value placed in whiteness:

> When Claudia dismembers the doll to try to find inside its beauty,
> which she does not see, the adults are saddened and outraged: 'Tears
> threatened to erase the aloofness of their authority. The emotion of
> years of unfulfilled longing preened in their voices'. The adults' tears
> and tone of voice transmit an enigmatic message to Claudia about the
> importance and power of whiteness in the adult world. (Sullivan, 2006,
> p. 72)

Sullivan identifies a particular feature of her own unconscious habits of white privilege in the association of the smell of cumin "with the (perceived) body odor of Mexicans" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 68). She traces the origin of this habit in her grandmother's particularly contemptuous tone of voice: "one of the enigmatic messages sent to me regarding race likely originated in the distasteful hiss of my grandmother's voice as she pronounced the word 'Mexican'" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 69). However, Sullivan's particular racist association between a spice, a perceived body odour and an ethnicity was most likely not simply transmitted by her grandmother. Unconscious habits such as the one revealed by this kind of olfactory and auditory associations are formed, she argues, through a "transgenerational crowd". This shaping of the unconscious and habit formation does not only take place within the nuclear family, but is effected through a "multiplicitous collectivity that cannot be reduced to a single voice" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 69):

> My grandmother's voice speaks through me as I pronounce the word
> "Mexican." She, along with many others, must be considered a coauthor
> of all I write or say regarding Mexican people, life, food, and so on. The

transactional multiplicity of unconscious habits reaches far beyond the triangle of the Oedipal family, and it involves even more than grandparents and other members of one's extended family. The transgenerational crowd that contributes to the formation of unconscious habit is as much composed of distant strangers, albeit in different ways and perhaps to different degrees, as it is of intimate relations that a person knows, loves, and/or hates. (Sullivan, 2006, pp. 69–70)

Unconscious habits of white privilege, both bodily and psychic (such as one's olfactory or auditory sensations being associated with particular images of cleanliness/uncleanliness) seem therefore *recalcitrant* to conscious beliefs or to knowledge that could otherwise counter and "correct" the racist associations that they carry:

> Even though I now consciously know that the association is racist and I sincerely do not want to make it, I am not able to smell cumin without it occurring. It is as if behind or alongside my conscious knowledge, a much stronger olfactory un(conscious)knowledge exists, undermining my attempts to smell cumin as just plain cumin (if there is such a thing). (Sullivan, 2006, p. 68)

5.4.3 Recalcitrant habits and white narcissism

The recalcitrance of people's psychosomatic habits, Sullivan suggests, is partly explained by the protective function that the latter play in securing White people's sense of self. The invisibility of white privilege to those who benefit from it implies thinking of oneself as race-free, colour-free, but also smell-free (and we could think of other bodily experiences of privilege such as thinking of oneself as not having a particular accent, etc.) while imagining the other (in this case, the Mexicans) as *coloured, raced,* having *an accent*, having *a smell*, etc. In a racist world, imagining oneself as "neutral", as "unraced", has particular implications for one's positive self-perception. If to be *smelly* is to be *dirty*, and dirtiness is associated with moral deficiencies[37], then, by the

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[37] "Non-white people have long been associated with dirt, filth, and pollution by white people. On one level, this association speaks of the alleged lack of bodily cleanliness of

same token, to be without smell is to be clean, to be clean is to be pure, virtuous, etc.:

> To capture the phenomenon in question, my olfactory (un)knowledge about cumin must be understood as the active, productive partner of my unconscious psyche, both of which seek to protect my white privileged sense of self. Mexicans are greasy and smelly, while I am clean and odor-free: this is what my nose assures me. This sense of self helps explain the anxiety I experienced when a former colleague once asked me if I ate garlic for breakfast. Apparently I smelled like garlic when I came to work each morning. But if this is true, then I am not as clean and odor-free as I thought, which means that I might not be fully white on the racial hierarchy established by my sense of smell. My reaction to cumin involves the racist process of identification through its projective disavowal. For my body to give up the olfactory association between cumin and (supposed) Mexican body odor would be to challenge the oppositional relationship between white and non-white people that helps guarantee my whiteness. (Sullivan, 2006, p. 68)

We find here an exploration of the *active,* recalcitrant aspect of white ignorance that Charles Mills partly explained by the existence of "white group interests". As we can now see, white group interests are secured not only cognitively, via patterns of thought, but also through affective and bodily habits. As I have shown, whilst Mills focuses on the cognitive aspects of privilege, Medina identifies affective blockages or numbness that partly account for the persistence of white ignorance. Forms of insensitivity to matters of race prevent Whites from acknowledging the ways in which they may be complicit in racial oppression, which in turn allows prejudicial behaviour to remain unchallenged. Racial insensitivity, as the affective component of white ignorance, constitutes therefore an obstacle for taking responsibility and acting against one's participation in oppression. The fact that these insensitivities remain undetected partly accounts for their persistence: what remains

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those such as Jews, black people, Latino/as, and others. Their skin is dark because unwashed, and they are perceived as having a particular 'racial smell' that is borne of filth. On another related level, their alleged dirtiness is a sign of a more intangible - though perceived as no less real- uncleanliness. Their inferiority to white people is found in their moral, spiritual, and mental impurity." (Sullivan, 2006, p. 73).

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undetected remains unchallenged and is therefore more effectively reproduced.

Similarly, Sullivan's investigation of unconscious habits sheds light on how the body is involved in sustaining white group interests. Psychic and somatic habits play an active role in securing white narcissistic constructions of Whites as clean, race-free, odour-free, etc. Some of the body's operations, and the way White subjects imagine their bodies to be, guarantee a particular self-image that is informed by the white imagination and its social hierarchies. Psychic and somatic habits are recalcitrant in that they thwart conscious efforts of Whites to change them. Part of that recalcitrance, in Sullivan's analysis, is due to their unconscious dimension. This does not necessarily entail that psychic and somatic racist habits are unchangeable. However, it indicates that any attempt to modify them will take more than merely becoming aware of one's non-conscious patterns of thought, and more than consciously professing well-intentioned disavowals of racial domination. In order to effect individual and collective change, the unconscious processes through which psyche, body and the racial imagination are intertwined need to be engaged.

I have been arguing that the impact of white domination in the formation of white subjectivity has affective and embodied dimensions, alongside the cognitive one's analysed by Charles Mills under the heading of white ignorance. I have shown that domination works through processes that are not merely cognitive, but also affective and physiological, and not simply through the conscious embrace of racist views but through unconscious processes that are also shared by Whites who think of themselves as opposing racism. Medina and Sullivan's account of affective and embodied aspects of white ignorance suggest that certain emotions are non-accidentally connected to it. I now turn to develop a more detailed account of the emotional phenomena non-accidentally connected to white privilege.

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5.5 Emotional patterns non-accidentally connected to whiteness

Sullivan focuses on habit as a psychosomatic formation. From her analysis we can understand habits, in their simultaneously psychic and somatic dimension, as having particular emotional expressions. In some of the examples above, psychosomatic habits of white privilege relate to tasting/digesting, smelling and hearing. The latter are most probably linked with patterns of *disgust* which may have a protective role in securing Whites' sense of self as "clean", "pure", etc. But as I have argued, the perspective of the oppressed provides special insight into the emotional lives of oppressors.

The emotions non-accidentally connected to the white embodied self also have a distinctive phenomenology from the perspective of subjects who are targeted by racism, as narratives and phenomenological descriptions of oppression show. For example, in Lorde's account of one of her first encounters with racial hatred, manifestations of disgust were displayed: the mouth-twitching, the wide-eyed gazing, the flared nostrils of the White woman on the subway train to Harlem. The White woman's horrified expression signifies to the young Audre that there must be something truly disgusting to justify her reaction ("I do not see whatever terrible thing she is seeing on the seat between us – probably a roach"). The way the White woman's body moves away from her ("The fur brushes past my face as she stands with a shudder") communicates horror, hatred, disgust in non-verbal ways ("No word has been spoken"). Yet all this is felt by the child, even if she does not fully understand the meaning: "Something's going on here I do not fully understand, but I will never forget it. Her eyes. The flared nostrils. The hate." (Lorde, 2007, pp. 147–148)

Lorde's narrative not only shows what racist abuse does to the oppressed, it sheds light on how racism is connected with particular emotional configurations in the oppressors. In the next section, I draw on Sara Ahmed's (2007) phenomenological analysis of whiteness viewed

from the perspectives of the oppressed in order to highlight the emotional aspects associated with whiteness. I will connect Ahmed's analysis of comfort as the affective component of whiteness for White bodies with Sullivan's notion of "ontological expansiveness".

5.5.1 White comfort: a relational emotional attunement

Drawing on "experiences of inhabiting a white world as a non-white body", Sara Ahmed reveals the relational character of whiteness in its bodily and emotional dimensions. Ahmed takes Fanon's description of what he would have to do if he wanted to smoke next to a White man as the starting point for her analysis of whiteness, which appears affectively marked by comfort for White bodies:

> And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. The real world challenged my claims. In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a third-person consciousness. The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty. I know that if I want to smoke, I shall have to reach out my right arm and take the pack of cigarettes lying at the other end of the table. The matches, however, are in the drawer on the left, and I shall have to lean back slightly. And all these movements are made not out of habit, but out of implicit knowledge. (Fanon, 1986, pp. 110–11, as cited in Ahmed, 2007, p. 152).

Ahmed notes how Fanon's description of how his body is in relation to the space, to objects, and to others "takes the form of an argument with phenomenology". While Husserl and Merleau-Ponty only focused on describing "the tactile, kinaesthetic and visual character of embodied reality" (Ahmed, 2007, p. 153), Fanon introduces "a historic-racial schema" (Fanon, 1986, as cited in Ahmed, 2007, p. 153). He captures what it means for him to move in a spatial setting that makes things familiar and easily available to a White body, but not to a man of colour. By merely thinking of the movements his body would have to make in order to smoke, he is "burdened" by an "unfamiliar weight". His body

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becomes "surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty" under the gaze of the White man. Whiteness, then, structures what bodies can and cannot do, or the easiness with which they can do what they intend to do:

> Fanon's example shows the body *before* it is racialized, or made black by becoming the object of the hostile white gaze. In this sense, for Fanon, race 'interrupts' the corporeal schema. Alternatively, we could say that 'the corporeal schema' is already racialized; in other words, race does not just interrupt such a schema, but structures its mode of operation. The corporeal schema is of a 'body-at-home'. If the world is made white, then the body-at-home is one that can inhabit whiteness. (Ahmed, 2007, p. 153)

Ahmed analyses whiteness as *habitual*, describing how it allows White bodies to be *unproblematic, unnoticeable*, while marking non-White bodies as noticeable, unable to "fit". Whiteness, as habitual, orientates around its orbit what bodies can and cannot do: "Spaces are orientated 'around' whiteness, insofar as whiteness is not seen" (Ahmed, 2007, p. 157). If whiteness is what allows White bodies to go unnoticed in a white world, it is what restricts, by the same token, the privilege of being "unproblematic" to non-White bodies. But to go unnoticed, to exist unproblematically, has an emotional dimension to it. If, as discussed in previous chapters, there are emotional attunements non-accidentally connected to being oppressed (shame, guilt, fear; a cluster of disempowering feelings in which the self is diminished), there may also be emotional attunements non-accidentally connected to whiteness as a form of privilege. Ahmed characterizes the emotional attunement of whiteness as *comfort*:

> To be orientated, or to be at home in the world, is also to feel a certain comfort: we might only notice comfort as an affect when we lose it, when we become uncomfortable. The word 'comfort' suggests well-being and satisfaction, but it can also suggest an ease and easiness. Comfort is about an encounter between more than one body, which is the promise of a 'sinking' feeling. To be comfortable is to be so at ease with one's environment that it is hard to distinguish where one's body ends and

the world begins. One fits, and by fitting the surfaces of bodies disappears from view. White bodies are comfortable *as they inhabit spaces that extend their shape.* The bodies and spaces 'point' towards each other, as a 'point' that is not seen as it is also 'the point' from which we see. In other words, whiteness may function as a form of public comfort *by allowing bodies to extend into spaces that have already taken their shape.* Those spaces are lived as comfortable as they allow bodies to fit in; the surfaces of social space are already impressed upon by the shape of such bodies. (Ahmed, 2007, p. 158)

Comfort, as Ahmed argues, might only become noticeable as an emotional phenomenon once we lose it. This may help to explain why it is difficult to acknowledge the emotional aspects that are non-accidentally connected to occupying locations of privilege. Subjects are oblivious to their own privilege.

Comfort, as an emotional attunement, is felt with less awareness, and therefore, perhaps, with less intensity. By contrast, the experience of being oppressed may appear as more evidently *emotional* because the cluster of negative, painful and disempowering emotions that we've been describing are probably more intensely experienced in general than what we may describe as the emotional ramifications of comfort: confidence, entitlement and overconfidence or arrogance. The non-White body experiences whiteness as that which makes it acutely aware of its own embodiment. Rather than being allowed to circulate unnoticed[38], the non-white body experiences whiteness as a restriction, as that which *stops* it from moving, circulating, doing, etc.: "Who are you? Why are you here? What are you doing? Each question, when asked, is a kind of stopping device (...)" (Ahmed, 2007, p. 161). In this sense, the lived

[38] There is here a relevant distinction to draw between being allowed to circulate with ease, *unnoticed*, and being made to feel *invisible*, which is another dimension of racism. In many ways, the pain that racism inflicts had to do either with not being seen (e.g. Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* is not seen by the adult white world surrounding her), or with being seen as what one is not; being mischaracterized, misrepresented. To be unnoticed is a mark of racial privilege insofar as it allows people to circulate and have access to spaces *without obstacles*, without being stopped or being made to feel that their body or existence is *a problem*. By contrast, to be made invisible is being denied recognition as a full human being, and therefore, being denied full presence and action in the world.

spatiality of non-White bodies is affectively marked by *discomfort*[39].
Non-Whites being *uncomfortable* is a function of White bodies' *comfort* in
a world organised in many ways around them. And comfort, as being at
ease in one's environment, felt as an extension of one's bodily shape,
produces *expectations* of comfort, which we may also take the form of
feelings of *entitlement to comfort*.

