EXILE'S SHIFTING NARRATIVE: DISASSOCIATION, CO-HABITATION, AND INTRUSION IN FRENCH LITERATURE'S CORPOREAL SPACES

Angela Lynn Ritter

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Approved by:

Dominique Fisher

Lydie Moudileno

Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja

Donald Reid

Jessica Tanner

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ABSTRACT

Angela Lynn Ritter: Exile's Shifting Narrative: Disassociation, Co-habitation, and Intrusion in French Literature's Corporeal Spaces
(Under the direction of Dominique Fisher)

Migration has touched French-speaking countries and has inspired a large body of literature recounting migrant experiences in the francophone world. Much of the scholarship on this literature has focused on questions of exile and foreignness in relation to geographical border-crossing as well as on France's policies toward immigrants in relation to philosophies of hospitality. Yet, authors are also thinking about "home" in ways that transcend geopolitical borders. My dissertation, "Exile's Shifting Narrative: Disassociation, Co-habitation, and Intrusion in French Literature's Corporeal Spaces," examines a set of creative works that displace and theorize the politics of exile and of welcome in terms of the borders of the human body. Considering contemporary French and francophone literature, performance, and film by authors Claire Denis, Wajdi Mouawad, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Marie NDiaye whose works are linked through their staging of dispossessed bodies, my dissertation offers a reconsideration of what it means to have or own a body, demonstrates the blurred boundaries between the Self and the Other, and reveals the possibility of being exiled from one's own body or to someone else's body. Furthermore, I present the body in these works as a space that can be entered and serve as a place of encounter, which thus also renders it a potential space for reconciliation, which leads me to argue that culture, past events, and memories—traumatic or not—may be shared between Selves and bodies, as part of a radical, embodied hospitality, and that he healing that needs to occur when reconciling trauma cannot happen in isolation.

To those who came before me and left a legacy of strength and determination, thank you.

To my sweet, smart, kind, loving, beautiful, extraordinary Ella, may you continue to live out this adventure of life with grace, beauty, and love. I love you and your Daddy so very much.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

> To dare say welcome is perhaps to insinuate that one is at home here, that one knows what it means to be at home, and that at home one receives, invites, or offers hospitality, thus appropriating a space for oneself, a space to *welcome* the other, or, worse, *welcoming* the other in order to appropriate for oneself a place and then speak the language of hospitality.
>
> Derrida *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* 15-16

What does it mean to be at home? What does it mean to be at home in an epoch marked with rapid movement across and within national borders? Is being at home dependent on relations to others? If feeling at home requires a sense of belonging and authenticity, can one ever find home; and what does humanity do with the isolation and alienation of permanent exile from a home? This dissertation examines a set of creative works that theorize the politics of exile and welcome in terms of the borders of the human body, positing the human body as a potential home, space of hospitality, and of exile. Considering contemporary French literature, performance, and film by authors Claire Denis, Wajdi Mouawad, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Marie NDiaye, my dissertation offers a reconsideration of what it means to have or own a body, demonstrates the blurred boundaries between the Self and the Other, and reveals the possibility of being exiled from one's own body or to someone else's body. New notions of exile appear in both film and literature; yet, these specific authors work in-between genres. Their various modes of representation— "staging", theater, but also filmic performance—overlap and offer nuanced representations of bodies as sites of dispossession, colonization, and exil. My dissertation shifts exile's focus from the nation to the Self and the body and thus speaks of corporeal exile. This notion leads me to examine how the representation of the body and the Self in the works of the

authors mentioned above treat hospitality and dispossession. I revisit the requirements and risks associated with current theories of hospitality and underscore the tension between the need for others and the protection of a sense of the Self in creating a feeling of home.

No longer is exile always the loss of country and home as it was for Edward Said or Chinua Achebe; exile has become a move towards something better, safer, freer. Questions of belonging and identity become a central, and often overwhelming, aspect of existence for exiles. The diminishing role of the nation-state has been a central force in our conception of the Self and community. Questions, such as these posed by Julia Kristeva, have plagued the existence of exiles, of those who do not find refuge in the "home" of a country: "Entre l'homme et le citoyen, une cicatrice: l'étranger. Est-il tout à fait homme s'il n'est pas citoyen ? Ne jouissant pas des droits de citoyenneté, possède-t-il des droits d'homme ? Si consciemment, on accorde aux étrangers tous les droits des hommes, qu'en reste-t-il réellement lorsqu'on leur enlève les droits du citoyen ?" (Kristeva 142-143). Kristeva refers to the exile, the *étranger*, as a scar. He rests on the surface of the nation but does not fully enter, is not a citizen, but his mark remains—both the mark on him and his mark on the community. Exiles have suffered isolation, lack of rights, countless identity issues, and "scars" that come from marginalization, or changes in language, culture, or societal norms—not to mention the effects of trauma from extreme situations like civil war, religious intolerance, or other violence. While more recently there is a greater focus on the positive effects of exile—freedom from violence, opportunity for economic stability, or liberty to pursue artistic expression, just to name a few—there is often still alienation and isolation in the exilic situation. Whether for largely negative or positive reasons, the experiences of exile have become a common theme of twentieth and twenty-first century literature.

The idea of a home is a consistent but also problematic theme in the discussion of exile, though the definitions of "home" vary. Edward Said, one of the most influential theorists on exile in the 20th century, discusses home, and exile, in relation to a nation. He argues that nationalism and exile define one another: "nationalism is belonging in and to a place, a people and culture, developed from condition of estrangement" (Said 176). Nigerian novelist, poet, and professor Chinua Achebe, who is also a renowned scholar on emergent Africa and a central figure in exilic literature and theory, discusses home in terms of his homeland, which is the land where his father grew up. Both of these influential writers define home and exile in relation to their geographical locations and displacements. However, Achebe also introduces a different concept of home in his reflections on the book *Mister Johnson*: "[I]t did open my eyes to the fact that my home was under attack and that my home was not merely a house or a town but, more importantly, an awakening story in whose ambience my own existence had first begun to assemble its fragments into a coherence and meaning…" (Achebe 38). Achebe draws his concept of home closer to his own personhood when calling home an awakening story. He connects "home" to his existence as a person in a way that does not refer only to geographical relations. Achebe complicates the idea of "home," removing it from its association with a territory, more specifically a nation, in the context of exile. He does not, though, move so far as to link home to his body, or suggest the possibility of being exiled from his body, as do Denis, Mouawad, Nancy, and NDiaye.

Relating home to an affiliation with a nation-state is problematic due to a lack of precise limits and/or shifting boundaries that complicate how we define home. Arjun Appadurai, in *Fear of Small Numbers*, discusses some of the challenges associated with globalization, such as violence, exclusion, and growing inequality, which he suggests were at least initially (in the

1990s) ignored. He addresses different types of culturally motivated violence—naming ethnocide and ideocide specifically— and asserts, "the idea of sovereign and stable territory, the idea of a containable and countable population… the idea of stable and transparent categories [all a benefit of the modern nation-state] have come unglued in the era of globalization" (6). It is these very uncertainties of shifting borders that beg a new paradigm for the discussion of exile, especially because the previous model is so inherently divisive.