5.5.2 "Ontological expansiveness": feeling entitled to comfort

Feelings of entitlement carry with them an unquestioned assumption
about the self as capable and rightfully deserving "by default" of
whatever it desires and undertakes. They may be amongst the emotional
phenomena that go most undetected by those who experience them,
precisely because they presuppose these unquestioned assumptions. A
dimension of white entitlement is visible in what Sullivan calls
"ontological expansiveness": "As ontologically expansive, white people
consider all spaces as rightfully available for [them to inhabit]"
(Sullivan, 2006, p. 144). Sullivan draws on a passage from Patricia
Williams' *Alchemy of Race and Rights* (1991), to highlight the
connections between race, space, and the different kind of "lived
spatiality" that White and non-White bodies are allowed to have:

> In *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, Williams explains that while
> shopping one Saturday afternoon before Christmas in New York, she
> was denied entrance into a Benetton clothing boutique. As Williams
> recounts, many small stores and boutiques in New York installed
> buzzers in the mid-1980s to reduce the incidence of robbery.
> "Legitimate" customers could be admitted into the shop, and those who
> looked undesirable could be prevented from entering the store at all.
> After pressing a buzzer to request that the door be unlocked so that she
> might be admitted, Williams peered into the store to see a white teenage

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[39] Discomfort, however, need not always be negative. As Sara Ahmed points out, some
ways of not fitting in, of being the outsider, can be productive: "Every experience I have
had of pleasure and excitement about a world opening up has begun with such ordinary
feelings of discomfort, of not quite fitting in a chair, of becoming unseated, of being left
holding the ground." (Ahmed, 2007, p. 163)

employee stare at her a few seconds and then mouth that the store was closed, even though several white patrons clearly were shopping inside. (Sullivan, 2006, p. 144)

There is a disparity between what is allowed to White and non-White bodies in terms of easiness and comfort, and in their sense of entitlement to particular settings and situations, although, as Sullivan notes, this has different manifestations when race, gender and class intersect:

> Black and white bodily existence differentially licenses people to inhabit space in unequal, non-reciprocal ways. White people may freely transact beyond their immediately inhabited spaces. The whiteness of their space is expansive and enables, rather than inhibits, their transactions. This often is not true in precisely the same ways for white men and white women; the former generally live space more expansively than do the latter. For example, some young middle- to upper-class white men view "slumming" in lower-class non-white communities as a rite of passage by which they rebel against their parents. In contrast, white middle-to upper-class women are more likely to avoid entering those neighborhoods out of fear of being sexually attacked—which is not to say that such avoidance is less racist than the intrusive attitude of some young white men toward non-white communities. But even though white women may not transact as freely as do men in some situations, qua white both white women and white men tend to live their space as a corporeal entitlement to spatiality. While their gender complicates and often limits the degree to which they expansively live their spatiality, white women's whiteness provides them a racial license to unencumbered spatial existence. Black people, on the other hand, are not supposed to transact in such an expansive way. Their existence is confined due to the racialization of space. (Sullivan, 2006, p. 148)

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2014) offers an eloquent illustration of whites ontological expansiveness, in White peoples' assumed entitlement to non-White spaces, and in particular, of Whites' sense of entitlement to talk, as a way of occupying the sonic field. The scene, described by the narrator and main character of the novel, Ifemelu, takes place at Mariama's hairdressing salon, which is located in a mainly Black neighbourhood and has a mainly Black clientele:

(...) a young white woman came in, soft-bodied and tanned, her hair held back in a loose ponytail.

"Hi!" she said.

Mariama [the hairdresser] said "Hi", and then waited, wiping her hands over and over the front of her shorts.

"I wanted to get my hair braided? You can braid my hair, right?"

Mariama smiled an overly eager smile. "Yes. We do every kind of hair. Do you want braids or cornrows?" She was furiously cleaning the chair now. "Please sit".

The woman sat down and said she wanted cornrows. "Kind of like Bo Derek in the movie? You know that movie *10*?"

"Yes, I know," Mariama said. Ifemelu doubted that she did.

"I'm Kelsey," the woman announced as though to the whole room. She was aggressively friendly. She asked where Mariama was from, how long she had been in America, if she had children, how her business was doing.

"Business is up and down but we try," Mariama said.

"But you couldn't even have this business back in your country, right? Isn't it wonderful that you get to come to the US and now your kids can have a better life?"

Mariama looked surprised. "Yes."

"Are women allowed to vote in your country?" Kelsey asked.

A longer pause from Mariama. "Yes."

"What are you reading?" Kelsey turned to Ifemelu.

Ifemelu showed her the cover of the novel. She did not want to start a conversation. Especially not with Kelsey. She recognized in Kelsey the nationalism of liberal Americans who copiously criticized America but did not like you to do so; they expected you to be silent and grateful, and always reminded you of how much better than wherever you had come from America was. (Ngozi Adichie, 2014, pp. 188–189).

Despite manifesting awareness of the fact that she is entering into a traditionally non-White space ("You can braid my hair, right?" shows an awareness that her kind of hair is *not habitual* in that space), Kelsey manifests her sense of entitlement in the way she takes up space, not only physically, by merely entering the room and asking to get her hair braided (thus appropriating a cultural practice), but also by the way her voice fills the space ("'I'm Kelsey,' the woman announced as though to the whole room"). Her inquisitive manners could be perceived as innocent and polite expressions of curiosity and openness, but through Ifemelu's informed perspective on race relations in the U.S., they are laid bare in all their entitlement and condescension. "She was aggressively friendly", that is, her friendliness is a way of asserting her

presence and her right to interrogate. The practice of interrogation, in this context, is a way of asserting power through an appropriation of the space, including of the persons who inhabit it. This is also visible in how Kelsey *imposes* her narrative on Mariama. She is less interested in Mariama's real story, than in echoing, through its fantasized reconstruction, a narcissistic confirmation of how "wonderful" her nation is ("But you couldn't have this business back in your country, right? Isn't it wonderful that you get to come to the U.S. and now your kids can have a better life?"). Mariama becomes then captive of Kelsey's imaginary constructions. Her fantasies show how her sense of entitlement is tied to her sense of belonging to a nation that supposedly gives "a better life" to the children of non-White migrants. We can imagine that, in Mariama's expression of surprise, and in her silences, she is attempting to resist Kelsey's intrusive interpretation.

Ahmed's phenomenological description of whiteness as an embodied habit whose emotional dimension is marked by *comfort*, and Sullivan's analysis of ontological expansiveness, which I interpret as a manifestation of white *entitlement to comfort*, shed light on the cluster of emotional phenomena that are non-accidentally connected to racial privilege. Comfort and entitlement to comfort constitute an emotional structure that accounts for one of the ways in which white privilege is reproduced. Comfort, on the one hand, is an emotional phenomenon, characterized by the fact that it remains relatively unperceived by the subject. It is one of the elements that allow racial privilege to be in many ways invisible to those who benefit from it. Feelings of entitlement, on the other hand, stem from comfort as the general emotional structure of privilege. Comfort allows privilege to be invisibilized, and therefore naturalised. It provides the conditions for subjects to *expect* that the world will be available to them.

The fact that comfort and feelings of entitlement are the emotional structures of white privilege becomes even more evident when comfort is withdrawn. When white privilege is challenged, discomfort

rises to the surface, and strong emotional defensive mechanisms get triggered to maintain power. This is visible in documented white emotional reactions to *racial discomfort* in pedagogical contexts. I now go on to show how comfort, as a feature of the emotional structure of privilege, is manifested in the display of defensive emotional reactions that seek to restore it as a way of recentering power.

5.5.3 Discomfort and reactive emotions

In this section I argue that oppressors tend towards defensive emotional reactions in order to deny their participation in oppression and to deflect responsibility for it. They can do this by seeking to obtain *comfort* from the oppressed after being challenged about the ways they participate in racism. Regaining comfort is, in this sense, restoring privilege, and therefore power. Insofar as oppressed subjects are required to provide comfort for oppressors, I argue that oppressors' reactions tend to be emotionally exploitative.

In her article "Comforting Discomfort as Complicity: White Fragility and the Pursuit of Invulnerability" (2017), Barbara Applebaum introduces her critique of "comforting discomfort" as a pedagogical practice with an account of an event that illustrates common reactions when the complicity of Whites in racial oppression is raised for discussion:

> Last year my colleague invited me to visit her class and address the topic of "Discourse, Truth, and White Strategies of Denial." After my presentation, a lively conversation ensued around white denials of racism and complicity that was led primarily by the students of color in the class. These students gave numerous examples demonstrating how white denials of racism and complicity manifest themselves in their university classrooms, and in fact, they gave ample instances of such denials that transpired in the very classroom in which I was invited to speak. Most significantly, they poignantly articulated the effects that such denials had on them.
> Noticing that the white students in the class were silent, I pressed them to engage with what the students of color were saying. A white male student, clearly agitated, said he didn't understand why the

students of color were so "angry" and that they seemed to be over-
sensitive and offended by practices that were not ill-intended. Two
female students of color reacted to his comments with frustration and
infuriation, one announcing that she was contemplating leaving the
room, to which the white student protested both with anger and tears
insisting that he was not racist.

Given that the very topic of my presentation was white
discursive practices of denial, the white student's violent resistance
could not remain unchallenged. As I critically questioned the white
student's discomfort and drew attention to the violence the students of
color were experiencing, the white colleague who invited me to speak to
her class interrupted by reproaching me for being too "hard" on her
white student. Another student put his hand on the white student's
shoulder to comfort him. I immediately noticed that no one expressed
the need to comfort the students of color who were experiencing difficult
emotions. What just happened? White comfort was recentered, and
white denials were protected in a class whose purported aim was exactly
the converse. (Applebaum, 2017, p. 863)

According to Applebaum, this episode is illustrative of what Robin Di
Angelo (2011) names "white fragility", "the ubiquitous practice in which
white people react with a range of defensive moves that compensate for
even the slightest distress caused by challenges to their racial
worldviews and/or to their racial innocence" (Applebaum, 2017, p. 866).
If White people's privilege is experienced emotionally as comfort, and,
more than that, as an *entitlement* to comfort,

When that comfort is disturbed by the challenge of having to confront
their "unconscious habits of white privilege" (Sullivan, 2006), whites
have a repertoire of socially sanctioned discursive practices of escape.
These discursive practices of escape include "the outward display of
emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behavior such as
argumentation, silence, and leaving" the scene (Di Angelo 2011, 54).
Such moves function to restore comfort and, in fact, are manifestations
of such habits of privilege that leave whites fragile and incapable of
contemplating their role in racism. (Applebaum, 2017, p. 867)

Applebaum argues that Robin Di Angelo's account of white fragility can
help understand the different ways in which power dynamics are at play
in confrontations around racial issues. From her analysis we may
identify a strand of the kind of emotionally exploitative practice that
oppressors engage in at the expense of oppressed subjects. For example,

in pedagogical contexts, people of colour are often put under pressure "to mollify white discomfort at the sacrifice of their own educational and emotional needs." (Applebaum, 2017, p. 867) While Di Angelo argues that this tendency to flee racial discomfort via a range of defensive emotions is a manifestation of *fragility*, i.e., of a kind of weakness and low tolerance for discomfort, Applebaum stresses that white fragility is not merely passive. It is not as though White subjects are simply ill-equipped, trapped and incapable. Rather, she argues, white fragility is *actively performed*: "White people actively *perform* fragility and continue to perform it in a way that consolidates white narcissism and white arrogance – signs of power and privilege, not weakness." (Applebaum, 2017, p. 868)

Performances of white fragility have been documented in popular culture and taken up in sociological scholarship under the heading of "white tears" (Srivastava, 2006). Through "white tears", subjects deflect their responsibility for racism by enacting the role of the victim. Through performances of victimhood, White people manage to silence people of colour, reduce or eliminate their own sense of guilt, recenter the dynamic around their emotional needs and obtain comfort and sympathy, as the White male student in Applebaum's example did, at the expense of other students of colour. These performances of victimhood are not merely an expression of psychological distress; they are manifestations of power, of what tends to happen when power is challenged, and of how power is reinstated through emotional means. Moreover, insofar as they silence the testimonies of people of colour and refuse to recognise their pain, "white tears" may constitute a particular kind of racial violence:

> Educational theorists have similarly noted how white emotions are protected in classroom discussions around racism. Zeus Leonardo explains that white students' crying during difficult classroom discussions around race changes "the dynamics in those settings by redirecting sympathy away from People of Color" (Leonardo 2016, xiv). Leonardo also points to white confessions that function to assuage guilt.

> When white guilt is placated, Leonardo argues, questions of accountability are dispelled and continued discussion of complicity comes to an end. Comforting white discomfort provides a type of absolution that restores the white comfort that was disrupted and is a form of violence that allows for the suffering of students of color to go unnoticed. (Applebaum, 2017, p. 865)

But the fact that white fragility is actively performed does not imply that Whites follow a consciously premeditated script or are aware of acting strategically. Their defensive emotional reactions are for the most part spontaneous and not consciously calculated. The performance I have just described is not to be understood as "performed by a sovereign subject who takes on or acts a role." (Applebaum, 2017, p. 869) Rather, drawing on Butler's (1990/1999) use of the term, white fragility is performative in that it is "a form of *doing* whiteness" (Applebaum, 2017, p. 869):

> Like gender, whiteness "is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler, 1990/1999, 43). Whiteness is thus a doing: less a property of skin than *an enactment of power reproducing its dominance in both explicit and implicit ways*" (Applebaum, 2017, p. 868. Italics in original)

White fragility is one of the ways in which privilege can manifest itself. Applebaum contends that white fragility is not merely weakness or, as di Angelo argues, "lack of stamina". Rather, it is "a performative enactment of invulnerability" (Applebaum, 2017, p. 868). Drawing on Erinn Gilson's (2011) work, Applebaum understands invulnerability as an ideal implicitly conveyed by "prevalent definitions of vulnerability", in which the notion of vulnerability has predominantly negative connotations: "Being vulnerable implies being weak, not protected, susceptible to harm, exposed to or at risk, defenseless and dependent, and, significantly, a victim." (Applebaum, 2017, p. 869) Seeking invulnerability is therefore attempting to protect or distance oneself from what may be source of pain, unsettlement and discomfort: "Invulnerability thus invites *closure*" (Applebaum, 2017, p. 870). In

performing invulnerability, White people are not "weak", but effectively protecting their position of privilege:

> If invulnerability functions as closure, then in seeking invulnerability we can ignore the ways in which we are vulnerable and dependent on our relations with others. Invulnerability is shored up by an ignorance or denial of vulnerability and is the basis of other forms of ignorance that enable the systematically privileged to maintain a position of privilege. (Applebaum, 2017, p. 870)

5.5.4 Projective mechanisms

I have argued that to be privileged has, in general terms, the bodily and emotional dimension of comfort, which in turn produces expectations or feelings of entitlement to comfort. In the preceding section I added a claim about what can happen when racial comfort is challenged. Defensive emotions play a role in restoring comfort and re-establishing racial power. We may link this process with the forms of epistemic and affective *insensitivity* or *numbness* described by Medina. To restore comfort is a way of restoring the privilege of not feeling distressed by the impact of racism in one's life, and by one's complicity in relations of oppression.

However, as I have also argued, there is an additional relational dimension to white comfort. If the emotional attunement of being a White body in a white world is marked by feelings of comfort and entitlement, the flipside is that the non-White body is read as that which causes discomfort. More radically, George Yancy argues that the relational aspect of whiteness means that Whites' sense of comfort, security, and self-esteem, is largely *dependent* on the construction of non-White bodies as dangerous, criminal and defective. In other words, it is not only that the *status quo* of white dominance has the effect of producing disempowering emotional attunements in the oppressed. Yancy contends that Whites have *needed* to build their domination on the material degradation and imaginative misconstrual of the non-White body.

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This process, as I go on to show, involves forms of emotional parasitism. These are visible in two main mechanisms: forms of psychological projection; and demands for emotional labour.