The question of hospitality naturally arises in relation to exile as we consider how we invite in and welcome exiled people and groups. French-Algerian born philosopher Jacques Derrida wrote multiple essays in dialogue with the work of Emmanuel Levinas, a French philosopher with Lithuanian Jewish ancestry. Upon Levinas's death, Derrida was moved to create a book-length discussion on the traces of Levinas's life. These traces continue after his death thanks to his writings. In this book, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, Derrida positions hospitality in relation to death, how *adieu* leads to *welcome*, and in so doing, introduces reading (and hearing) to Levinas's ethics of hospitality as a means of relating to the other. Derrida also introduces the question of home—home as a space for oneself, where one can *welcome*, and where one can freely use the "language of hospitality." To the question of what it means to be at home, Derrida includes the importance of propriety. Is propriety of space required for hospitable invitations? Does the person at home require a certain degree of comfort and confidence to be able to receive and extend hospitality?

French immigration sociologist Abdelmalek Sayad offers an unequivocal "yes" to this question in *La double absence*, in which he argues that immigrants in France lack a *home* because the immigrant is considered an outsider both in his country of origin and in host country. Through his positing of this double absence, there is an implication that one cannot be at "home"

if perceived as an outsider. Martinican psychiatrist, philosopher, and revolutionary, Franz Fanon also expressed the deteritorializing effect in the perception of his Self and his body. As a Martiniquais with a *carte nationale d'identité francaise*, like all other French people, Fanon is French, but he describes being perceived otherwise because of his skin color. He is Black, and thus, he is the Other, the outsider, in the minds and in the gaze of the French white people. Fanon also expresses discomfort in metropolitan France and in his own body because he felt trapped in the oppressive objectification of the white gaze. Perception of being out of place is incompatible with the idea of being at home, which to him means feeling comfortable in a space and possessing a sense of belonging. Fanon discusses the idea of being black as "enfermé dans son corps…il est devenu objet de conscience" (182). According to Fanon, race and the idea of the other—so also the immigrant—are constructed by the gaze of the white man. Fanon, himself, came to this realization upon being called a Black for the first time. Self-conceived identities are also composed of outside perceptions of people's bodies and characters. The feeling of belonging in a space and in one's own body are both in part due to, or prohibited by, outside perceptions.

Sayad offers an anecdote of the guest's point of view on the relationship between home and hospitality. He presents the immigrant's experience as one in which the immigrant is the subject who can never become host. He offers an example of an immigrant worker who has lived in a *foyer*[1] in Paris for 5 years, and in France for 28 years, but he knows that he is not at home in this f*oyer* because he cannot invite the interviewer in for a cup of tea.

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[1]Foyer in French, like its English counterpart, is a meeting place, or an open place of entrance and reception. While in English the foyer is typically describing the entrance hall in a house or apartment, the French foyer is the reception area of a public building like a hotel or the theater. In both linguistic contexts the foyer is a place for receiving guests, for welcoming others into a space. In this particular context, the immigrant's foyer in Paris is a type of temporary residence hall for young adults who are doing internships, educational programs, or working as apprentices, as well as housing for migrants.

> I would love to invite you to my room, to make you coffee, a pot of tea; we could have it together, but it's forbidden. You come visit me at my place – I gave you the address, I told you I live at that address--, you came but this is no home. You are not at home when someone comes to your door and you tell them: 'Come on, let's go out, we'll talk, we'll have coffee, we'll eat.' (Sayad 107 qtd in Rosello)

This immigrant has an address to offer to the interviewer, a place of residence where they can meet, but it is not a home because he does not have the right to extend an invitation of hospitality. He is a guest in his own house because he does not have rights of a master of the house and instead is subject to outside rules. Mireille Rosello concludes from Sayad's immigrant anecdote that "Being at home is being where you can not only eat and drink but also invite someone to eat, to drink, to chat. Being at home is where you can be the host, where you can offer hospitality. If one cannot offer hospitality, one has an address, not a home" (Rosello 17-18). In other words, one's own definition of home, and sense of being at home, is inextricably tied to the individual's ability to make someone else feel at home in his own space.

Propriety thus becomes an important part of the conversation. Propriety, being master of the home, is a requirement for offering that home to others, and thus extending hospitality. This view is not shared by Levinas, however. Instead, Levinas proposes a need for dispossession, rather than ownership, to ethically respond to the question of the Other. Levinas speaks of dispossession in relation to subjectivity and argues that dispossession is opening up to the Other. However, Rosello's scholarship does not include reflection on forms of colonization that go beyond geopolitical borders; the colonization of the body—exploiting it, controlling it, invading

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There is often a maximum length of stay permitted for residents in the foyer, which emphasizes the transitory existence of the migrant and the limitations of his welcome.

it or transforming it—are all arguably as releveant when considering hospitality, especially in relation to my authors. Rosello's question about what makes a guest and a host introduces the idea of belonging and, though it veers from focusing on ownership, her question still implies the importance of being master of one's home. In order to be master, one must possess rights to occupy and appropriate the space but also be perceived as belonging: citizenship requires recognition. It also assumes adoption of local practices and laws, which according to Rosello are what determine roles of host and guest that "differ from culture to culture and vary depending on historical contexts" (viii). She also affirms French philosopher Michel Foucault's proposition that these laws of hospitality hold power; her book focuses on the "problematic moments when hospitality and benevolence create perverse dynamics" (viii). The position of power that can be attained through hospitality, a perverse dynamic as alluded to by Rosello above, is no surprise given the nature of hospitality and the power structures implied, as well as the precarity and unpredictability inherent in hospitable acts. Rosello argues that, "It may be that the opposition between the guest and the host is worth revisiting as a continuous and problematic line between power and powerlessness, ownership and dispossession, stability and nomadism" (18).

She proposes that there is an ethical issue of risk inherent in hospitality.[2] I contend, though, that the interdependent relationships portrayed in the works I am studying actually propose the risk inherent in inhospitality; rejecting the other, keeping others outside of the Self, is actually the greater risk. On the other hand, Rosello explicitly identifies "hospitality as a gift"

[2] "Envisaging the guest as a completely unpredictable creature who can bring chaos into the house has two other consequences. First of all, the model seems to forget that the risk is shared by the guest: the host could be a murderer too, and the guest could be betrayed. Secondly, envisioning the host as stoically confronting such apprehensions and doubts about the guest implies an almost puritanical hero who chooses hospitality over psychic comfort." (Rosello 12-13)

as her theoretical point of departure, more closely tying hospitality to ownership and charitable acts of giving. The host strips the guest of her own identity. This view of hospitality refers us back to the cannibalism against which Césaire warned in *Discours sur le colonialisme.* It is not only the colonized but also the colonizer who is under threat of being consumed: “Signe que la cruauté, le mensonge, la bassesse, la corruption ont merveilleusement mordu l'âme de la bourgeoisie européenne” (15). However, Césaire also presents cultural norms as enemies that stand to threaten humanity and its ability to ethically offer hospitality, and proposes that this threat is greater to communities and individuals than is the possibility of lost identity due to hospitable welcome:

> Alors, n'est-il pas vrai, on comprendra que l'ennemi dont Lautréamont a fait l'ennemi, le « créateur » anthropophage et décerveleur, le sadique « juché sur un trône formé d'excréments humains et d'or », l'hypocrite, le débauché, le fainéant qui « mange le pain des autres » et que l'on retrouve de temps en temps ivre-mort « comme une punaise qui a mâché pendant la nuit trois tonneaux de sang », on comprendra que ce créateur-là, ce n'est pas derrière le nuage qu'il faut aller le chercher, mais que nous avons plus de chance de le trouver dans l'annuaire Desfossés et dans quelque confortable conseil d'administration! (Césaire 30)

Césaire brings the threat to the doorstep, but not a threat in the form of the guest; the threat lies in rules, policies, and cultural norms that have left the European bourgeois devoid of humanity and memory, and full of violence, corruption, and barbary. Césaire also accuses the Western world of having dehumanized itself in the process of colonization’s barbery. It does not remember the violence it has exerted and repeats it causing further division and isolation among its people. From this description of the French people, it is easy to understand the ironic title of

Moroccan writer Tahar Ben Jelloun's *Hospitalité francaise*. Ben Jelloun explicitly denounces France for its inhospitable acts, especially the violent attacks, on Arabs by the French communities in France. Hospitality for Ben Jelloun, Césaire, and Rosello can occur between individuals but is more broadly conceived across cultural and political lines in the context of migration or socio-political relationships.