George Yancy's description and analysis of "white embodied gazing" gives us further insight into the emotional dimensions linked to the cognitive and psychosomatic habits described by Mills, Medina, Alcoff, Sullivan and Ahmed. Furthermore, Yancy's analysis highlights the parasitic or exploitative dimension of whiteness and helps us see how some of the emotional patterns of the oppressed partly originate in the particular ways that Whites exercise their power. For example, Black shame is a function of White's self-perception as 'pure' and of their projection of the abject upon Black bodies. In this sense, Whites need Black shame in order to confirm their own 'purity'. This dialectic, and the parasitic dimension of whiteness is all the more insidious in its logic and ways of operation in that it produces at the same time an illusory image of the White subject as not dependent on the Black body:

> The Black body has been historically marked, disciplined, and scripted and materially, psychologically, and morally invested in to ensure both white supremacy and the illusory construction of the white subject as a self-contained substance whose existence does not depend upon the construction of the Black qua 'inferior'. (Yancy, 2017, p. 17)

These "illusions of the self" that populate White people's imaginary constructions operate in everyday social interactions where the Black body (but we could also extend some of this analysis to other non-White bodies) is, in Yancy's terms, *confiscated*, i.e., robbed of its agency, put under the control of white supremacist institutions, exploited and degraded. Yancy names institutions, practices and cases that exemplify the confiscation of the Black body, such as slavery, lynching, or unethical scientific experimentations such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, and, in today's society, the disproportionate mass incarceration of Black people in North America (Yancy, 2017, p. 18). These ways of

confiscating the Black body, Yancy argues, are a crucial function of Whites' own sense and possibility of agency:

> whiteness comes replete with its assumptions for what to expect of a Black body (or nonwhite body); how dangerous and unruly it is; how unlawful, criminal, and hypersexual it is. The discourse and comportment of whites are shaped through tacit racist scripts, calcified modes of being that enable them to sustain and perpetuate their whitely-being-in-the-world. (Yancy, 2017, p. 19).

As a way of showing the relational dimension of the meaning of Blackness, Yancy analyses a common, "peculiar experience", which he names "the elevator effect". Yancy's description provides further evidence for the claim that white privilege is importantly emotionally structured as comfort. In his account of "the elevator effect", Yancy describes how, in daily, trivial encounters with White people, his body often becomes "confiscated without physically being placed in chains". From his description we can have a sense of how Whites sustain oppression by displaying anxiety and fear at the mere sight of a Black body. In many instances, the Black body seems to be experienced by the White body as that which *causes* discomfort in the forms of fear and anxiety. These emotional responses to the presence of non-White bodies are, in Yancy's view, forms of projection through which Whites sustain their sense of self. The image of the non-White as embodying criminality, dirtiness, disease etc., insofar as it is placed outside the white ego, sustains the imaginary identification of the self as innocent, clean, pure, etc. In other words, if Whites continue to be attached to their sense of purity, cleanliness and moral integrity, they will need to continue placing the non-White as that which brings the threat of discomfort (which can be fantasized as the threat of violence):

> Well-dressed, I enter an elevator where a white woman waits to reach her floor. She 'sees' my Black body, though not the same one I have seen reflected back to me from the mirror on any number of occasions. Buying into the myth that one's dress says something about the person, one might think that the markers of my dress (suit and tie) should erase

her tension. What is it that makes the markers of my dress inoperative? She sees a Black male body 'supersaturated with meaning, as they [Black bodies] have been relentlessly subjected to [negative] characterization by newspapers, newscasters, popular film, television programming, public officials, policy pundits and other agents of representation'. Her body language signifies, 'Look, *the* Black!' On this score, through a sort of performative locution, her body language functions as an insult. Over and above how my body is clothed, she 'sees' a criminal, she sees me as a threat. (Yancy, 2017, pp. 20–21)

We can see from Yancy's description and analysis that the fear and anxiety displayed by the White woman functions as a sort of disciplining method that frames the Black body as dangerous and criminal by virtue of its very existence. No action by the Black body is needed. The White woman's fear and anxiety condemn it "by default": "(...) one might say that Blackness functions metaphorically as original sin. There is not anything as such that a Black body needs *to do* in order to be found blameworthy" (Yancy, 2017, p. 21). Emotions become, in this way, a form of discipline. Fear and anxiety signal the disruption of comfort and sense of entitlement of the White woman; the Black body poses a problem, being perceived as threatening her physical integrity. Yancy highlights the parasitic dimension of these common white emotional reactions: "[the White woman is] unaware of how the feeling of her white bodily upsurge and expansiveness is *purchased at the expense* of my Black body" (Yancy, 2017, p. 21. My emphasis). This is so because, even though this encounter with the White woman's fear "does not shatter [his identity]", it nevertheless produces an acute awareness of his own embodied existence:

> My movements become and remain stilted. I dare not move suddenly. (...) I feel trapped. (...) I now begin to calculate, paying almost neurotic attention to my body movements, making sure that this 'Black object', what now feels like an appendage, a weight, is not too close, not too tall, not too threatening. (...) So, I genuflect, but only slightly, a movement that somewhat resembles an act of worship. I am reminded of how certain postures – "bowing and scraping" - were reenacted over generations, sometimes no doubt unconsciously. My lived-body comes back to me (...) as something to be dealt with, as a challenge. (Yancy, 2017, p. 33).

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The emotions displayed in cases like the White woman in the elevator have an exploitative element. Comfort needs to be sustained in the face of fear. Therefore, the oppressed are implicitly required to perform different kinds of emotional labour, such as adapting their behaviour in order to reduce white discomfort: to bow in order to appear less threatening, to smile, but not enough to seem menacing, and so on.

In reply to the objection that the White woman's intentions may have been misinterpreted, Yancy notes that, even if we hypothetically concede the possibility of misinterpretation, the elevator example condenses a multitude of signals that have become part of a shared knowledge among Black people:

> My judgement is not whimsical or simply subjective; her gestures are interpreted within the context of cumulative cases, where the reasons I give are 'like the legs of a chair, not the links of a chain', indicative of a gestalt-like assessment of the evidence. So, my justifiable belief about the white woman's gesture is interdependent; the evidence for her having enacted a racist gesture is a form of commonsense knowledge among Black people. (Yancy, 2017, p. 24)

Even granting the possibility of making an error of judgement in reading the White woman's expressions of fear and disgust, this does not disprove "the warranted assertability of other claims regarding the racist actions of whites" (Yancy, 2017, p. 24) profusely documented by non-Whites as part of their common experience or racism. The "elevator effect", Yancy argues, is not an isolated incident, but must be understood "as a replicative instance of the larger social macrocosm of problems" within a racist society. The projective fear displayed by the White woman in the elevator is to be understood in connection with other kinds of violence that target Black people at a larger scale. Yancy links his "elevator effect" example to the case of the beating of Rodney King, an African-American taxi-driver, by police in the United States:

> Judith Butler provides an insightful analysis of the Rodney King beating and verdict that squares well with my interpretation of the

interconnections between what is "seen", what is "not seen", racism, and the construction of the "Black body". Butler's analysis illustrates how white fear was projected onto King's body, as it is projected onto my Black body in my elevator example, to the point that his attempts to defend himself were seen as a threat. As Butler makes clear, "the video shows a man being beaten." She asks, though, how the jury in Simi Valley came to "see" King's prone body as a dangerous and threatening object that the police had to further subdue over and over again with their batons? Like in the elevator, a contestation emerges within the visual field and a battle takes place over the meaning of the Black body's intentions. According to Butler, King's Black body was schematized through "the inverted projections of white paranoia". (Yancy, 2017, p. 35)

Importantly, the argumentative strategy adopted by the defence attorneys of the police officers accused in the Rodney King case played on the stereotypical constructions of the Black body as "wild" and "dangerous", whilst the White policemen were presented as "guardians" of "civilization":

> After inviting the jurors to see the events from the point of view of the police officers, the defense attorneys elicited testimony from King's assailants that depicted King repeatedly as a bear, and as emitting bear-like groans. In the eyes of the police, and then again in the eyes of the jurors, King's black body became that of a wild "Hulk-like" and "wounded" animal, whose every gesture threatened the existence of civilized society. Not surprisingly, the defense attorneys portrayed the white bodies which assailed King as guardians against the wild, and as embodying a "thin blue line" that separates civil society from the dangerous chaos which is the essence of the wild. (Gooding-Williams, "Look, a Negro!", p. 166, in Yancy, 2017, p. 36).

We may ask ourselves how much the construction of the Black body as "dangerous" generates a socially acceptable narrative that allows people to express the pleasure taken in humiliating and degrading Black bodies that, as Sullivan argues, were part of the common habits of white supremacy in the U.S. As Yancy adds, "one wonders to what extent white racist police officers actually reap satisfaction from the sight of a 'whimpering' Black male" (Yancy, 2017, p. 48n49). Whether or not fear is actually *felt* by policemen in most cases of brutality against Black people, fear is used as a common justification for police violence. If this

justification is, in most cases, socially accepted, and institutionally validated (for example, in prevalent impunity in cases of police violence) it is because it "fits" with the predominant ways in which white imaginary constructions have already partly legitimized *fear* as a warranted emotion of Whites with respect to Black people and other non-White bodies.

There is therefore a *continuum* between the White woman in the elevator who displays fear and disgust; the woman in the subway train to Harlem who manifests disgust and hatred; the hand of the White child, recoiled in fear and disgust from touching W.E.B. Du Bois' exchange card; the psychological pleasure that White slave owners derived from degrading and torturing slaves, and contemporary forms of police violence exercised in overwhelmingly disproportionate ways against non-White bodies, particularly against Black bodies in the United States. Without claiming that all these instances can be *amalgamated* (they obviously constitute distinct forms of violence, varying in shape, degree, and in context), there are nevertheless common threads between them. In the cases discussed, what is salient is that the emotional patterns exhibited by Whites in their encounters with non-White people (overt or covert patterns of disgust, fear, and pleasure taken in humiliating Black and non-White bodies), function as projective mechanisms through which the non-White bodies become the site of White people's *ejecta* (Yancy): the "dirty", "disgusting", "smelly", "dangerous", "criminal", "rapist", etc. are the non-White Others. Importantly, fear and disgust, as projective mechanisms, function in ways that sustain and reinforce oppression. The fear of the Black body, analysed as a white projection by Yancy and Butler, is not only an emotion, but acts as an instrument of power when used as the justification for punishment and police violence. Moreover, fear, disgust, and other emotions displayed by White people in the contact of non-White people, not only via their speech and representations, but also through their body language, can be part of what is internalised by

oppressed subjects as the cluster of disempowering feelings (shame, guilt, feeling defective) although, as we have seen in previous chapters, in different ways and to different degrees, and not without resistance.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I focused on examining how white subjectivity does not only involve distinctive kinds of cognitive patterns, conceptualized by Mills as *white ignorance*, but also how in white ignorance, cognition and affectivity are closely linked. White ignorance is also constituted and perpetuated through embodied habits that are, in many ways, unconscious. Drawing on discussions of these phenomena, and on phenomenological descriptions of whiteness as analysed from the perspective of the oppressed, I extracted emotional patterns non-accidentally connected to white privilege. I argued that *comfort* is the salient emotional structure of white privilege, sustained by forms of entitlement connected to *expectations of comfort*. Simultaneously, strong defensive emotions are produced when comfort is challenged. Reactive emotions such as anger, guilt and shame, and other related behavioural phenomena – such as engaging in argumentation, crying or disengaging from the challenging situation – seek to restore comfort as a way of restoring privilege. I argued that attempts to restore comfort, as a way to reinstating power, often come coupled with burdening emotional demands placed on non-White subjects. The latter are expected to protect white comfort, either by avoiding issues related to racism, or by presenting such issues in a way that will protect white feelings. Whiteness, then, has strong emotional roots in comfort, expectations of comfort and in the different emotional strategies through which White subjects seek to maintain power and enforce domination by expecting forms of emotional subservience from non-White people.

6. The emotional patterns of masculinity

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I aim to identify some of the emotional patterns non-accidentally connected to male privilege, and the role they play in sustaining gender oppression. As sociologist R. Connell (2005) contends, masculinities became increasingly the focus of social sciences in the aftermath of the Women's Liberation Movement in the Western world. In the last five decades, a vast array of studies has identified cognitive as well as emotional patterns linked with masculinity. This exploration has an earlier precedent in the work of seventeenth and eighteenth-century philosophers, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, who identified the role of social oppression in the formation of female and male character, as well as its impact on the moral and intellectual capacities of men and women.

It is an impossible project to capture the great variety and diversity of work produced in this area, let alone to give a comprehensive account of the emotional patterns of *masculinity* as a single, unified and universal phenomenon. In this chapter, I shall choose Bonnie Mann's (2014) account of masculinity as the main source for conducting my argument. First of all, as I'll go on to argue, Mann's account of masculinity is particularly pertinent for my purposes in that it directly addresses the connection between gender and power. Following Beauvoir, it focuses on what gender *does* rather than on the metaphysical question of what gender *is*. Furthermore, as I'll contend, Mann's analysis offers a particularly illuminating angle from which to examine the emotional dimension of masculinity through its connection with embodiment and embodied habits. Mann's account of male embodiment is grounded in Iris Young's *Throwing Like a Girl* and employs Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological lens to analyse bodily style. This approach offers a particularly rich way of exploring and extracting

the emotional phenomena non-accidentally connected to masculinity as a form of domination. Moreover, in starting from the analysis of embodiment and bodily style, and moving on to shame as one of the grounding emotions in the formation of male subjectivity, Mann's analysis offers interesting overlapping parallels with the way I proceeded in chapter 5, when extracting the emotional patterns non-accidentally connected to white privilege through Sullivan's account of embodied habits.

Certainly, Mann and Sullivan proceed in rather different ways. As I showed in chapter 5, Sullivan draws on Laplanche's psychoanalytic perspective rather than on a phenomenological one. Moreover, her notion of habit aims to encompass phenomena that are missing from Merleau-Ponty's account of style (for example, psychosomatic habits connected to ingesting and digesting food, and correlated feelings of disgust). Despite these differences, Mann's use of the notion of bodily *style* nevertheless resonates with Sullivan's appeal to of unconscious bodily habits. Both accounts show how structures of racial and gender oppression and privilege partly shape people's bodies (their bodily behaviour and their physiological functions). Moreover, this attention to embodiment shows in a compelling fashion how a wide range of emotional phenomena are connected to these same structures. In giving Bonnie Mann's work a central place in my argument, I do not contend that the work of other feminist scholars would not be equally suitable to the task. There are, of course, other ways of getting at the phenomena I aim to explore. However, as I will show, Mann's perspective is particularly illuminating and compelling for the purposes of my argument.

6.2 The centrality of the lived body

Any attempt to analyse the emotional patterns non-accidentally connected to "masculinity" requires clarification of this notion. To

discuss the diverse debates on the ontology of sex and gender of the last five decades is beyond the scope of this chapter. So, rather than entering into the details of these debates, I choose a perspective on gender that I think is particularly fruitful for identifying the emotional patterns with which I am concerned. I will draw on the phenomenological analysis of the lived body articulated by Bonnie Mann, who herself draws on the phenomenological analysis of Simone de Beauvoir and Iris Marion Young, in her book *Sovereign Masculinity: Gender Lessons from the War on Terror* (2014).

Bonnie Mann highlights the centrality of the lived body for a richer understanding of gender and masculine subjectivity. Attention to the role played by embodiment in the formation of masculinity allows us to conceive of this form of domination as constituted by emotional structures which play a fundamental role in sustaining male domination, and therefore, women's oppression. Following Bonnie Mann's analysis, I shall begin by presenting the advantages of using the category of the lived body in order to think about masculinity.

6.2.1 An impasse in feminist debates

Feminist debates on the question of "gender" and "sexual difference" have reached a kind of "impasse" according to Bonnie Mann: "Feminist accounts of nature, whether critical or affirming, tend to be ghettoized around the question of sexual difference" (Mann, 2014, p. 37). Admittedly, the sex/gender distinction had emancipatory effects for women, as it challenged "traditional accounts of sexual difference, which justified the subordination of women through appeals to biology, nature more broadly, or God" (Mann, 2014, p. 81). Distinguishing female physiology (sex) from women's psychological and intellectual capacities (gender) opened a space for thinking the possibility of freedom in women's lives: biology, so the argument went, does not *determine* social reality.

However, the sex/gender distinction soon came under scrutiny. Rather than thinking "sex" as a natural given, feminist materialists argued that "what we understand to be biological sex is itself the product of the appropriation of women's physical, emotional and sexual labor by men (Wittig, Guillaumin)" (Mann, 2014, p.82). In this sense, what is taken to be "natural" in women's bodies is actually the product of an exploitative political system.

In line with some of the arguments of materialist feminism, post-structuralist feminist analysis – of which Judith Butler is perhaps the main representative – calls into question the gender-binary maintained in the sex-gender distinction. The male/female binary belies an underpinning normative heterosexuality that makes evident its political character. Not only is "gender" politically and socially constituted, but the notion that "sex" is a natural, pre-social "given" is in fact the product of an heteronormative logic. As Iris Marion Young puts it, "The discursive rules of normative heterosexuality produce gendered performances that subjects reiterate and cite; the sexing of bodies themselves derives from such performatives." (Young, Lived Body vs. Gender, 2005, p. 15)

From a different perspective, the advocates of "sexual difference feminism" challenge the aforementioned theories for ignoring an originary sexual difference which is irreducible to the ways that women and men are socially constituted. Symbolic constructions of gender are therefore grounded on natural sexual difference.

While distancing herself from "sexual difference" feminisms, failing as they do to sufficiently challenge the historical use of sexual difference as a justification of women's subordination, Bonnie Mann articulates a synthetic critique that applies to all the aforementioned theories for producing excessively rigid and reductive accounts of the distinction between "culture" and "nature". Whilst materialist and post-structuralist accounts tend to reduce "nature" to "culture", sexual difference feminisms reduce "culture" to "nature". Doing so, each of the

main strands of feminist thought fail to accept, or engage with, a fundamental and irreducible existential ambiguity. In trying to solve the tension between nature and culture, feminist discussions of sex and gender are symptomatic of "the common human unwillingness or incapacity to endure the ambiguity of the human condition" (Mann, 2014, p. 37), namely, the irreducible tension between body and mind, nature and culture, immanence and transcendence. This "paradox of immanence and transcendence" is described by Beauvoir as follows:

> As long as there have been men who live, they have all experienced this tragic ambiguity of their condition, but as long as there have been philosophers who think, most of them have tried to mask it. They have striven to reduce mind to matter, to absorb matter into mind, or merge them together within a single substance. Those who accepted the dualism established a hierarchy between the body and the soul that allowed the part of oneself that could not be saved to be considered as negligible (Beauvoir, 1948, p. 290, as cited in Mann, 2014, p. 35).

Despite the fundamental differences between the feminist accounts mentioned so far, Mann considers that they share a desire to foreclose this tension, reflected in their conception of the distinction between gender and sex:

> The temptation is always to flee the ambiguity by reducing it, by making nature into consciousness (and I think the critics of sexual difference tend to do this by making nature a product of discourse or material practices), or by making consciousness into nature (and I think the champions of sexual difference tend to do this by claiming that women's way of knowing or women's way of writing are rooted in an originary, bodily difference). (Mann, 2014, p. 37)

In collapsing nature into culture, or culture into nature, these accounts "reduce our field of engagement with the question of nature. We implicitly accept our confinement within the boundaries of natural sexual difference (…)" (Mann, 2014, p. 38).

By contrast, Mann contends, Beauvoir's political phenomenology offers a more fertile path for understanding gender, as well as notions of masculinity and femininity, outside of the confines of the sex/gender

debate. Beauvoir's theory of gender is potentially liberating because it leaves the question of our relationship to nature *undetermined*:

> [Beauvoir] initiates a shift in how we think about the phenomenon of sexual difference, which maintains the ambiguity between sex as "natural" and gender as "cultural" (without, of course, having recourse to the notion of "gender" that came later and in another language context) by shifting the question from what femininity and masculinity *are* to what they *do*. (Mann, 2014, p. 11)

For Beauvoir, Mann notes, the metaphysical question of sexual difference is a sort of trap. It serves "to mask or mystify a political reality" (Mann, 2014, p. 29). Sexual difference, for Beauvoir, is therefore not a problem of "substance" but one of "justification" (Mann, 2014, pp. 29–30).

6.2.2 Gender as justification

Although *The Second Sex* has mainly been recognized for its analysis of femininity and women's subordination, Mann interprets Beauvoir's ground-breaking work as containing, between the lines, a "sketchy and underdeveloped" analysis of masculinity "in its sovereign form" (Mann, 2014, p. 21). Bonnie Mann aims therefore to expand Beauvoir's account of gender as *justification* in order to develop her own analysis of "*sovereign masculinity*", the gendered way in which the nation imagines itself.

What does Mann mean when she says that Beauvoir understands gender as an "operation of justification"? What does gender justify, and how is this done? Gender legitimises and justifies relations of subordination and domination, by an appeal to nature as an explanatory causal element accounting for the differential social treatment of men and women. At first glance, it could be argued that some of the feminist debates previously described also identified these operations of justification. However, unlike the debates that have reached an "impasse" around the sex/gender question, the originality and fecundity

of Beauvoir's analysis lies in the fact that it does not narrow the relation between "nature" and "culture" to a linear and direct causal chain. Rather, Mann contends, the strength of Beauvoir's account resides in how it "undoes causality" by showing how the causal relations between nature and culture are better thought as interlocking, rather than as linear and unidirectional:

> While in patriarchal accounts, nature causes social power differences between men and women (…) in feminist "denaturalizing" accounts, material and political interests or discursive formations act causally on material bodies to constrain, shape or constitute them as sexed. In feminist "renaturalizing" accounts women's bodily differences are backgrounded causes for symbolic formations that are potentially generative of powerful positive meanings for sexual difference. In Beauvoir's phenomenological description of what it means to be a woman, on the other hand, the very force and directionality of causality is not eliminated but diffracted; we are no longer dealing with linear causal chains but with justificatory *entanglements*. (Mann, 2014, p. 36)

Mann uses the image of an "entanglement" to signify the disruption of causal linearity in Beauvoir's analysis. "Nature" and "culture" are continuously feeding upon one another, without this meaning that one is reducible to the other. The operation of justification performed by gender takes the form of an entanglement between nature and culture, not in the simple sense that nature and culture are always interacting, but in the more radical sense that their intricate involvement does not allow us to draw a neat and tidy distinction between them. Mann finds an example of justificatory entanglement in Beauvoir's account of "the two faces of time", namely, creation and maintenance of life:

> (…) Beauvoir (…) takes note of a temporal feature of mammalian biological existence that she finds significant in giving an account of social hierarchies between women and men. "In higher forms of life, reproduction becomes the production of differentiated organisms; it has a twofold face: maintenance of the species and creation of new individuals; this innovative aspect asserts itself as the singularity of the individual is confirmed. It is thus striking that these two moments of perpetuation and creation divide. (Beauvoir, 2010, pp. 33–34; Fr. 1:56)" (Mann, 2014, p. 36)

Beauvoir's distinction between "creation" and "maintenance" does not stand for an essential difference grounded in nature or biology. Rather, maintenance and creation acquire their significance *existentially*. The gender difference in the experience of these "two faces of time" cannot be reduced to a single, direct causal explanation, either by pointing exclusively to biology or to socio-political forces. In this different experience of temporality, nature and culture are intrinsically enmeshed:

> Women disproportionately experience the urgency of maintaining new life, as well as nature's cyclical processes of violence and decay, while men disproportionately experience the thrill of creating life (…). Both of these faces of time and the tension between them are integral to the human condition and to each individual life, whether male or female. While the division between them *lends itself* to a division of interests between the sexes, it does not *cause* such a division determinatively. And while a division of interests might become causally entangled with a division of power, it is not in a simple causal chain with such divisions. (Mann, 2014, pp. 36–37)

An eloquent example of how the maintenance and creation are gendered temporal experiences can be found in the practice of *care*. Care, as Lisa Baraitser analyses it, has its temporal dimension in maintenance, which "appears to contain two temporal forms":

> In part maintenance is about trying to keep something going – keeping things functioning or in a steady state, allowing what already exists to continue or persevere, to carry on being. Maintenance is not the time of generation or production, or the eruption of the new. (…) Secondly, to maintain is also to keep buoyant; to maintain one's mood could be described as buoying oneself up, keeping oneself or someone else afloat during difficult times. (Baraitser, 2017, p. 53)

One explanation for the fact that women disproportionately experience time as maintenance lies in the unequal gender distribution of the labour of care. Returning to Mann and her reading of Beauvoir, this social expectation can be thought as parasitic on women's capacity to be pregnant, give birth and breast-feed. What gender *does* is use women's reproductive capacities as one of the bases for legitimizing women's

subordination. Analysing gender as justification, Beauvoir shows "how structures of injustice are parasitically entangled with general features of human existence, even those that seem most "natural" (…) without being caused by them in any simple way" (Mann, 2014, p. 37).

Although Bonnie Mann presents Beauvoir's distinction between maintenance and creation as the best illustration of a "justificatory entanglement", an additional example can help us to clarify the intricate relation between "nature" and "culture" in gender understood as a justificatory process. The following is an account offered by Connell in her sociological study of masculinities. A man (Hugh) recounts his first sexual experience:

> (…) I must have come in about five or six strokes, and I thought the feeling was outrageous because I thought I was going to die… And then during that week I had a whole new sense of myself. I expected – I don't know what I expected, to start growing more pubic hair, or expected my dick to get bigger. (Connell, 2005, p. 53)

As Connell notes, Hugh's telling of his first sexual encounter shows "the intricate interplay of the body with social process":

> the *physical* feeling of climax is immediately an interpretation ('I thought I was going to die'). It triggers off a familiar sequence – death, rebirth, new growth. Conversely, the *social* transition Hugh has accomplished, entering into sexual adulthood, immediately translates as bodily fantasy ('more pubic hair', 'dick to get bigger'). (Connell, 2005, p. 53)

The anecdote reveals how social meanings and bodily feelings circulate and nurture one another. This first sexual experience is interpreted in terms that symbolize power and domination, which Hugh expected to manifest in his body. The fantasy of gaining a new form of social power is simultaneously a fantasy of gaining bodily power: becoming "bigger". Here, we can recognize a common way in which bodily and cultural signifiers are entangled in justifications of domination. Men are expected

to "naturally" derive sexual pleasure from domination, and to exercise domination through sexuality.

We can understand Mann's claim that for Beauvoir linear causality is "diffracted" through an account of gender as "justification" insofar as, for Beauvoir, the facts of nature lack meaning in themselves: "if the body is not a *thing*, it is a situation" (Beauvoir, 1956, p. 61). Human biology derives its significance from the way it is experienced in a historical context:

> Once we adopt the human perspective, interpreting the body on a basis of existence, biology becomes an abstract science; whenever the physiological fact (for instance, muscular inferiority) takes on meaning, this meaning is at once seen as dependent on a whole context; the 'weakness' is revealed as such only in the light of the ends man proposes, the instruments he has available, and the laws he establishes. (Beauvoir, 1956, p. 61)

Inversely, what gender *does* is in many ways intensely physically *felt*. For example, if I am the only woman in a room full of men, I may physically feel my body as too visible if I decide to speak. This physical sensation of bodily hypervisibility can be simultaneously entangled with feeling out of place, or with thinking of myself as incompetent.

6.2.3 What the lived body reveals

A second reason for returning to Beauvoir's account of gender is its engagement with the revelatory potential of the lived body. Beauvoir's phenomenological analysis conceives the body in a less reductive manner than the feminist debates "ghettoized" around the sex/gender distinction. On the one hand, Beauvoir's phenomenology does not reduce the body to a passive "surface" that either natural or social forces act upon or "shape", "in the same old mechanistic, causally implicated, object-body of the naïve sciences that phenomenology had long recognized as an abstraction from the lifeworld" (Mann, 2014, p. 82). On the other hand, her analysis enables us to pay attention to the *plasticity* of the body, i.e., its capacity to *resist*. As Shannon Sullivan contends, plasticity is not to

be understood in the simple sense of "malleability" or "shapeability". Rather, the body is plastic also in its capacity to resist: "As William James clarifies, plasticity 'means the possession of a structure weak enough to yield to an influence, but strong enough not to yield all at once'" (Sullivan, 2015, p. 13)[40]. Bodies are therefore not merely *shaped* by social or natural forces but have a degree of freedom or agency in how they "bend" or "inflect" social or natural forces:

> For phenomenologists, one doesn't live one's body primarily as an object acted on by others, though one may live it this way, in situations of illness, vulnerability, exploitation or violence. Even then, Husserl teaches us, the body is lived in the mode of the "I suffer," which is not the mode of an impersonal object, but of a sentient and conscious being for whom freedom is one essential possibility. (Mann, 2014, p. 82)

By engaging with *embodiment* rather than with the question of the essence of sexual difference, Beauvoir's political phenomenology is attentive to the intertwining between biology and culture, and between what is "profoundly personal and individual yet through and through socially constituted and collective" (Mann, 2014, p. 83). The notion of "style" plays a key role here. *Style* names a particular way of engaging with the world, or, as Sullivan puts it, of *transacting* with the

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[40] Catherine Malabou conceives "plasticity" as situated "between determination and freedom". Plasticity, as a concept, is placed between two "semantic extremes": first, according to a "'closed' signification". Something is plastic "if it cannot return to its initial form after undergoing a deformation" (Malabou, 2008, p. 15). For example, a block of marble is plastic in that it can be sculpted into a pair of hands: it's supple enough to be modified, and solid enough to retain the shape that results from this modification. "Suppleness" and "solidity" are thus opposed to elasticity (that which returns to its original form) and rigidity (that which cannot be modified). Secondly, the "open" significance of plasticity points to its spontaneous capacity for transformation. Malabou offers the paradigmatic example of "[stem-cell's] capacity to differentiate and transdifferentiate themselves" (2008, p.16). Attending to its chemical sense, Malabou reminds us that *plastique* is "an explosive substance made of nitroglycerine and nitrocellulose, capable of causing violent explosions" (2008, p. 5). Plasticity is therefore that which is capable of *taking* a form and, at the same time, of opposing a degree of resistance to the informing force: "to talk about the plasticity of the brain means to see in it not only the creator and receiver of form but also an agency of disobedience to every constituted form, a refusal to submit to a model" (2008, p. 6).

environment. Style is manifest, for example, in how my body moves through space. Phenomenological accounts do not reduce style to the workings of physiology: "Style is gestural, rather than merely physiological"[41]. One's movements may be quick or slow, flexible or rigid; one's voice may be loud or low, monotonous or musical. But these ways of engaging with the world are not merely personal. Their meanings are also socially inflected: "Walking in high heeled shoes (...) [is] located, so to speak, between feet, legs, shoes, floors, and gendered expectations" (Sullivan, 2015, p. 12). Style is therefore plastic in the sense that it is "an open structure", both limited and enabled by the environment with which we engage:

> (…) though "style" is an open structure, it is not merely voluntary. Personal and cultural/social habits sediment into style. Habits formed through repeated actions (and more so those repeated over generations) "also get sedimented into the environment, in the structures of ustensils, instruments, and habitation, as such they direct action from outside. A path, for example, is a result of the repetition of a certain mode of walking." (Heinämaa 2003, p. 44, as cited in Mann, 2014, p. 83)

Attending to embodiment as habitual or "stylistic" shows how gender "gets its ontological weight" in a more fruitful way than the post-structuralist accounts that privilege the analysis of discursive signifiers. Gender, Mann argues, is not only located "in the realm of the symbolic" (Mann, 2014, p. 69).