The notion of dispossession as a means to achieving hospitality, proposed by Levinas, is particularly relevant when considering hospitality in relation to the body, a space so often considered "owned." Levinas argues that people must accept their dispossession of the world and not react with violence to the threat of the Other. Such violence often serves as an attempt to protect that which one does not even own in the first place. In this point of view, it is also implied that the breakdown in ethical treatment of the Other comes from a place of fear and protection. As such, if nothing is owned, then there is nothing to protect, and the outsider is no longer a threat. Deconstructing notions of corporeal self-autonomy and self-containment refer back to Levinas's call to dispossession in both a territorial and subjective sense. Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou also disscuss dispossession in ways that move beyond a spatial concept; they do include dispossession associated with territory such as colonization and land loss, but also broach the idea of dispossession of the body when discussing ownership of one's living body by another person such as in histories of slavery, as well as subjection to violence or necropolitics. They call for a need to re-evaluate the permeability of the Self and suggest that dispossession (here of the body) is intricately tied to our notions of selfhood as well as community. In their discussion they use the term dispossession in relation to submission in the process of subjectification:

> Dispossession encompasses the constituted, preemptive losses that condition one's being dispossessed (or letting oneself become dispossessed) by another: one is moved to the other and by the other—exposed to and affected by the other's vulnerability. The subject comes to "exist" by installing within itself lost objects along with the social norms that regulate the subject's disposition to the address of the other. (Butler and Athanasiou 1-2)

They explore what it may mean to willingly be exposed to and affected by the Other when determining selfhood. Like Levinas, they reject the fear of change and the need for protecting borders and posit the importance of remaining porous, permeable, and willing to let in alterity. While Butler and Athanasiou never fully develop their ideas nor offer solutions, they are sketching a hope for interrelated being. In their work-in-progress open discussion, they do allude to the possibility of new ways of considering Otherness.

My dissertation focuses on Nancy's *L'Intrus*, Denis's *L'Intrus/The Intruder* and *Vers Nancy*, NDiaye's *Rien d'humain*, *Les grandes personnes*, and *Autoportrait en vert*, and Mouawad's *Seuls* and *Soeurs.* These authors address the question of alienation and suffering through their representation of the Self and the body in their works. They all stage characters who experience alienation and suffering because of the boundaries they create through false notions of self-autonomy, but more importantly, also open themselves up to alterity in order to find healing in a way similar to what Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou seek to propose in their discussion (though never actually developing the ideas). They share musings on the possibility of the Self as relational, open to others and thus also responsible to and for others. "In other words, the form of reflexivity that seeks to undo the sovereign and defensive position is one in which a certain crafting of the Self, even a labor on the self, seeks to reopen, or to keep open, a relation to alterity. So, this form of reflexivity seeks to resist the return to the self in favor

of a relocation of the self as a relational term" (Butler and Athanasiou 70). Hospitality in this light would require the Self to offer constant reception and openness to the other. Though it also implies that such hospitality is an involuntary part of existence for the Self that acknowledges its own relationality.

While the anxiety and conflict are real, Butler and Athanasiou also propose that our relationality is an opportunity to be affected or to be moved "by" and "to" someone. They suggest that there is an element of beauty in the universality that transports us beyond ourselves. In the discussion of the body as a home and a habitable space, the question of hospitality also plays an important role. Butler and Athanasiou argue that hospitality requires dispossession. Here, they refer to a dispossession of the home and also of the idea of being master of the home, which includes both the idea of propriety as well as releasing control and dominant power structures. I take this idea further though and examine its relevance to Denis, Nancy, NDiaye, and Mouawad's representations of the Self and the body. These authors depict the body and the Self as an inhabitable space for "others" and a place from which one can be exiled—thus the body is dispossessed from its "master," in Butler and Athanasiou's sense.

The notion of a master underscores the play of power structures as they affect the habitability of a space. Thus, a dispossession of "master" of the home or body, in this case, is a release of ultimate power and control. Being "master" over one's body suggests the capacity to rule over it, to decide who enters and who does not. However, the term "master" can also refer to expertise; one can master a skill, for instance. The very existence of a master of a body also suggests that the body can be controlled by an expert, which is certainly not the case when we think of sickness and our failing bodies; Nancy's *L'Intrus* becomes a perfect example. It is also not the case when we consider bodies which are controlled by "outside" entities—as seen in texts

such as NDiaye's *Les grandes personnes*, for instance. Regrettably, Butler and Athanasiou also connect the idea of the master of a home to the idea of the host who hospitably welcomes the guest. They are exploring possible reconceptions for selfhood but reinforce the duality of the host(master)/guest and with it the implicated power structures. I challenge the duality of master/slave and host/guest dualities by offering examples of more complicated relationships and power dynamics. For instance, in NDiaye's *Les grandes personnes* or *Rien d'humain*, exiled entities inhabiting other bodies/spaces hold a great deal of power over their "host." As these power relationships shift, they also push our understandings of hospitality.

The dialogue in the twenty-first century on exile studies has included concepts of transglobalism and transculturality, [3] which focus on the permeability of borders, the creolization of identities, and a general shift from homogeneity. I continue this important work in exile studies by introducing a new place, and a new threshold, for discussion—the body as site of exile. I create a parallel between exile as it occurs across geopolitical borders and the possibility of a similar, yet more universal, exile experience that transpires across and within the permeable borders of bodies. Doing so, I analyse how the body becomes a space of exile—for example, crossing of borders, liminality and the resulting hybridity, marginality, and identity struggles. When speaking of the body in this project, I rely on the notion of corporeality and conceive of

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[3] Transglobal, simply meaning extending across the world, is a term that is increasingly important as the previous hegemony of national borders is losing its power. It is arguably redundant, "trans" meaning across, and "global" also meaning across the world, but it is intentionally such in order to really emphasize the lack of rigid borders. Movement, communication, relationships, and community—they all occur across borders, and thus decrease the value of nation states as a way to divide or categorize. Transcultural includes elements of hybridity that can be seen in multiple ways in the plays of Mouawad and NDiaye—cultural and linguistic hybridity and hybridity in terms of genre, as well, just to name a few. In his book *Une histoire de l'écriture migrante au Québec*, Clément Moisan further delineates "Le transculturel, caractéristique de la présente période, dépasse la mise en présence ou en conflit des cultures pour dégager des passages entre elles et dessiner leur traversée respective" (Moisan 207). While he's speaking specifically about transculturality as it is present in Quebec, it is also applicable globally.