    Helen Fielding's emphasis of the primacy of the body over language supports Mann's argument for a return to the insights of Beauvoir's phenomenology:

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[41] While Merleau-Ponty focuses on bodily experience, Sullivan contends that phenomenology thus underplays the role of physiology in our understanding of habit. Sullivan argues that "physiological functions *are* habits" in that they are also *transactional*: "Breathing, for example, cannot take place by means of lungs alone; it requires air (or oxygen, more precisely). Likewise, digestion occurs only when the stomach and intestines have food to process and absorb. Respiration and digestion are made up of a cooperative, active relationship between organism and environment" (Sullivan, 2015, p. 12).

Because we are corporeal… meaning does not come to us only, or even primarily, through language. We are first perceptual, motor, and socio-affective beings. We learn to move as embodied, to perceive the world, and to engage with others according to the particular ways that the world manifests itself in this epoch. (Fielding, as cited in Mann, 2014, p. 69)

In this sense, Mann echoes a familiar critique of post-structuralism's excessive emphasis on discursive operations, and implicit characterization of bodies as indeterminate "surfaces" "shaped" by discursive practices, of which they are the mere products. Connell highlights the limitations of such accounts in their tendency to neglect the role of the body in gender:

With so much emphasis on the signifier, the signified tends to vanish (…) [i.e.,] when gender is seen as, above all, a performance; or when the rending contradictions within gendered lives become 'an instatement of metaphor' (…). The surface on which cultural meanings are inscribed is not featureless, and it does not stay still. Bodies, in their own right as bodies, do matter. (Connell, 2005, p. 51).

Similarly, as Young indicates, Toril Moi views Butler's theory of gender as unsatisfactory insofar as it "makes bodies and sexual identity simply a product of discourse" (Young, 2005, p. 15):

Deconstructive challenge to the sex/gender distinction has increasingly abstracted from embodiment, (…) at the same time that it has rendered a concept of gender virtually useless for theorizing subjectivity and identity. At this theoretical pass, Moi proposes that we throw over the concept of gender altogether and renew a concept of the lived body derived from existential phenomenology, as a means of theorizing sexual subjectivity without danger of either biological reductionism or gender essentialism. (Young, 2005, p. 12)

It may be objected that in presenting "denaturalizing" (materialist and post-structuralist feminisms) or "renaturalizing" (sexual difference feminisms) accounts of gender as narrowly linearly causal, Mann fails to do justice to their complexity. Since examining this critique goes beyond the scope of this chapter, and granting that it is not necessarily unfounded, it may suffice to point out that Mann – along with Connell

and Moi – may be right to emphasise that gender is not only about language. Embodiment plays a crucial role in gendered subjectivities. Moreover, Mann's defence of Beauvoir's political phenomenology does not exclude the insights of post-structuralist and materialist feminist analysis. In fact, Mann's account *expands* Beauvoir's phenomenology of gender: it aims to develop something that, in Beauvoir's analysis, is in its "embryonic" stages (an account of masculinity in its sovereign form), and it opens it "to other modes of inquiry", whether poststructuralist, psychoanalytic, or materialist, always keeping in mind the centrality of the body:

> Gender as an operation of power that is personally assumed in the most intimate sense (...) is always already at work in/on the body. But when gender takes on its gender tasks; when it is deployed in the making and unmaking of nations; when it is central to gathering an army and waging a war; when it is at work in practices of colonial aggression, detention and torture, it does not leave the body behind. Indeed the body at its most vulnerable, in its neediness, is the reservoir of nature from which gender must always return to drink. (Mann, 2014, p. 45).

In other words, poststructuralist, materialist and psychoanalytic analyses can be put to work in a similar direction to Beauvoir's political phenomenology, namely, to analyse what gender *does*. They can help us understand how operations of gender, through the use of a gendered imaginary, through gendered operations of language, or through "material operations of gender in acts of war", are at the same time always parasitic on bodily features, which they use to justify instituted hierarchies: "at every level of analysis, we will see that gender feeds on the natural – even as the natural pushed back, insists, rebels." (Mann, 2014, p. 30) For example, when analysing the operations of gender in acts of war, Mann attempts not to lose sight of "the heavy-handed materiality of gender as lived in the body" (Mann, 2014, p. 12), such as "the brute physicality of the body, its vulnerability to violence, its capacities for shame and pain" (Mann, 2014, p. 30). Again, analysing the practice of torture by the U.S. military, Mann highlights how the

production of a *national manhood* is partly achieved through an appropriation of tortured bodies:

> I would add that the *sexual* humiliation of the prisoner, the feminization or homosexualization of the prisoner, which the prisoner experiences in his body as excruciating *shame*, can be appropriated, lifted out of the prisoner's body, and used in the shame-to-power conversion on which the sovereign manhood of the torturing regime depends It is precisely the nonexistence of the manhood of the nation, its evident fragility, its ephemeral nature, that requires bodies to be tortured, so that "the sheer material factualness of the human body" might be "borrowed" by the regime. (Mann, 2014, p. 192).

This example shows how an analysis that puts embodiment at its centre enables us to identify some of the ways in which emotions and masculinity are entangled. Humiliating the prisoner and using his shame are instrumental for the production of "the sovereign manhood".

I now move on to show how Bonnie Mann extends Simone de Beauvoir's analysis of gender as *justification* in her account of *sovereign masculinity*. Her attention to embodied habits of gender or "style" will enable us to extract the emotional structuring of masculinity, in the context of twenty-first-century United States.

6.3 Embodiment and emotional patterns

6.3.1 Sovereign masculinity as an operation of gender

Mann extends Beauvoir's analysis of gender by analysing sovereign masculinity as a justificatory operation. Sovereign masculinity designates more precisely how "masculinity" and "sovereignty" are enmeshed in the way the American nation imagines itself:

> If we want to understand the United States' vision of empire, we have to understand its culture and practices of gender, and if we want to understand gender as it is lived in the United States today, we need to understand sovereignty as it is imagined and practiced by the nation. The notion of 'sovereign masculinity' reminds us of this relation. (Mann, 2014, p.3)

Drawing on Judith Butler's characterization of the sovereign subject, Mann understands "sovereignty" as consisting in both a denial of *injurability* and in its projection onto the Other. The sovereign subject is "one that builds itself on the conceit of its own inviolability: 'Such a sovereign position not only denies its own constitutive injurability but tries to relocate injurability in the other' ([Butler], 2009, 278)" (Mann, 2014, pp. 3–4).

However, Mann's analysis is not merely concerned with masculinity as the imagined gender of the nation. Her account aims to clarify the formation of individual masculinity by analysing "how the images and stories that circulate wildly in service to [America's] quest for national manhood get their claws into the very identity structures of individual persons" (Mann, 2014, p. 11). For example, national manhood can be appealing for young men in conditions of poverty because it "offers military recruits a way to earn a salary and participate in a fantasy of masculine sovereignty at the same time" (Mann, 2014, p. 11). At the same time, as an imaginary formation, national manhood lacks *reality*, or "ontological weight", on its own. National manhood therefore needs to "borrow" from "the ontological weight that accrues to the individual subject at the lived embodied level" to become "real" in its turn, as the previous example of the use of torture suggests. This does not mean that, at the individual level, gender has ontological weight *exclusively* from lived bodily experience, independently of the social imaginary and the discursive realm: "The ontological weight that gathers and sediments in lived gender is itself partly a product, of course, constituted between the uniquely situated individual subject and the social world" (Mann, 2014, p. 11). Consequently, gender operates here as a *justificatory entanglement*: the production of masculine embodiment is causally entangled with the appropriation of the lived reality of masculinity, required "to lend reality to the manhood of the nation" (Mann, 2014, p. 11), which also serves as an aspirational image for individual men.

6.3.2 How gender is grounded in bodily style

Let's examine more closely how gender gains its ontological weight. Here Mann turns first of all to bodily experience: "when we look at how gender *is lived* by both women and men, the aesthetic dimension has a certain primacy." (Mann, 2014, p. 70) This "aesthetic dimension" lies in the fact that when we try to make sense of the world around us, gender is already in play through our perceptual and sensorial capacities. Mann draws on Young's phenomenological analysis of female body experience as revealing a fundamental structure of femininity and masculinity. In her essay "Throwing Like a Girl", Young (2005) describes a common contrast between typical female and male body motility. Female bodily experience is characterized by an inhibited and disrupted motility, called by Young "the disruption of the 'I can' body":

> Young concludes that *enclosure* is one modality of feminine spatiality, since the space of the 'I can' for women tends to be gathered tightly and held close, and is represented by girls in their drawings as enclosed by high walls. (Mann, 2014, p. 88)

To illustrate Young's claim, Mann recounts her experience as a voluntary volleyball coach to a small group of 8-year-old kids (4 girls and 2 boys). Echoing Young's description of feminine and masculine bodily motility, Mann describes how all but one boy and one girl started off moving "like a girl", displaying an "inhibited intentionality", by starting an action with an "I can", but "withhold[ing] its full bodily commitment to that end in a self-imposed 'I cannot'" (Young, 2005, p. 36, as cited in Mann, 2014, p. 86). However, although all the children started at a similar level, the boys learned more quickly than the girls how to use the space effectively. Instead of the "discontinuous unity" and "ambiguous transcendence" that characterizes feminine motility, the boys were soon able to "organize the world as a unitary field of the 'I can'" (Mann, 2014, p. 87):

For these eight-year-olds, serving was only one skill in which this discontinuous unity manifested itself. I had to convince them that they could move decisively toward the ball. At first they stood stuck still and let the ball drop right next to them. Later the girls would run toward the ball only to stop and pull back, flinch away from it, just before they got there. When I insisted they call out "mine" to claim the ball from their teammates, they would start to say the word then almost swallow it, move toward the ball, then turn away from it. "I want commitment!" I hollered over and over again, making the good-natured parents on the bench laugh. The first time I said it, one of the parents joked that the boys wouldn't have any idea what it meant. Yet when it came to having a bodily sense of "commitment" it was all four girls who lagged behind. Soon both boys were all over the court, practically pushing their teammates out of the way and shouting "mine," sliding dramatically in their all-out efforts to get to the ball (even when they didn't need to). (Mann, 2014, p. 87)

Young's analysis of female body experience and her identification of the structure of female motility as disruption of the "*I can* body" allows us to account for the nature of a particular kind of emotional phenomenon that proves to be instrumental in the formation of the masculine self. Drawing on Young's insights, Mann argues that in the "doing" of the self, the gendered experience of the body is crucial. This is clear from the fact that gender misrecognition can intentionally be used as a form of violence. Furthermore, gender misrecognition can elicit unpleasant or painful emotional reactions, to different degrees. What is at stake in these emotional reactions is an "undoing of the self":

The fact that gender misrecognition can effect a kind of undoing of the self is one of the clues which proves what psychologists and feminists have long noted: that gender recognition and gender-presentation that enables it is part of the *doing* of the self" (Mann, 2014, p. 77).

This undoing of the self is manifested in the fear, shame, and even terror of feminisation felt by many men. Arguably, the experience of the undoing of the self crucially depends upon particular *beliefs* and cultural notions to the effect that women are inferior. Mann does not deny this. However, her point is that appealing to cultural beliefs is not sufficient to explain the emotional intensity manifest in instances of gender

misrecognition. When men express the fear or shame of being "like a woman", they describe

> a spontaneous giving way, a dissolution, an unravelling at the heart of the self, which coheres with beliefs about women's inferiority but is not reducible to them. The experience doesn't seem to pass through belief at all, at least if we think of belief as cognitive and conscious. (Mann, 2014, pp. 85–86)

The experiences of shame, fear and terror of being feminized do not merely depend on beliefs. Rather, Mann contends, these emotions are strongly grounded in embodiment. The fear/terror felt at the undoing of the self is grounded in the risk of a loss of the male body through feminization. More particularly, the unravelling of the masculine self is experienced as a disorganization and disruption of the "*I can* body":

> What is at stake when the "'I can' body" is disorganized and disrupted? The capacity to act, of course, the capacity to be a body-in-the-midst-of-doing, *immersed* in its own action. The habit body that undergirds and guarantees most of our skilled, coordinated, physical doings, is undone in these moments. It becomes painfully conscious of itself, and the consciousness disrupts the skill and coordination of the action. The body-subject becomes awkward, tentative, vulnerable, shamed. Ultimately, she or he becomes injurable, violable, rapable; in other words, available for violent use by stronger others, weak in the face of impending harm. (Mann, 2014, p. 91)

The undoing of the self is not merely feared at an "intellectual" or cognitive level. It is not only what we "believe" that sustains or threatens the self. More radically, the body holds the self together through the way it is habituated to interact with its environment, i.e., in its *style*, and in the reading of this style by others. Feeling terror at being feminized is a fear of being vulnerable to violence. In other words, if, following Butler, part of what sustains the male sovereign subject is a denial of its own vulnerability (injurability or violability), the fear of "feeling like a woman" is a fear of "losing" one's sovereign position in the world.