the body separate from a sense of identity or being that may reside in the body. In that ideas of transnationalism, transglobalism, or transculturality naturally arise within the discussion of crossing geopolitical and cultural borders, I propose the concept of trans-corporeality as it is relevant to the notion of the body as habitable space in or from which one can be exiled[4] in the literary works of the authors considered. Trans-corporeality considers the body in relation to its intersections with the world around it; it is a term coined by Stacy Alaimo but which I have appropriated to consider specifically the interactions between human bodies and Selves. Alaimo considers the concept within the contexts of new materialism, post-humanism, and environmentalism. She problematizes current theories of the body based on how the body relates to the natural world around it, indicating that they do not account for active interactions and transformations: "Ironically, despite the tremendous outpouring of feminist theory and cultural studies of 'the body,' much of this work tends to focus exclusively on how various bodies have been discursively produced, which casts the body as passive, plastic matter" (Alaimo 3). This perception of the body as a static creation, against which Alaimo argues, is also very different from how this dissertation and the literary works it studies approach the body. However, I have transported her term away from her focus on environmental interactions to an emphasis of trans-corporeality as a description of the dynamic interlations between human bodies, parts of bodies, and bodies and senses of Self. As Denis, Mouawad, Nancy, and NDiaye push the boundaries on

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[4] Ideas of trans- are already prominent within literary and cultural studies through the lens of gender and sexuality. Feminist and Queer theorists such as Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, informed by deconstructionist thought, consider sexuality and gender in terms of trans-, going beyond the limitations of heteronormativity and binary divisions between man/woman, male/female, and masculine/feminine.. While important work, this is outside of the scope of this project.

how their audiences and readers conceive of the body, they propose movement, transformation, and bodily interactions, which become embodiments of the concept of trans-corporeality:

> By emphasizing the movement across bodies, trans-corporeality reveals the interchanges and interconnections between various bodily natures. But by underscoring that trans indicates movement across different sites, trans-corporeality also opens up a mobile space that acknowledges the often unpredictable and unwanted actions of human bodies, nonhuman creatures, ecological systems, chemical agents, and other actors. (Alaimo 2)

Conspicuous in its absence from Alaimo's discussion of trans-corporeality, though, is the movement and interactions between corporeality and the Self, which is precisely what I consider in this dissertation and in my appropriation of the term with respect to the literary works I study. This contribution is especially important in considering corporeal relationships as a microcosm of cultural and societal interactions of hospitality.

I examine how Denis, Mouawad, Nancy, and NDiaye illuminate the experience of displacement through stories that focus on the body as a hybrid and open space that can be a potential home. I study literary characters who inhabit other characters' bodies, live outside of bodies altogether as ghosts, whose bodies are constantly morphing and thus do not provide a stable home, or who do not recognize their own bodies. In these examples, subjectivity and corporeality are represented in relation to the Other; they involve bodies and Selves that are open to the Other. I argue that hospitality also involves this trans-corporeality that reflects radical openness. The prefix *trans-* refers to movement across entities; with regards to trans-corporeality, the emphasis is on movement across and between human bodies. In *Être Singulier pluriel*, Nancy includes in his discussion of "trans" notions of "transport, transaction, transfert, transformation, transcription, transmission…" (102) and thus associates the notion of "exister" to

that of “s’exiler.” (102). These are notions that Denis exploits in her filmic reading of Nancy’s *L’Intrus*, which takes a more dramatic tone. Such movement in the focus on trans- thus highlights corporeal and subjective interchanges, connections, and ultimately the permeability of the body and the Self. While trans-corporeality, in an Alaimo sense, refers to interaction between the human body and non-human natures, my development of trans-corporeality in the context of corporeal exile reveals the interconnected nature between human bodies and between human bodies and their identities. In this way, trans-corporeality reflects hybrid, heterogeneous identities created by the interconnected nature of the permeable body and Self. This notion of what a body is or how it may be staged and transformed blurs what belongs to what Nancy calls the *organique*, the symbolic, and the imaginary, especially as I deal with fictional works and representations of bodies that also reflect autobiographical and factual events. Nancy uses the term *l’organique*, which is not perfectly translatable in English but which refers to a natural state. For him, the transplant caused a separation between his Self and his body such that he could no longer distinguish between the inside and outside and also between his Self and the Other. Considering the body and the Self as beyond the *organique* impacts concepts of community and hospitality as it alters the perception of relations between bodies and Selves and also the dynamics of associated risks. Individuals do not own their bodies; the Self can be at the same time inside and outside. The body can also simultaneously be home to the Self and the Other. Thus, there is less to lose by offering hospitality. However, on the other hand, constant openness to others increases the risks of feeling alienated or exiled from one’s own sense of the Self because of the presence of foreignness.

Nancy presents his body and his self in its duality; he exists at the intersection of the inside and outside of his body, similarly to the *étranger* as a *cicatrice* according to Kristeva. I am

considering literary representations of what Nancy describes as his life and Self after his heart transplant. In the works I am studying, the body is represented as a "corporeality" and as a space that can be intruded by someone else, as is the case in Nancy's heart transplant. Yet, the ways in which the characters, narrators, and authors stage and represent their Self, their body, and even their organs (Nancy), leads me to also study how they form relationships and even come to welcome others into their corporeal spaces. In texts like *Les grandes personnes* or *Rien d'humain* by NDiaye, *Seuls* by Mouawad, or Nancy's *L'Intrus*, bodies are also represented and conceived as a space of violence and pain, where identities are fragmented and exiled, disassociated from themselves or even reality, and their inhabitants may not be invited—like Nancy's new heart that his body rejected. However, we will see that these authors also offer the possibility of power and liberty, as well as a reconciliatory process of healing. There is also the potential for community formation in moments of shared suffering and healing, as seen in *Soeurs* by Mouawad, for instance, or NDiaye's *Les grandes personnes*. What is more, even the fragmentation and co-habitation, whether invited or not, are presented as potential for a desirable outcome—community—because exile is not presented as the problem, but instead loneliness and isolation are the threats to a fulfilling life. Thus, sharing the body through co-habitation and considering it as a potential space of encounter, as do these authors, presents a means for creating community by bridging the gaps between people.

The very nature of exile considered in terms of displacement lies in borders—drawing them, crossing them, upholding them, etc.—and this creates a language of exclusivity. The language of a unidirectional trajectory as seen in spatial exile, that of coming/going, fleeing/returning, outside/inside, inherently creates division and distance— "us/them," "in/out," "margins"—whereas drawing lines across differences and demonstrating shared experience are

the goals of the works of NDiaye and Mouawad. Sidney Mintz reflects on the preponderance of changes that are affecting previous boundaries of nation and communities based on culture: rapid and constant movement of capital, commodities, information, and people forces a reconsideration of meanings attached to terms such as state or nation. Instead, "[w]ords such as diaspora, transnational, ecumene (oikoumene) and hybridity are increasingly employed in a lexicon created in large measure to deal with what is thought to be a qualitatively new epoch in world cultural history" (Mintz 300). Diaspora, transnational, ecumene, hybridity—they are all terms to express the movement and fluidity that are characteristic to today's society. Yet, it is this geopolitical volatility that leads me to question and explore in these texts: can one ever be "home"; can we belong to a "place" or a "people"; and, if not, in what ways must our concept of "community" change?