The fact that masculine identity-formation is importantly grounded in the "*I can* body" is also manifested in the way gendered style is interpreted socially, without the sociocultural meanings of feminine and masculine motility needing to be consciously, "cognitively grasped to be operative":

> How I live gender in my body, my gendered style, signals (among many other things) my availability for use, or lack thereof. The more centered my habitual body comportment is in the use of the "I can" body, the less I am marked intersubjectively for such use. The more centered my bodily comportment is on what Young might call the "I cannot." body, which in feminine body experience is closely tied to the "I am watched and judged by the male gaze." body, the more I am marked intersubjectively for use. (Mann, 2014, p. 91)

The grounding of the masculine self in bodily style becomes more evident in the experience of men who do not embody it, who are therefore vulnerable to violence, and under pressure to adopt a stereotypical masculine style as a way of protecting themselves, not only from different forms of aggression, but from feeling *undone* in their self. In his autobiographical essay *Returning to Reims* (2013), Didier Eribon describes the terror that discovering his homosexuality meant for him. It was both a terror of being located in a degraded category, and terror of feeling his *self* being or becoming *abject*:

> Discovering little by little what my desires were, and what my sexuality would be thus meant inserting myself into a predefined category, one that had been stigmatized by means of these words of insult. It meant experiencing the terrorizing effect these words can have on those to whom they apply, on those who run the risk of exposing themselves to them for an entire lifetime. To use an insult is to cite the past. It only has meaning because it has been used by so many earlier speakers: "a dizzying word that rises from the depths of time immemorial," as one of Genet's verses puts it. Yet, for those at whom it is aimed, it also represents a projection into the future: the dreadful presentiment that such words, and the violence they carry, will accompany you for the rest of your days. To become gay is to become a target, and to realize that you already potentially were such a target even before you had actually entirely become one, before you were ever fully aware of what this word that you had heard hundreds of times might mean, even if you had

always known how powerfully insulting it was. The stigmatized identity precedes you, and you step into it, you embody it, you have to deal with it in one way or another. They may be numerous and diverse, all the different ways it is dealt with, but they are all marked by the constitutive power of the verbalized insult itself. (Eribon, 2013, p. 98)

Similarly, in his autobiographical narrative *The End of Eddy* (2018), Edouard Louis describes the strategies that he needed to use to conceal his homosexuality and his effeminate style. A working-class French teenager living in terror of being "found out", Eddy repeated – as a mantra – his determination to be "a tough guy". He tried to modify his tone of voice and gestures, and was under pressure to perform heterosexuality, to manifest hatred for homosexuals and love for masculine-coded sports, like football:

> With Sabrina I had failed, losing the battle between my desire to become a tough guy, and the desire of my own body, which was pushing me towards men, which is to say pushing me away from my family, away from the whole village. And yet I didn't want to give up, so I continued repeating to myself that obsessive phrase, *Today I'm gonna be a tough guy*. My failure with Sabrina made me redouble my efforts. I took care to make my voice deeper, still deeper. I kept my hands immobilised in my pockets whenever I spoke, so I wouldn't have them around. Following the night that had revealed to me more clearly than ever the impossibility of my becoming aroused by a woman's body, I took a more serious interest in football than ever before. I began watching it on television and memorised the names of all the players on the French team. I watched wrestling as well, just like my brothers and my father. I made my hatred of gay people ever more explicit in order to deflect suspicion. (Louis, 2018, p. 170)

Both Louis' and Eribon's narratives show the role played by class in masculine identity formation in France. In the working-class environments of their childhood, masculinity was asserted through toughness and prowess in sports. At the same time, the bodily styles of the *bourgeoisie* were at the time coded as feminine. To be an intellectual, to be effeminate and to be gay were imaginatively associated. Later as a student at an upper-middle-class *lycée*, Louis noticed the contrast in bodily style between working-class and *bourgeois* young men:

Here boys kiss each other on each cheek when they say
      bonjour, they don't shake hands
They carry leather satchels
They have gentle manners
They would all have been called *fags* at my college
Bourgeois people don't exhibit the same kind of bodily
      habits
They don't define virility the way my father did, the way
      the men at the factory did
(this will be even more apparent at the École Normale,
      all those feminine bodies belonging to middle-class
      intellectuals) (Louis, 2018, pp. 189–190)

In *Returning to Reims,* Didier Eribon describes how he needed to escape two forms of social "condemnation", sexuality and class, by "playing one off against the other". Eribon interprets his effort to escape his working-class origin as a strategy that allowed him to become gay:

> So it is not, as Sartre would have it in an enigmatic phrase he writes about Genet, that homosexuality is a way out that someone invents in order to avoid suffocating. It is rather that someone's homosexuality obliges them to find a way out in order to avoid suffocating. I can't help thinking that the distance that came into being — that I created — between myself and the world I grew up in, that my self-creation as an "intellectual," represented the way I found to deal with what I was becoming. I couldn't become what I was becoming without inventing myself as different from those from whom I was in fact already different. A bit earlier in this book, discussing my path through school, I described myself as a miracle case. It could well be that what made that miracle possible for me was my homosexuality. (Eribon, 2013, pp. 198–199).

"Class betrayal", through the adoption of the styles of the intellectual *bourgeoisie* (accent, intonations, bodily movements) became for Eribon a necessary way out, to live his sexuality without the constraints of his social environment. At the same time, the original terror of being found out as gay (i.e., as an "abject man") transmuted into a terror of being found out to be of working-class origin:

> (...) it doesn't seem exaggerated to assert that my coming out of the sexual closet, my desire to assume and assert my homosexuality, coincided within my personal trajectory with my shutting myself up inside what I might call a class closet. I mean by this that I took on the constraints imposed by a different kind of dissimulation; I took on a

different kind of dissociative personality or double consciousness (with the same kinds of mechanisms familiar from the sexual closet: various subterfuges to cover one's tracks, a very small set of friends who know the truth but keep it secret, the taking up of different registers of discourse in different situations and with different interlocutors, a constant self-surveillance as regards one's gestures, one's intonation, manners of speech, so that nothing untoward slips out, so that one never betrays oneself, and so on). (Eribon, 2013, pp. 26–27)

In order to be able to affirm his life as a gay intellectual, Eribon had to disown the environment of his family: "in one case I needed to become what I was, but in the other I needed to reject what I was supposed to have been". (Eribon, 2013, p. 225)

Eribon's and Louis' narratives illustrate how bodily style has a major role in the formation of (heterosexual) male subjectivity. As an additional example, we find in Mann an anecdote of how her daughter Dee Dee was bullied by other children when she cut her hair very short: Dee Dee "announced her decision to grow her hair long and never cut it 'so that I will be a girl again.'" What Dee Dee learnt through this painful experience, Mann argues, is that "to be a girl (...) requires an *agreement*. You must show that you are one, and show it in ways that others will be able and willing to perceive" (Mann, 2014, p. 77). This agreement is manifest through one's bodily way of engaging with the world.

6.3.3 Fear-of-shame: an emotional structure of masculinity

Attending to what female and male embodiment reveal allows us to extract an *emotional structure* non-accidentally linked to "sovereign masculinity". Mann characterises it as "systematic shame", but it can be more precisely understood as a cluster of shame and fear. Fear-of-being-shamed for feeling or looking "like a woman" – which in an extreme degree can be *terror*-of-being-shamed – is a salient thread in the configuration of sovereign masculinity. Viewed in this light, masculinity appears as a reactive or defensive formation against the systematic fear of being shamed.

Mann identifies this existential emotional structure of masculinity and femininity in the context of contemporary U.S. culture. Her account reveals a dialectic where shame – or the spectre of it, in the shape of the feminine – plays a crucial role. This is visible in the fact that shaming is systematically used to form masculine identity. Language, imagination and culture are saturated with images reminiscent of shame and shaming instances:

> The nation and the culture come under the spell of an inflated and hyperbolic manhood, not for the first time, after the defeat in Vietnam and the rise of Women's Liberation Movement. This is perhaps most poignantly documented in Jackson Katz's landmark film *Tough Guise: Violence, Media and the Crisis in Masculinity*, in which he shows the literal inflation of images of manhood in the 1980s and 1990s – guns get bigger, muscles are pumped to extreme dimensions through the use of steroids, and the fantasized efficacy of violent masculine action becomes almost absolute (2002). In a world suffering through this capture, gendered identifications are achieved in the thick of an imaginary domain replete with narratives and images saturated by shame, its anticipation, and its defeat through redemptive violence. (Mann, 2014, p. 108)

The abundance of images of shame has an important impact on the formation of the individual masculine self:

> While isolated shame experiences may have little lasting impact, when they are consistently reinforced or echoed in the imagery and language of a culture, such as when a young boy notices that boys are regularly shamed for showing fear, distress, sensitivity, or sympathy – that language provides names for such boys: "wimp," "sissy," "pussy," "faggot," "little girl" – that the cultural space is saturated with images of "real" men who have apparently shed any relation to such names, as well as with images of those who haven't – these "isolated shame experiences become magnified and fused" (Kaufman 1980, 73) to such an extent that "shame becomes basic to identity". (Mann, 2014, p. 115)

Insofar as such images are ubiquitous, the threat of shame appears as an existential condition for the formation of masculine subjectivities. This does not mean, of course, that *all* men have the same aspiration to attain sovereign masculinity. However, in one way or another, all men

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form their identities in relation to sovereign masculinity, either by resisting, subverting or pursuing it. In the latter case, a young boy attempting to become a sovereign man "must disown the parts of the self that are connected to regimented scenes of shame" (Mann, 2014, p. 116), and coded as feminine. Shame and the feminine are entangled in the emotional structure to which masculine formation is reactive. Mann names this process "shame-to-power conversion", understanding "conversion" in Beauvoir's sense, as "the process of fleeing intersubjective risk for the comfort of sovereignty":

> Now we see that the aspiring sovereign man must hide the parts of the self that remain connected to regimented scenes of shame, in order to convert shame to power. Shame in masculinity formation initiates a lifelong process of self-cloaking (…) that promises to eliminate exposure, vulnerability. In sovereign masculinity, the cloak is pieced together from displays of agency, often hyperbolic, paradigmatically violent, which obsessively bring to visibility a fantasized *in*vulnerability. Sovereign masculinity has no other purpose than this display, than this cloaking. The shamed one must explode into hyperbolic self-assertion or cease to exist as a man. (Mann, 2014, p. 116)

Shame-to-power conversion is of course not the only strategy that individual men can use in reaction to the risk of systematic shaming. As Louis and Eribon show, embracing those areas of culture in which femininity seems more permissible can constitute a way out. However, shame-to-power conversion may be all the more common when other alternatives are unavailable. For example, before being able to escape from an homophobic social environment – where homophobia was expressed through misogynistic insult: "Most of the time they would say *pussy* when speaking to me, and *pussy* was about just the worst insult they could imagine" (Louis, 2018, p. 18) – Louis describes what Mann might count as a shame-to-power-conversion strategy:

> It must have been towards the end of my last year at the collège. There was another boy, even more effeminate than I was, and people called him *Trout Lips*. I hated him because he didn't share in my suffering, he didn't seem interested in sharing it, he never made any effort to get to

know me. (…) One day he was being loud in a hallway where a large group of students had gathered, and I called out: *Shut the fuck up faggot!* All the students laughed. Everyone looked at him and looked at me. I had managed, for the moment of an insult shouted in a hallway, to transfer my shame to him. (Louis, 2018, p. 171)

Within an oppressive environment, and lacking opportunities to protect himself, Louis was socially constrained to use shame-to-power-conversion as a response against the threat of shame.

If masculinity is formed through strategies of shame-to-power-conversion, then shame constitutes an essential condition for the emergence of masculinity. In other words, without the threat of shame, masculinity would lose its function as a reactive formation:

> When sovereign manhood has established itself against the experience of shame, shame and its production become the necessary motor for the realization of its power. When it is no longer shamed, it must shame others to reproduce itself. To repeat: *the core structure of sovereign masculinity is this shame-to-power conversion*. (Mann, 2014, p. 116).

Shame-to-power conversion therefore constitutes a sort of *redemption* that "saves the degraded self, restores him to his world, secures him from the threat of abandonment" (Mann, 2014, p. 117). One example of this redemption is manifest in Stanley Kubrick's film, *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). Mann comments how shame and its projected redemption play central roles in the formation of the soldier:

> In one of the opening passages of the film, the shame-to-power conversion that is at the heart of sovereign masculinity is articulated in an anticipatory promise by Sergeant Hartmann, the drill instructor. Hartmann is played by R. Lee Ermey, who served as an actual drill instructor during the Vietnam War and famously wrote many of his own lines for the film. "If you ladies leave my island," Hartmann promises the all-male recruits, "if you survive recruit training… you will be a weapon, you will be a minister of death, praying for war. But until that day you are pukes! You're the lowest form of life on Earth. You are not even human fucking beings! You are nothing but unorganized grabasstic pieces of amphibian shit!" (Mann, 2014, p. 118).

At the end of the film, the formation of the soldiers is achieved through the transformation of shame into honour:

> On the final day of basic training, hours before he is killed, Hartmann makes the long awaited declaration: "Today you people are no longer maggots. Today you are Marines. You're part of a brotherhood... From now on, until the day you die, wherever you are, every Marine is your brother. Most of you will go to Vietnam, Some of you will not come back. But always remember this: Marines die, that's what we're here for! But the Marine Corps lives forever. And that means you live forever!" At the culmination of the shame-to-power conversion, the soldier is offered a place in the *collective, fraternal* agency of his military unit. He is offered honor as an antidote to shame, and this honor equated with loyalty, first and foremost to the brotherhood he has been invited to enter, which is the locus and life of this collective, fearsome, sovereign masculinity (Mann, 2014, pp. 119–120).

Kubrick's portrayal of the training of the soldier may be an extreme example of sovereign masculinity, but it offers a clear picture of a complex and widespread social process.

6.3.4 The spectre of infantile vulnerability

These strategies of conversion aim to restore the "*I can* body", to rescue it from the threat of "feeling like a woman", which means falling into the feminine "*I cannot* body". In this sense, the insult "like a girl" names the impotence of the body. However, according to Mann, the insult goes even further. "Like a girl" connects the meaning of impotence with the absolute dependence, helplessness and vulnerability that characterise infancy: "At the most basic level, shame taps into the memory of a deep, bodily incapacity to *live* without engaging the regard and the embodied agency of someone else" (Mann, 2014, p. 122).

Mann connects the experience of infantile helplessness with "a kind of exposure to death". This is expressed, for example, in the anxiety that children of around seven months display when they encounter strangers:

While the infant's cries and demands bespeak a constant need to be noticed, her abrupt facial retreat from the surprise of the stranger's gaze implies that her visibility becomes a problem and a danger, a kind of exposure to death. Far worse than not being seen, is being seen by one who is hostile or contemptuous. While her visibility to the one who loves and cares for her is a comfort and a necessity, her visibility to the stranger *hurts*. (Mann, 2014, p. 122)

This "infantile vulnerability-onto-death" (Mann, 2014, p. 123) is repressed, and recalled in future experiences of shame.