Changing the space in or from which exile occurs provides an interesting, relevant, and important addition to my notion of exile—especially within the transglobal context of the twenty-first century. In order to change the localization of discussion to the body as an exilic space, one must first conceptualize both the body and the Self as permeable thresholds that can be inhabited. Here I will explore the question of what home is and suggest that the body is a home to the individual, to a Self and sense of self-hood. In considering the body as a habitable space and therefore a home, there is thus the potential for harmonious dwelling, as well as conflict. If, as Fanon suggests and as I will explore in the texts of Denis, Mouawad, Nancy, and NDiaye, there exists an idea of a person who is not unified with his body, we can understand this as a displacement of being and body—or perhaps a person exiled from his body. It is from this that I propose that the body can also be a space in which identities are fragmented, from which a Self can be exiled, and the body can even become a habitable space to others as is the case in

Fanon's quasi schizophrenic description of how the white gaze robs him from his body, his ethnicity, his history.

Gaps and displacements exist between the body and identity, one body and another body, different aspects of identity, and these separations parallel the idea of displacement of a person from their home in the more traditional sense of geographic exile. Additionally, the paradigm in which we discuss and conceive of geopolitical exile is thorny because it actually reinforces exclusionary geopolitical boundaries,[5] thus is ultimately further marginalizing the exilic population. The body as a habitable space for others, as represented in the texts of Denis, Mouawad, Nancy, and NDiaye, is particularly important to deconstructing the divisions of the Self and the Other that are ever-present in the discussion of geopolitical, geographic exile[6]. Focusing on the extreme permeability of the body helps to breakdown expectations of self-containment, thus problematizing distinctions between the Self and the Other, which are heavily present in post-colonial, exilic narratives[7]. This divisive language is, of course, a backbone in discriminatory practices, but these notions can be deconstructed and complicated by placing the

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[5] The language used to discuss geographic and geopolitical exile is inherently divisive; terminology such as inside/outside, marginality, "entre-deux" perpetuates isolating tendencies toward an understanding of "us" vs. "them." Additionally, when focusing on exile as an experience only understood and lived by immigrants, refugees, emigrants, etc., it further isolates them from a larger community. On the other hand, the focus on the universal experience of exile in relation to the body allows for shared experience, thus building community and creating links over the geographical and geopolitical divides.

[6] The term geographical exile is referring to the displacement from one geographical location to another. This can be due to political reasons such as war, persecution, corruption, or economic distress, but can also be due to natural disasters, famine, or other personal factors. Thus, when discussing exile as displacement from one location to another, I hesitate to simply use the term "geopolitical," which refers to the ways in which geography affects politics.

[7] Nancy treats the challenge of these exclusive distinctions as they occur in community and does so also by focusing on the importance of "être avec" in order for the self to even survive. Yet, he leaves the argument at a social level, focusing on the interrelation of people rather than perhaps undoing any distinction.

Other physically inside the body of the Self or by erasing some of the divisions between the Self and the Other by including spectral Selves. If our bodies, often considered the epitome of private space, are inhabited by another person—as is the case in *Les Grandes personnes* by NDiaye, for instance—it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between the Self and Other. They have overlapped. As a "home," the body is a space in which identities can be fragmented, from which a Self can be exiled, and the body even become a habitable space to others. Also, if the Self no longer has a body in which to dwell, no longer has a corporeal "home," then how is the Self distinguished from the Other? Mouawad and NDiaye's fictional characters and bodies push their audience's understanding of corporeal limits, and in so doing also bring into question if the Self actually exists as a contained being outside of the Other.

By way of their respective literary, philosophic, and cinematic works, as well as through direct dialogue, Jean-Luc Nancy and Claire Denis have explored the philosophic bearings of organ transplants on notions of foreignness (both *étrangeté* and *étrangèreté*) and intrusion. Nancy employs these two different terms, *étrangeté* and *étrangèreté*, as part of foreigness and both in relation to his experience of an *extériorisation du soi*. *Etrangeté* refers to strangeness and *étrangèreté* to the strangerness but both in regards to feelings of foreignness because he has a stranger, un *étranger*, inside of him. In this work, they have complicated and deconstructed the boundaries of both master/host and self/other binaries. Their conversations raise important questions about the body's simultaneous and paradoxical need for and rejection of others, which is important when considering potential risks for foreignness in communities, whether it be foreigness in terms of people from foreign countries entering into communities or more generally foreignness in terms of difference or strangeness (*étrangeté*) associated with a more general Other. However, until this project, the framework they offer has not found a place within the

broader discussion of exile studies; instead, exile studies has been overshadowed by immigration narratives and Denis and Nancy's work has been retained largely within the borders of philosophy and film.

My dissertation lies at the intersection of exile and hospitality studies which strive to make sense of and influence the politics of receiving immigrants but instead often reinforce the dichotomy of insider/outsider and host/guest. "Exile's Shifting Narrative" examines how these authors illuminate the experience of displacement through stories that focus on the body as the fundamental "home" space and, as a result, deconstruct the binary notion of a *Self* separated from an *Other*. Fiction extends Nancy and Denis's meditations on the porosity and hybridity of the corporeal "home" through tales of literary characters who, for example, inhabit other characters' bodies; who live outside of bodies altogether as spectral characters or ghosts; whose bodies are constantly morphing and thus do not provide a stable home; or who do not recognize their own bodies.

In the second chapter, I present Nancy's philosophical argument that bodies are always self-dislocating and then propose a similar type of interrelation between bodies of work by Denis, Nancy, and Derrida's response to Nancy in *Le Toucher – Jean-Luc Nancy*, as well as his concept of *la greffe* (grafting). The metaphorical concept of a transplant, and one that relates to origins, surfaces in Jacques Derrida's notion of writing as a *greffe*: "Ainsi s'écrit la chose. Écrire veut dire greffer" (Derrida 395). In the most literal sense, graft and write do share etymological roots. The Latin word *graphium*, meaning stylus or etching needle, is at the root of the word "graft". Also, the Green etymology demonstrates an even more direct connection – the verb *graphein* means "to write". Yet, more than a connection at the language level, Derrida is referring to an inherent relationship between writing and grafting: writing is a hybrid entity made

up of many parts grafted together. I demonstrate how each text or film builds upon the others, in a poetic performance of the process of transformative “grafting.” I also consider this interdependent process of transformation as part of identity creation in order to illuminate a complex relationship to origins. Origins are not a point of departure nor something to be preserved or forgotten. Rather, origins are the points of intersection where the grafting is visible; they appear as traces of relationships to other people, reflections of experiences, and scars of traumas lived. *L'Intrus/The Intruder's* main character, Louis Trebor (Michel Subor), has a chest scar that serves as an example of such a trace; it is a symbol that cinematographically and emotionally connects him to the different places travelled on his journey for a black-market heart as well as to his son who was killed and whose heart was harvested and sold. By demonstrating the layers of grafting and intersections of people and places that go to create the main character's persona, I contend that human identities are grafted into hybrid existences and that the origins of each transplanted part testify to human interdependence.

In the third chapter, I focus on the representation of the characters in NDiaye's *Rien d'humain, Les grandes personnes,* and *Autopotrait en vert* and demonstrate that the body can willingly, or unwillingly, become inhabited by an Other, which then becomes part of the Self. For example, a character named *le Fils* (the Son) has two other characters— his biological parents—living inside of his chest. This dramatic play's fantastic elements offer a fluid and transitory view of the body in relation to other bodies and to their sense of the Self that challenges the audience's perception of self-autonomy and instead proposes a new concept of a Self that exists only in relation to Others. I argue that the body fails to be the personal sanctuary that is desired of a “home,” thus suggesting a need to find solace and a unified self-concept in constantly shifting spaces.