It would be too easy to reject Mann's analysis by claiming that the infant does not have a clear notion of death, let alone of its own mortality. We can understand being exposed to death, not in the sense of having the intuition that one's vital physiological functions will fail, but as a feeling of a shattering of the self. In early infancy the child is radically dependent upon others, not only for nutrition, hygiene and shelter, but also because it is through others (through their touch, care, love, words, etc.) that its sense of self is constituted and held. Being "exposed to death" by becoming a captive of the stranger's gaze involves feeling a loss of self connected with a loss of the familiarity of one's world. In *Full Metal Jacket*, humiliation through infantilization in the process of training the soldier is therefore not incidental: "When Sergeant Hartmann forces his failing recruit to march with his pants down, sucking his thumb, he makes graphically explicit the infantile helplessness that shame always recalls." (Mann, 2014, p. 122)

The shame associated with infantile helplessness is likely strongly tied with the feminine as the abject, since those who most commonly procure this kind of care are women:

Persons whom we learn to identity as women, as female, as feminine, are those responsible, most directly and most often (not always), for keeping us alive when we are pathetic, desperate, weak little creatures who cannot keep ourselves alive, or even when we are teenagers with certain challenges located in the frontal lobe of our actions. My way of having a world is infused with these gendered realities from the beginning (Mann, 2014, pp. 126–127)

Therefore, gendered shame is lived as a threat of losing one's world, which is felt as a loss of self:

> When the "I can" body is disrupted and disorganized through gendered shame, then, the threat of a *loss of world* is in play. We see this disruption carried out in its most extreme form in *Full Metal Jacket* when the other marines brutally beat "Gomer Pyle" as punishment for his shameful failures. The stakes are high. Without a world, I am not an "I" in any meaningful sense of the word, since to be an "I" is precisely to have a world. (Mann, 2014, p. 127)

In this sense, to lose a world is to lose meaningful connections to others. We do not only depend upon others for our subsistence. We need others to sustain our sense of self and our self-esteem. To have a world goes beyond that of the nuclear family:

> My own personal embodied "style" bears the mark of the claims made on me by various collectivities, my gender, my race, my nation – if I am a soldier, my branch of military service. My way of having a world is infused by my belonging to, resisting, or both, the claims of these collectivities. This is to say that my way of having a world is already deeply intersubjective. (Mann, 2014, p. 126)

Mann's analysis of what gender *does*, i.e., of its function in justifying male domination, therefore portrays sovereign masculinity as a defensive formation against the threat of shame, the threat of a loss of self through the loss of one's community, or one's place in one's community. Shame-to-power conversion can be attempted through various compensatory strategies. However, sovereign masculinity is not only a defensive formation, but a parasitic one, which feeds on the degradation of the feminine and the infantile:

> each hyperbolic display of agency will be at the same time an act designed to create vulnerability, humiliation and shame for someone else. The machine of conversion *needs* the other's powerlessness and shame, and will produce it prolifically. The replication and magnification of power requires the constant production of shame as the raw material that is converted into aggression, hostility and contempt. (Mann, 2014, p. 124).

These strategies of shame-to-power conversion seek to create shame and vulnerability not only in women but in anyone perceived as deviant.

In the context with which Mann is concerned, sovereign masculinity is also importantly defined in terms of race and sexuality. The production of power feeds itself upon the degradation of the man and woman of colour, the "effeminate gay", etc. Men who simultaneously stand in relations of subordination with respect to race and class, and of dominance with respect to sexuality and gender, may therefore reproduce the logic of shame-to-power conversion as a way of maintaining their status. This, according to Susan James, is a dimension that Beauvoir also explores. As James puts it, Beauvoir was sensitive to the way in which "men's experience of domination can shape their behaviour towards women":

> In dominating his wife [Beauvoir] argues, a husband makes up for "all the resentments accumulated during his childhood and his later life, those accumulated daily among other men whose existence means that he is browbeaten and injured –all this is purged from him at home as he lets loose his authority upon his wife (SS 1972, 483; DS 1986, ii. 297) **Invalid source specified.**

In her analysis of the oppression suffered by the Chicana *mestiza*, Anzaldúa interprets the violence that men exert upon them (their "machismo") as partly deriving from their loss of self through racial oppression:

> Today's macho has doubts about his ability to feed and protect his family. His "machismo" is an adaptation to oppression and poverty and low self-esteem. It is the result of hierarchical male dominance. The Anglo, feeling inadequate and inferior and powerless, displaces or transfers these feelings to the Chicano by shaming him. In the Gringo world, the Chicano suffers from excessive humility and self-effacement, shame of self and self-deprecation. (…) The loss of a sense of dignity and respect in the macho breeds a false machismo which leads him to put down women and even to brutalize them. (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 83)

Because *machismo* is partly a reaction to a "deep sense of racial shame", heterosexual Chicanos have a greater investment in gender roles than Chicanas and gay men:

> Tenderness, a sign of vulnerability, is so feared that it is showered on women with verbal abuse and blows. Men, even more than women, are fettered to gender roles. Women at least have had the guts to break out of bondage. Only gay men have had the courage to expose themselves to the woman inside them and to challenge the current masculinity. (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 84)

Men have a greater emotional attachment to structures of domination, and are therefore more dependent upon their need to dominate women than women are conditioned to endure it. From a psychological point of view, heterosexual men are in this sense less free than those they oppress.

We can see through these examples that the displacement of shame, as an emotional pattern non-accidentally connected to masculinity, takes complex forms in its connections with other structures of domination, which are also maintained through emotional mechanisms, as we discussed in Chapter 5. Emotional structures of one kind of oppression have complex ramifications for other forms of dominance and subordination.

6.3.5 Admiration and esteem

So far, we have identified fear-of-shame as an emotional structure that plays a key role in the formation of masculinity. By projecting shame onto the other through feminization and infantilization, shame is transformed into power. However, as Beauvoir points out, the parasitic dimension of sovereign masculinity not only works by depicting the feminine as the site of the abject. A further emotional source of male domination can be traced to men's demands for admiration and esteem. James situates Beauvoir's account of men's need for admiration and

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esteem in the tradition of seventeenth-century moral psychology, where "hierarchical social relations are widely held to depend on the affects of admiration and contempt, which are understood to operate on and through the body" (James, 2004, p. 76):

> The central features of this seventeenth-century discussion all recur in Beauvoir, who allots an important place to admiration in her analysis of the hierarchical relations between man and woman. In her role as Absolute Other, woman sustains man's self-esteem by reflecting back to him an image of himself; but the image must be an admiring one. Men "seek to find in two living eyes their image haloed with admiration and gratitude, deified" (*SS* 1972, 217; *DS* 1986, i.302). The look or gaze so central to Beauvoir's account is significant. Man searches for his image in two human eyes, he looks to woman's facial expression for confirmation of his worth, and it is through her body that she makes her admiration manifest. (James, 2004, p. 79)

In Beauvoir's analysis of admiration and esteem as passions that uphold gender hierarchies, we find another illustration of gender as justification whereby "nature" and "culture" feed on one another. Admiration and esteem are taken to be given by nature, as if what is admirable in men – and despicable in women – derived patently from bodily differences. Men's bodily manifestations tend to be interpreted as the expression of a "naturally" active character and power:

> The comparative hardness and containedness of man's body, the neatness and visibility of his sexual organs, his well-defined erotic climax, and his role in intercourse contribute to the association of masculinity and activity. (James, 2004, p. 82)

By contrast, women's bodily features are traditionally interpreted as a sign of their passive and inferior character. These interpretations are of course grounded in the materiality of bodies themselves but, as James argues, tend to be reinforced by "a range of further interpretative devices":

> (…) Bodily differences that are a matter of degree are imagined as oppositions; for example, although man is prey to uncontrollable bodily

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secretions these are obliterated in the contrast with flows of menstrual blood or amniotic fluid, so that woman alone emerges as leaky and unbounded. (James, 2004, p. 82)

Because bodily differences are socially understood in terms of a valued activity for men and a devalued passivity for women, "the scene is set for admiration and contempt". In other words, the emotions of admiration and contempt are articulated and justified as if deriving naturally from these differences in bodily features.

Admiration and esteem are emotional mechanisms through which men maintain their power, but which may reinforce women's oppression. For example, some women may come to develop a sense of themselves as defective and may only find value for themselves through their relationship with men:

> The self-esteem gained from associating with those who possess *grandeur* is still self-esteem, but this way of getting it depends on psychological strategies which have their own costs. Since woman is 'doomed to dependence, she will prefer to serve a god rather than obey tyrants' (*SS* 1972, 653; *DS* 1986, ii. 547) and will therefore project her desires on to her relationship with man (…) (James, 2004, p. 84)

We can recall here the case of Capécia in relation to André, discussed in Chapter 2, of the kind of alienation that women in heterosexual relationships tend to suffer. They only derive satisfaction and pride by entering "the world according to him".

I have argued that Mann's analysis allows us to identify the key role played by certain emotional patterns in the formation of male subjectivity. By understanding what is at stake in its fantasized *undoing*, we can gain a sense of how masculinity attempts to "keep itself together". Masculinity is thus understood as a *strategy* deployed in reaction to what threatens its constitution and maintenance. By focusing on *how gender is lived in the body*, we can give a richer explanatory account of the nature and intensity of men's fear/terror of being shamed

for looking or feeling "like a woman" than by merely appealing to cultural signifiers of women as inferior.

In order to understand the nature of men's fear or terror at the prospective of being feminized, Mann looks at what being feminized means in terms of bodily experience. Identifying the structure of the stylization of the female body as the disruption of the "*I can* body" enables us to perceive the nature of "the threat experienced by the masculine subject who finds himself slipping, against his will, into womanhood" (Mann, 2014, p. 84). By analysing what the masculine subject fears ("to be shamed for being/feeling like a woman"), Mann contends that shame at being feminized is experienced as an *undoing* of the self. The shame felt in being feminized is the shame of falling into the "I cannot body", i.e., of feeling impotent and helpless. Thus, to be feminized is to be degraded to the humiliating helplessness of infancy, a state of radical dependence and vulnerability.

The emotional structure of masculinity is shame-based because it is in reaction to shame that masculinity takes shape, through a variety of strategies among which *shame-to-power conversion* is prominent. We have explored two main forms of shame-to-power conversion: the first involves projecting shame onto others as a way of ejecting the *abject* from the self. The second, as presented in James' reading of Beauvoir, consists in men's demands for admiration and esteem, which in turn reinforce women's subordination.

6.4 What about entitlement?

How does this account of the emotional patterns that sustain masculinity square with the apparent self-confidence and sense of entitlement that men commonly display? Does not male privilege protect many men from being shamed, so that they are less likely to experience this emotion? This is suggested by Kate Manne:

> What are the masculine-coded perks and privileges in question? These include social positions of leadership, authority, influence, money and other forms of power, as well as social status, prestige, rank, and the markers thereof. Then there are less tangible facets of social "face," pride, reputation, or standing, and the relevant *absences* – for example, the freedom from shame and lack of public humiliation, which are more or less universally desired but only some people feel entitled to. (Manne, 2017, p. 113)

However, if shame is a pervasive emotion against which masculinity must constantly protect itself, Kate Manne's description may be incomplete. Masculinity does not simply deliver men from shame. To be a man is not to be less prone to feeling shame or being shamed. Rather, the contexts and contents of men's shame, together with their responses to instances of shame/shaming, will be distinctive.

In Chapter 5, I argued that *entitlement* is also an affective-embodied phenomenon that plays an important role in sustaining whiteness as domination. If entitlement manifests in similar ways for men, then patterns of entitlement may effectively protect men from the kinds of shame that affect oppressed groups in specific contexts, such as women. For example, if institutional practices facilitate the sense of belonging and even *owning* a professional space, this may translate into men being less prone to feeling insecure, defective or ashamed of their capacities to fulfil their professional tasks.

By contrast, as we have analysed, members of oppressed groups may suffer from systematic shame in contexts where their bodies do not "fit", or have not done so historically. The incorporation of shame by the oppressed may, in fact, function as an instrument of power that reinforces existing structures. The low numbers of women in STEM or academic Philosophy, for example, will be taken as proof of the fact that women are not "fit" to be there, owing to their lack the talent or natural abilities, or because they do not "like" such spaces[42]. Where some spaces

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[42] Recently, the physicist Alessandro Sturmia claimed that "the data doesn't lie — women don't like physics". https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/oct/01/physics-was-built-by-men-cern-scientist-alessandro-strumia-remark-sparks-fury ;

and institutional practices are organized in ways that traditionally fit men's profiles and needs, feelings of entitlement (in the form of self-confidence and lack of shame), may become salient.

This does not mean, however, that the spectre of shame isn't lurking on the horizon. Once the scaffolding of entitlement becomes fragile shame may be felt all the more intensely; those who feel it consider themselves as *entitled to be free from shame*. How are we to make sense of Kate Manne's claim that one of the dimensions of entitlement consists in feeling entitled to not be shamed?

Building on the analysis above, we can hypothesise that entitlement functions as a strategy through which shame can be deflected. Entitlement may function as a fiction through which the masculine self aims to protect itself from shame. To become a man is to feel entitled not to be shamed precisely because to be shamed would threaten a masculine sense of self. If one feels like a man, one feels entitled to be free from shame and will therefore use whatever strategies are necessary to deflect shame[43].

Kate Manne offers this suggestive description of Donald Trump to illustrate how shame is *rejected*, not allowed to infiltrate the subject. Trump, she writes, is at "the most extreme of a spectrum of toxic masculinity" (Manne, 2017, p. 126). Humiliated by Barack Obama's mockery of his request that the latter produce his birth certificate during the White House correspondents' dinner: "[Trump] jutted out his chin, pursed his lips, and turned a deeper shade of orange (...)". Kate Manne asks whether that is "really the face of shame". She continues:

> But then I realized that Trump's was the face of shame turned inside out – its exterior wall, as it were – shame refused, with fury substituted, since he and his ilk are accustomed to being treated with the greatest respect on all occasions. It was the face of someone who fully expects

[43] In its most extreme forms, this can take the form of what Kate Manne calls "entitled shame" displayed by "family annihilators".

and feels entitled to the admiring gaze of others positioned beneath him, looking upward. (Manne, 2017, p. 128)

Trump's display of entitlement to admiration is, Kate Manne suggests, "the face of shame turned inside out". In other words, this kind of entitlement does not consist in simply being free from shame, but could be seen as another example of a "shame-to-power conversion" strategy.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that there are salient emotional patterns which are non-accidentally connected to masculinity as a form of domination and which sustain male privilege and women's oppression. I have, with Bonnie Mann, contended that an account of the emotional patterns of masculinity can be extracted from phenomenological analyses of the lived body. Following Beauvoir's account of gender as *justification* and Young's analysis of female bodily motility as disruption of the "*I can* body", Mann's analysis reveals that shame is an emotional structure of sovereign masculinity. Masculinity, as a form of domination, is maintained through emotional strategies that seek to transform shame into power. The narratives of men such as Didier Eribon and Edouard Louis, whose bodily styles do not typically embody sovereign manhood, reveal how systematic humiliation through feminization and infantilization help to sustain sovereign masculinity. Beauvoir's analysis of admiration and esteem as emotions that support hierarchical relations between men and women can also be seen as playing a role in shame-to-power conversion strategies. Such demands for admiration and esteem potentially increase men's power as they further disempower women. This account of the relation between masculinity and shame may seem hard to reconcile with men's characteristically greater self-confidence and sense of entitlement. In the light of Bonnie Mann's analysis, I suggest that entitlement may be part of men's reactive strategy against the threat of systematic shaming.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have argued that, when political philosophers explore the harm done by oppression, they should pay more attention to its emotional dimension. Unless we take account of this dimension, we shall not fully understand what oppression is, or grasp the nature of the harm it can do.