Finally, the fourth chapter demonstrates how Mouawad presents his own exile from Lebanon to France then to Canada as a tool to access the possibility of feelings of exile as part of the human condition. His play *Seuls* is a perfect example; the autobiographical character Harwan performs the majority of the play as a spirit outside of his comatose body. Like NDiaye, he demonstrates that feelings of loneliness and isolation are emotions shared by immigrants and by people who are exiled from their own bodies or from one another. In both *Seuls* and *Soeurs*, Mouawad's characters are on journeys to return to their Self. This process includes a violent purging of past suffering and rebuilding of the Self as a hybrid and relational Self. I present this process as a contemporary take on catharsis, a catharsis that has as its aim healing and that also offers the possibility of community formation based on both shared suffering and shared healing.

The authors I explore here all treat the idea of exiled bodies differently. However, the intention of the analysis is not to compare them or highlight these differences but rather to demonstrate how these authors and their texts contribute to a larger discussion that begins a paradigmatic shift in how we conceive of exile. Existing outside of one's body, or having others inhabiting one's body is an exilic experience that parallels geopolitical exile through feelings of isolation, inferiority, or living without a "home," as well as displacement across borders. Like nations, states, and other geopolitical spaces, the body has its own borders. In my dissertation I argue though that the borders are actually permeable, perhaps more like frontiers to be crossed. The body is a threshold, a space for gathering and welcoming, an entry point, and rather than focusing on the boundaries that draw distinctions between those who are in and out, the body is open to being formed by hybridity.

In this dissertation, I also bring together diverse authors and texts in order to consider the body from a multiplicity of persectives. Denis, Mouawad, Nancy, and NDiaye have different

genders and races, have different ethnic backgrounds and personal experiences that affect the ways in which they perceive their own bodies and how bodies and identities interrelate with one another and others. Yet, for all these authors their writing blurs the boundaries between fiction and autobiography. They also all mix, transcend, and transform literary genres to achieve these goals. Their works represent and stage characters who experience identity conflicts that have visceral, corporeal manifestations. These identity conflicts are both a result of and a cause of great violence and trauma. My study of their works highlights similarities in the representations of corporeal experiences associated with concepts of Selfhood, and I demonstrate how these similarities from a diverse corpus actually illuminate different aspects of what I term corporeal exile. I also argue that their works offer complimentary views of how Selfhood can be conceived in relation to others. Though in different ways (through language, multimedia, cross-genre, cinematographic technique, philosophical inquiry, etc.), all four authors embrace hybridity in their works, in their characters and in their personal lives, and I argue they portray the possibility of communities that are based on existing with difference.

Wajdi Mouawad is a Lebano-Franco-Canadian playwright, director, and actor. Marie NDiaye grew up in the outskirts of Paris but migrated to Berlin during Sarkozy's presidency. I consider these authors in tandem because they similarly present the body as a highly permeable space and propose extreme interdependence among their characters. Wajdi Mouawad and his family fled their home during the civil war in Lebanon and immigrated first to France but were denied permanent residence, and then settled in Montreal. Mouawad was a young boy when the violence forced his family to leave and take refuge elsewhere, and having spent most of his life in Montreal, he integrated well. Also, his Lebanese origins do not leave him as vulnerable to the racism that other exiles might experience in Montreal or especially in France. Nonetheless, many

of Mouawad's texts tell of the struggles of exile on identity. Though perhaps the even greater challenge and sufferance depicted in his work is the trauma of war and violence that he faced in Lebanon.

Marie NDiaye was born and raised in France by her French mother; her Senegalese father returned to Africa when she was still a baby. She did not suffer a loss of country or the feeling of marginalization as an immigrant; she is French. However, as an adult NDiaye did cross France's border into Germany where she lives with her husband and three children. According to interviews, NDiaye and her family had a desire to move from their little village in the countryside of France and were very displeased with the politics of Nicolas Sarkozy, so they decided to move to Berlin where there was a very good and free French school for their children. There was no hardship—no war, economic misfortune, nor political oppression. NDiaye did not move out of duress or from trauma, nor did she move far or to a particularly different cultural climate. Prior to her move to Berlin, NDiaye did not personally experience geographic displacement, yet the trauma of exile can be experienced trans-generationally. The exilic experience itself can be traumatic, as can be the reason for exile. The writings of NDiaye explore these issues of transmission and the different ways in which trauma is embodied in stories, memories, silence, and other experiences. Also, growing up as a Black girl in predominantly white parts of France is an alienating experience of its own.

In the same way that race becomes an important element in the construction of a marginalized existence, NDiaye's identity as a writer is constructed by the white, French publishing system; she is often categorized as a francophone writer, which is problematic in more than one way. Historically, including when she was first classified as such, the term francophone writer suggested that she came from a French-speaking country that is not France.

Yet, she is French. However, the francophone classification has evolved and now includes all literature written in the French language, yet both French and francophone categories still exist and presumably are determined based on thematic differences. This continues to be problematic in terms of NDiaye's classification as francophone as it pigeon-holes her into a category that is not representative of all her work. Such a classification also has elements of power and racism implicit in it and is often a category that reduces the creative works to a social imperative that is placed on francophone writers, which is why many authors and scholars have publicly argued against the terms francophone and francophonie. The term "littérature monde en francais," a proposed replacement, is also problematic, but it aims to emphasize that these writers belong to a "globalized generation." However, the term francophone is argued to be a patronizing relic of colonization. It is also this perception by the public that leads to feelings of marginalization and gives them a different perspective on questions of identity.

I would be remiss not to address the possibility of sensitive reactions to the focus on shared suffering and the universality of feelings as it is proposed through the study of corporeal exile. It is important to acknowledge that Selves and bodies exist in relation to their memories, events experienced, and their cultural environments. My dissertation does not intend to discredit or argue against the importance of the body's history, but rather the concept of a body as an ecumene brings attention to multiplicities and networks of experiences and cultural influences and underlines the possibility of intersections—intersections of experiences, of people, of fragmented parts of one's own identity, to name a few. Underlining commonality to encourage shared suffering and healing does not suggest the erasure of specificity—events, memories, cultural underpinnings. Just the opposite is true. It allows for people to come together to bear witness to suffering, underscoring the importance of discovering the past, uncovering silenced

truths, and preserving memory, for the purpose of then purging the negative emotions and healing together. Denis's *L'Intrus/The Intruder*, Mouawad's *Soeurs* and *Seuls*, and NDiaye's *Rien D'humain* and *Les grandes personnes* all demonstrate a particular need for uncovering the past, or present, because of the significance of events on the identities of characters. They also discover that the intersections of people in these memories reveal the importance of a shared larger cultural and historical framework in how our bodies and identities take shape. The universality of suffering as is proposed through the study of the exiled body in the works of Denis, Mouawad, NDiaye and Nancy suggests that culture, past events, and memories—traumatic or not—may be shared between Selves and bodies, a type of radical, embodied hospitality, and the healing that needs to occur when reconciling trauma cannot happen in isolation. I demonstrate that in Denis, Mouawad, NDiaye, and Nancy's literatures, the body is a potential space of exile but also of hospitality. If the body can be entered and serve as a place of encounter, it is also a potential space for reconciliation.