Analytical philosophers commonly approach oppression by trying to define it, and in doing so habitually neglect its emotional character. In the opening chapter, I appealed to Haslanger's work to illustrate this claim. Her widely discussed definition of oppression is silent on the subject of emotion. As a result, I argued, it lacks the resources to explain some of the most powerful and insidious features of oppression. Defining the harms that oppression causes through abstract notions such as "injustice", "inequality" or "imbalance of power" does not allow us to fully comprehend them. Instead, a more fruitful explanatory approach lies in attending to the emotional aspects of oppression. In chapter 1 I offered a preliminary defence of this claim. If we want to understand what oppression *is*, we need to understand what oppression *does*. When oppressed people themselves describe what oppression does, it becomes clear that its emotional aspects play a crucial role.

I subsequently presented a series of narrative testimonies and fictions, which provide evidence for the main claims of my thesis, namely that oppression has a distinctive emotional profile and, consequently, that certain patterns of emotion are among its characteristic features (chapter 2). The narrative material that I analysed reveals a significant connection between structures of oppression and emotions such as shame, guilt and self-loathing. Feelings of internal division, together with disorientation and paralyzing psychic conflict, are also prominent

in the testimonies I discussed. While I take the salience accorded to these emotions as indicative of a significant connection with oppression, I do not contend that these are the *only* emotions that deserve to be considered. There may be other important emotional phenomena that are integral to experiences of oppression with which this thesis does not engage, but which could be the subject of future investigative work. For example, although I claim that fear is one of the emotions through which oppression works, its place in my analysis is marginal by comparison with shame. Future research could examine in more detail what makes some disempowering emotions more or less pervasive than others in lived experiences of oppression.

In chapter 3 I considered what account of emotions can best illuminate the link between emotion and oppression. I argued that a model of emotions as mainly short-lived and episodic does not allow us to capture the ways in which structures of oppression and privilege shape our affective lives. I contended that we need to conceptualise emotions as extending over time, as attunements or patterns, and as relational. With the help of this model, we can also get a fuller grasp of how emotions are connected to power. To make this argument, I took issue with Gabrielle Taylor's (1985) account of shame, criticising it for its tendency to reduce this emotion to discrete and short-lived episodes, and for its failure to pay adequate attention to its social character. I argued that Bartky's (1990), notion of "emotional attunement", and Peter Goldie's (2012) account of "emotional patterns", offer a better way to articulate the entanglements between emotion and oppression, insofar as these notions help us capture the character of the feelings involved in oppression, and explain why they endure over time. Additionally, I argued that Sara Ahmed's (2004) account of emotions as "relational" offers a fruitful way of construing the interconnection between emotion and structures of power. As I went on to show, Ahmed's analysis provides an argument for one of the implications of the main claim of my thesis, namely that if

there is a significant connection between a certain emotional pattern and a structure of oppression, we may expect to find a significant connection between certain emotional attunements and structures of privilege.

The claim that there is a significant connection between oppression and certain patterns of emotion stands in need of clarification. What precisely is the nature of this link? I discussed this problem in chapter 4. After rejecting the view that the link can be formulated in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, I argued that the narrative material discussed in chapter 2 nevertheless indicates that oppression is non-accidentally connected to certain emotional patterns or attunements. I therefore proposed that the nature of this connection should be understood as non-accidental. I showed that, although the emotional patterns I identify are not necessary and sufficient features of oppression, they are *indicative* ones. In other words, the salience of certain emotional patterns in narratives and testimonies of oppression is not a matter of chance. We have good reasons for thinking that these emotions are *characteristic* features of oppression. I subsequently argued that difficult cases, in which the relevant emotions are not obviously felt or acknowledged, offer further evidence of the emotional character of oppression, insofar as they point to strategies through which these emotions are repressed or transformed.

I pointed out in the Introduction that my exploration of the emotional patterns non-accidentally connected with structures of power does not systematically examine the extremely complex question of the place of beliefs and judgements in emotions, as some contemporary philosophers do. I have chosen to take it for granted that our emotions have a cognitive dimension, without entering into the discussion about whether they are reducible either to their cognitive, or to their evaluative aspects. Setting this debate aside, my account in chapters 5

and 6 focused on exploring the link between embodiment and habitual ways of feeling. These ways of feeling, I contended, do not only derive from our beliefs, although I do not deny that they may incorporate both beliefs and evaluative judgements. As I have argued, they are also constituted by feelings that are embedded in bodily habits, and it is this aspect of oppression that I have been concerned to examine.

In chapters 5 and 6 I used the conception of emotions as long-lived and relational patterns set out in chapter 3 to examine the emotional configuration of two forms of privilege: whiteness and masculinity. In different ways, Sullivan's account of the "unconscious embodied habits" of white privilege (chapter 5), and Mann's analysis of masculinity as partly grounded in "bodily style" (chapter 6), provide a framework that allows us to capture the patterned – in the sense of recurrent and temporally extended – character of emotions. As habits or styles, these forms of feeling are characterised by their relative stability over time, insofar as they are a way of being in the world.

Much of the literature on white ignorance has accounted for the role of racism in white subjectivity by focusing on its cognitive aspects, or to put it differently, on its *patterns of cognition*. White ignorance, as analysed by Charles Mills, accounts for a habitual way of thinking and (un)knowing, which constitutes a form of persistent "cognitive handicap" that is widespread among White people. Drawing on José Medina's analysis of the *affective* aspects of white ignorance, I highlighted the need to explore its embodied dimensions in greater depth. The hypothesis that guided my argument was that, if there are persistent cognitive mechanisms that constitute white ignorance as a habitual way of (un)knowing, we may expect to find persistent patterns of feeling in which race plays a significant causal role, and which are also instrumental to the reproduction of racial oppression. Drawing on Shannon Sullivan's exploration of the unconscious embodied habits of

white privilege, I traced the ways in which these patterns of feeling are embodied and are often transgenerationally transmitted through bodily signals that need not take the form of propositional beliefs. Such embodied habits, which are simultaneously psychic and somatic, constitute some of the unconscious ways in which White people "transact" with their social environment – a point that Sullivan develops following Laplanche's "theory of seduction". In addition, I used Sara Ahmed's phenomenological analysis of whiteness as an embodied habit to shed light upon comfort as a habitual emotional structure connected to white privilege, whose role in sustaining domination can be made visible through the different defensive emotional reactions that are typically deployed when white comfort is challenged.

I subsequently showed that the habitual character of comfort, as a commonly unacknowledged feeling of "sinking in", can be understood as an affective structure that 'supports' feelings of entitlement, in the form of expectations of comfort. I brought out this emotional aspect of domination by discussing how White bodies, but not non-White ones, are typically allowed to move and take up space. Domination partly manifests itself in the feeling among White people that they are entitled to a familiar environment in which they can move easily. I also drew out a connection between Sullivan's account of "ontological expansiveness" and Ahmed's phenomenological perspective on comfort as a structural affective experience of whiteness. It is mainly when comfort is challenged that, as Ahmed contends, comfort comes to be acknowledged; the fact that one's expectations of familiarity are unmet can be the cause of discomfort. The presence of non-White others in a traditionally all-White context is therefore typically experienced as a disturbance, and as a source of discomfort. Similarly, I discussed how expectations of comfort are made manifest when White people are challenged about their complicity in sustaining racial oppression. Through defensive emotional reactions, white people seek to reinstate comfort as a way of restoring

power, for example by demanding that non-Whites restore their comfort. They demand, for example, that racism is addressed in ways that protect "white feelings".

In chapter 6, I developed my examination of the patterned aspect of emotions by taking a slightly different approach. Rather than exploring the gender equivalent of white ignorance, as many scholars of patriarchy have done, I used Bonnie Mann's analysis of bodily style as a feature of male subjectivity to highlight the role of shame in the formation of masculinity. Sovereign Masculinity, as the way in which the nation "imagines itself" (Mann, 2014), "borrows" its "ontological weight" from the lived experience of bodily style. Men's sense of self, their sense of self-esteem and pride, is strongly rooted in a bodily style characterised by Mann as "the I can body". We find evidence of this formation in the fact that men's sense of self-esteem and pride is strongly challenged when their masculine bodily style is undermined. In other words, challenges to men's bodily style are experienced as threats that may shatter the self, and these threats take the form of the spectre of femininity, experienced as "the I cannot body". Humiliating the male self therefore typically takes the recurrent form of feminising *the body*: by insulting it; highlighting its femininity; subjecting it to feminine-coded behaviour; or infantilising it.

As a form of domination, I showed, masculinity therefore has a fundamentally emotional configuration. Shame is used both to sustain it, and to maintain some forms of oppression. Mann's analysis, I contended, reveals how male subjectivity is upheld through a series of strategies that she calls "shame-to-power conversion". These involve forms of humiliation (ranging from insults to physical violence) through which the self seeks to eject the 'abject', coded as feminine, and project it onto Others. I've emphasized this aspect of Mann's discussion of the case of the recruit in *Full Metal Jacket*, forced to suck his thumb and wear diapers in the process of becoming a soldier and thereby acquiring a

supreme form of masculinity. In addition, I have argued, shame-to-power conversion is sought through the demands for admiration and esteem that (heterosexual) men make of women, thus reinforcing their oppression. In order to "conjure" the existential threat of femininity, masculinity relies on these emotional strategies.

In chapter 3 I also claimed that emotions are *relational*. Following Sara Ahmed, I argued that they are not simply "inside" the mind of individuals, nor "outside", in "the collective". Rather, we should think of emotions as relational, in the sense that they are what allows us to draw a distinction between an "inside" and an "outside", an "us" and "them". To put the point another way, emotions are not simply "possessed". They are *ways of reacting* to objects, persons, or situations; and it is in these ways of reacting that an "I" and "we", an "us" and "them", are delineated and constituted. It's not as if the "I" and the "them" are fully constituted, and objectively distinguished, with emotions coming "in addition" to what is already "there". Instead, an "I" becomes "I" through the felt effect of its contact with what becomes a "them" and *vice versa*. In other words, it is through emotions, as ways of reacting to contact, that we are constituted in our relationships to others; and it is through emotions that relationships with others are *felt* and come to be seen as relations. In this sense, then, emotions have a revelatory dimension; they are disclosive of relations of power and of our situation with respect to power.

Taking up this view in chapter 5, I explored the relational character of emotions through Sullivan's accounts of embodied habits as *transactional*, i.e., as shaped by and shaping of a social environment. Embodied habits, and the correlative affective phenomena that I identified, are the ways in which we react to contact with a social environment. Our habits shape who we are; and we are also shaped by the embodied habits of others. I pursued this relational aspect of emotions by highlighting the *dialectical* character of emotional patterns. For example, White people's comfort and entitlement to comfort, as one

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of the affective dimensions of privilege, is experienced at the expense of non-White people's capacity to feel "at home". Thus, white comfort partly explains non-white discomfort. Similarly, white fear of the Black body, and the multiple mechanisms by which Whites project the abject from the White self onto the Other, can partly explain the pervasiveness of shame and guilt, which are commonly found among the oppressed.

Many of the emotional patterns characteristic of the oppressed can therefore be understood, at least in part, as an effect of the defensive emotional attunements of their oppressors, through which the latter seek to sustain their power. To return to central claim I made in chapter 4, there is a non-accidental connection between the relational emotional patterns I have identified and oppression. Throughout this thesis I have sought to make this relationship visible by exploring the place of shame in the mutually dependent emotional patterns of oppressors and oppressed. As I have sought to show, the difference between the oppressed and the privileged does not lie simply in the presence or absence of a particular emotion such as shame. It lies, rather, in the ways an emotion is experienced, how it shapes the self, and how it empowers or disempowers. The disgust felt by White people when sharing food with Blacks, for example, is not a random phenomenon. It finds an explanation in the way people's feelings have been shaped by structures of power. The same is true, as I showed in Chapter 6, of men's excruciating fear of being shamed.

Attending to these embodied habits, or styles of engaging with the world, allows us to comprehend how privilege and oppression shape our *ways of being in the world*, or, more specifically, our *ways of feeling*. Both Sullivan and Mann conceive habit and style as "plastic". But because our embodied habits are partially *unconscious*, they often thwart our efforts to change our investment in racial hierarchies. In a longer work it would be interesting to map out the cognitive aspects of male privilege and analyse the affective components of the cognitive handicaps typically

displayed by men. Such an investigation would build on my chapter 6, where my point was to identify some of the emotional aspects of embodied masculinity.

I see my thesis as having implications for two main areas of enquiry. On the one hand, it is part of a broader attempt to understand the role played by emotions in relations of power, and thus part of an attempt to understand power. On another hand, by understanding how emotions are involved in power, it aims to cast new light on our understanding of emotions themselves.

In relation to the first point, I have aimed to provide a non-reductive account of the emotional lives of the oppressed and their oppressors by showing how oppression is sustained and reinforced through emotions as instruments of power. I do not contend that oppressed and oppressors are fatally stuck in these entanglements. Resistance and liberation are, of course, possible. But paying attention to the interplay between emotions and structures of power helps us to explain why oppression is pervasive, and why overcoming it is difficult. In my discussion of the narratives first introduced in chapter 2, I have highlighted some of the individual and collective emotional strategies on which resistance depends. But there is much further work to be done on this topic, and I aim to pursue it in future. As I hope my account shows, my framework has potential for examining the emotional character of resistance to oppression in more detail. The arguments that I have developed go some way to suggesting why certain instances of oppression are so pervasive and hard to shift. One obvious question this raises is whether resistance to oppression requires breaking or disrupting dialectical emotional patterns, and if so, which ones, and how. This might also lead us to address the question of what is involved in taking responsibility for oppression. How can we mobilise our knowledge of the emotional patterns non-accidentally connected to oppression in order to

change them? And how can emotions be engaged in a way that modifies the structural roots of oppression? As my discussion has emphasized, attending to the emotional aspects of oppression captures important aspects of what is involved in being an oppressor, and what it is to have emotional investments in sustaining oppression. My framework therefore contains helpful resources for thinking about two interconnected problems: the kind of engagement with resistance that oppressors need to develop; and the difficulties that oppressed people face when challenging oppression.

To explore these issues in greater depth, one would need to explore a wider range of emotional transactions between oppressors and oppressed. One issue that would need further thought concerns the normative status of particular emotional states within an emotional pattern that may oscillate between being empowering and disempowering. Are there, for example, some forms or occurrences of shame and guilt that can play a more productive role than others in challenging oppression? If so, how are the empowering and disempowering forms related? And how can each of them be used to modify the dialectical emotional relationships within which oppressors dominate the oppressed? A second issue that would benefit from further investigation returns us to my decision to use "emotion" in a broad, all-encompassing sense. As my argument has made clear, the notion of an enduring emotional pattern forms a "matrix" made up of many kinds of embodied states. In explaining particular emotional relationships, I have appealed to different elements of this matrix; but there is obviously more to be said about what the elements are and how they interconnect.

These are large philosophical ambitions; but in pursuing them I would like to stay close to the emotional character of oppression. The main aim of my thesis has been to show that there is a non-accidental connection between certain emotional patterns and oppression, and thus

between these emotional patterns and power. This is the claim I should like to develop in my future work.

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