Chapter 2: Corporeal Intrusions- Claire Denis and Jean-Luc Nancy's Discussion of Foreignness and Border Crossings

Introduction:

Jean-Luc Nancy and Claire Denis have dialogued with one another on themes of intrusion and foreignness, both directly through interviews and articles in response to each other's works, and also indirectly through their respective oeuvres. This chapter aims to further tease out the ways in which their works portray the body as an open space with permeable borders—open to relationships built from contact between bodies *in* writings/films and between bodies *of* writings/film. This chapter will serve to establish the framework of this project by proposing the body as a conceptual space of border crossing. Nancy's poetic essay, *L'Intrus*, discusses his experience as a corporeal "host" for the "other" and the "exile" of "himself" and parallels a lot of the sentiments expressed by both Wajdi Mouawad and Marie NDiaye that will be discussed later in the project. It also poses important questions regarding intrusion and rejection, immunity and identity, and the crossing of corporeal borders. In *L'Intrus*, which is an autobiographical essay on the experience of his heart transplant, Nancy's body is undergoing a double rejection: simultaneously rejecting part of his own body and the replacement part. Yet, in order to live, he must intentionally become less "himself" by lowering his auto-immunity, whose purpose is to protect himself from foreign bodies. Here, Nancy's biological experience is a transposition of Mouawad and NDiaye's notions of the body and complicates the idea of inside/outside and Self/Other, and they put forward the same notion of interdependence. Nancy

writes his essay in such a way that you can see the fragmentation of the Self[8]—he speaks of his "body" where one might normally use the word "I". He repeatedly expresses a notion of becoming a stranger[9] to oneself, which alludes to this idea of being exiled from oneself. While Mouawad and NDiaye look at exilic bodies and non-corporeal exilic entities, Nancy subdivides the body into multiple exiled or exiling entities, thus further complicating the idea of a body as a home since he proposes a body that is not even habitable to itself. In this way, Nancy can also touch on a sense of uncanniness in the way that strangeness comes from not feeling at home. Freud's discussion on the Uncanny comes from the German *unheimlich,* which means uncanny or eerie in the closest semantic English equivalents, but which etymologically corresponds to unhomely. The word *unheimlich* has also been theorized since Freud and since decolonization occurred; it means "strange" and "uncanny," whereas the word *heimlich* can refer to either the familiar and agreeable or to what is hidden, concealed, kept out of sight, unfamiliar, and strange. "Among its different shades of meaning, the word '*heimlich*' exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, '*unheimlich*'. What is *heimlich* thus comes to be *unheimlich* … everything is *unheimlich* that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light" (Freud 224–25). This idea of strangeness connecting to unhomely – non-welcoming, uncomfortable, not suitable to life, not having a home – will later be a point of further connection between Nancy and NDiaye whose characters experience an unhomely strangeness within the context of their own bodies. Homi Bhabha relates the unhomely beyond the individual. "The unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of

[8] Similar to this idea is RD Laing's concept of "divided self" that he uses in a clinical sense to help people understand madness and the process of going mad. He introduces a notion of the "false self" and the "madman as outsider".

[9] This notion of "strangeness" is something that Nancy really adds to the discussion though it is not that different from the idea of "foreigner", which is central to exilic terminology.

political existence" (*The World and The Home* 144). Claire Denis approaches the topic of foreignness similarly to Bhabha by incorporating geographical borders and illegal border crossings into her film, but she does so alongside of an illegal heart transplant. This rapport between bodies moving and other types of movement is also taken directly from Nancy and his notion of "trans". She explicitly connects different types of border crossings – from country to country, crossing over into the private spaces of someone's home, often without invitation, and the traversing the skin with the transplant of one person's heart into another person's body. Denis's *L'Intrus/The Intruder*, even more than a study of often hostile intrusion, is a portrait of loneliness and isolation. The various crossing of borders only further elucidates the distance between the characters and an inability to connect.

The chapter begins with a brief discussion of Nancy's philosophical argument on bodies and the interrelation of bodies – specifically in regards to his notion of the "*l'espacement*" of bodies and assertion that bodies are always self-dislocating. According to Nancy bodies are open space themselves, as well as always creating space between themselves.

> Les corps ne sont pas du "plein", de l'espace rempli (l'espace est partout rempli): ils sont l'espace ouvert, c'est-à-dire en un sens l'espace proprement spacieux plutôt que spatial, ou ce qu'on peut encore nommer le lieu. […] Le corps-lieu n'est ni plein, ni vide, il n'a ni dehors, ni dedans, pas plus qu'il n'a ni parties, ni totalité, ni fonctions, ni finalité. (*Corpus* 14)

Nancy continues on regarding the body as skin, "pliée, repliée, dépliée, multipliée, invaginée, exogastrulée, orificée" etc. and indicating that it is through these and thousands of other ways that the body makes room for existence: "le transcendantal est dans l'indéfinie modification et modulation spacieuse de la peau" (*Corpus* 14). Yet, Nancy's concept of *l'espacement* extends

further to the dislocation of bodies. Bodies are always about to leave, to move, and he considers a departure to even be simply "cet instant où tel corps n'est plus là, ici même où il était" (*Corpus* 32). It is in this very displacement that Nancy considers distinction of the Self and thus also existence. "Cet espacement, ce départ, c'est son intimité même, c'est l'extrémité de son retranchement (ou si l'on veut, de sa distinction, ou de sa singularité, voire de sa subjectivité). Le corps est *soi* dans le départ, en tant qu'il part – qu'il s'écarte ici même de l'*ici*" (*Corpus* 32). The concept of bodies dislocating themselves offers a direct connection to the idea of the displacement associated with geopolitical exile and creates a clear connection between corporeal and geopolitical exile. Nancy also draws a link between departure, dislocation, and identity that provides a basis for the ontological explorations of the filmic analysis of the chapter (and theatrical study in subsequent chapters). This connection will continue to be pertinent as I examine corporeal and geopolitical exile in Denis's short film *Vers Nancy,* which is an interview between Nancy and one of his students, Ana Samardzija, that takes place while on a train heading East towards France's border. The two discuss important questions of assimilation and the erasure of cultural difference in geopolitical exile but also suggest that intrusion occurs within every foreigner moving towards a more abstract and philosophical conception of exile and foreignness. While overall and certainly at the surface level the dialogue of the interview rests in the geopolitical sphere, I argue that the cinematography introduces a significant connection to corporeal borders through the fragmented, extreme close-up shots of body parts removed from their context and the tactility of the camera's movement. These shots divide up the body into separate parts and emphasize the border as well as the potential for movement. This filmic technique is akin to the Bressonian fragmentation Rancière speaks of in *Les écarts du cinéma.* Whereas in the context of narrative structure in film "Tout fragment visuel est équivalent à un

morceau de langage qui est lui-même un morceau de narration" (59), Denis deconstructs the body into fragmented pieces of the whole, for the purpose of considering interrelation and interdependence as well as underline the potential for transplantation or transposition of these images and likewise bodies and body parts. The symbolic connection and juxtaposition of corporeal and geographic borders in this film provide a different lens for exploring the chapter's questions and also a point of departure for the more symbolic analysis of corporeal encounters in *L'Intrus*, both by Nancy and Denis. My analysis of *L'Intrus* begins with Nancy's essay about the experience of his heart transplant in which he theorizes broader concepts of foreignness in relation to his own body: the intrusion of a foreign heart that is transplanted and subsequently rejected by his failing body. He dissects the emotional, physical and philosophical struggles associated with foreign bodies crossing the borders of his own body, but what is more, he employs the body as metaphor for a larger conversation on foreignness and intrusion that relates to his work on community. Nancy's essay provides the most concrete example of corporeal intrusion – an outside heart enters his body. He is also intentional in using his heart transplant as a means for discussing foreignness (*étrangeté* and *etrangèreté*), immunity, rejection, and intrusion – in other words, he makes an appeal to the notion of crossing geographical borders. From there, I will analyze Denis's filmic adoption of Nancy's essay, also titled *L'Intrus/The Intruder,* which not only depicts a protagonist purchasing a heart on the black market but also directly treats illegal immigration.

Placing the corporeal experience in tandem to the immigration experience relates the conversation more explicitly to exile studies and begins to shape the framework of presenting exile in a more widely applicable way, which I will exploit further in subsequent chapters. Denis and Nancy have purposefully referred to the film as an adoption and not an adaptation of

Nancy's essay. Adaptation Studies is a growing field that focuses on rewritings of shared stories. Theorists such as Linda Hutcheon argue for adaptation as "second without being secondary" (Hutcheon 9) and posit adaptations as their own creations rather than imitations. This view of adaptation is directly connected to the idea of border crossing and transformation: stories escape beyond their original generic form, they shift and transform, and find a new home in a new space as a new creation. If we consider adaptation in this light, why then the need to refer to her work as an adoption? Perhaps, the distinction is made in part because Nancy's *L'Intrus* does not offer any storyline to adapt. Nancy explains, "le livre ne contient aucune histoire que le film aurait pu adapter (sauf à se transformer en documentaire médical, qui n'aurait alors, en vérité, gardé du livre aucune" inspiration ")" (*L'Intrus selon Claire Denis* 1). Instead, she is inspired by the questions of identity, foreignness, and intrusion that he explores through autobiographical reflections on his experience of his heart transplant. Denis creates a different story and inserts her own experiences of intrusion while exploring the same themes. Yet her film is still a rewriting of Nancy's essay on his heart transplant and perhaps a more literal representation of what Nancy meant by "trans" (*Être singulier pluriel* 102) connecting the concepts of movement, border crossing, and existence.

Again, then, we ask why? Why adoption? The word adoption bears many connotations that are relevant to a heart transplant. It draws upon a clear connection to lineage and origins focusing on separation, and more specifically a violent rupture as the adoptee is taken away from its roots. It implies movement from one community to another, yet it implies reception rather than the rejection of an intruder that occupies such an emotional space in the narrative of Nancy. Similarily, Jacques Derrida describes in *La Dissémination* and *Marges de la philosophie* his concept of *"la greffe,"* specifically using the term of skin graft or organ transplant for his

assertion that writing always involves rewriting, quoting, repetition, transformation and violence in relation to the original text. His term automatically conjectures a certain degree of violence for grafts and transplants are bloody and leave scars, whereas adoption can bring to attention the idea of hospitality and reception – a cultured response perhaps to encourage adoption but one that ignores the potential pains of being taken away from one's mother, one's home, perhaps one's place of origin[10]. Nonetheless, Derrida's proposal of writing is similar to Denis's process of creating *L'Intrus/The Intruder*, and their use of corporeal/lineal language (respectively) to describe it, both refer back to the body and interrelations of bodies and beings, which the term adaptation does not. Like her source of inspiration, Denis also preserves the entanglement between theoretic and philosophic ideas on foreignness and the intrusion and corporeal experiences that lead to such feelings. Martine Beugnet expresses this intentional and inextricable relationship in both authors work as an "impossibility to dissociate the abstract concepts from their embodied manifestation: in its cinematographic and in its literary expression, the theoretical preoccupation with foreignness is mapped out on the very body of the narrator/character, as well as in the wording of the written text and in the material surface of the film's images- imprinted, as it were, in the flesh of the text/film" (Beugnet 32). While both authors are bridging the connection between exile and border crossing and the body, their choices of genre as well as different personal experiences bring a different approach and reveal a nuanced understanding of intrusion within bodies, which will continue to be a point of interest as I move into the theater of Mouawad and NDiaye.

Nancy's *Corpus*

[10] In the following chapter, we will consider Marie NDiaye's treatment of international adoption in her play *Les grandes personnes*.

Corpus can be defined in many ways: a collection of texts or writings on a particular subject, the main body or mass of a subject, or perhaps a collection of parts, of organs, limbs, bones, and spirit—defying the myth of singularity of the body. Maintaining the nuances and intricacies of the word and the possible different interpretations is important. “It [the body] is already divided, shared” explains Gary Shapiro as he poses questions about “how to touch, tactfully, the corpus of Jean-Luc Nancy” (Shapiro 52). By corpus, Shapiro means broadly the collection of philosophical writings by Nancy but also offers specific reference to Nancy’s collection of essays that is itself entitled *Corpus* (Seuil 1992). Shapiro argues that Corpus is not just a concept but “the body of work, the body that works […] The corpus, in every sense, of Nancy’s work aims at rethinking community not as an enclosed and finished circle of meanings in which there is always a mediated return to the origin, but as the sharing of words, sense, and voices and, as he now makes explicit, the sharing of corpus or the corporeal” (Shapiro 53). A few ideas are important to tease out here: first, the active relationship between the concepts of corpus as an object made up of parts and also the possibility of it as a subject working towards something—in this case, rethinking community. Second, we must note the importance of sharing the corpus and the corporeal in understanding community – a topic to which Nancy has devoted a considerable amount of his philosophical scholarship.

When discussing bodies, and bodies in relation to other bodies, Nancy first situates them in terms of space: the body as *weight* sinking in space (implying here the law of gravity); the body is touching or touched up – thus requiring a space between the body and the “Other” that is implicitly traversed by the touch; and the body as *open* space, as place. Nancy delineates between space and place with regards to spaciousness and openness:

> Les corps ne sont pas du « plein », de l'espace rempli (l'espace est partout rempli) : ils sont l'espace *ouvert*, c'est-à-dire en un sens l'espace proprement *spacieux* plutôt que spatial, ou ce qu'on peut encore nommer le *lieu*. Les corps sont des lieux d'existence, et il n'y a pas d'existence sans lieu, sans *là*, san un « ici », « voici », pour le *ceci*. Le corps-lieu n'est ni plein, ni vide, il n'a ni dehors, ni dedans, pas plus qu'il n'a ni parties, ni totalité, ni fonctions, ni finalité. (*Corpus* 16).

Conceiving the body as a body-place that is spacious, open, and without definitive outside or inside allows, also, for a different view of corporeal movement. Certainly, bodies move within space; Nancy proposes that bodies are always "sur le départ, dans l'immanence d'un movement, d'un chute, d'un écart, d'un dislocation" (*Corpus* 31). He emphasizes their non-static nature, and introduces the ideas of displacement, transplantation, and transposition as notions of "trans" in order to argue that bodies and Selves are constantly in states of exile– all important in consideration of the comparison between movement and intrusion in the human body and movement within the broader geo-political body. There are nuances between these terms though that are important when considering strangeness (*étrangeté*). Displacement is to move something from its place or position, to force or expel something from its home, and also take the place of something else. Transplantation can also mean to move from one place to another, or in the case of a plant, to remove it and plant it elsewhere. Transplantation also can refer specifically to the surgical meaning to transfer an organ, tissue, etc. from one part of the body to another or from one person or animal to another. Transposition veers a bit further from the first two terms in that there is a switch that occurs- the change of position is relative to something else, to another body, perhaps. Transposition implies interchange and mutuality. It also has a genetics-specific meaning referring to the movement of a gene or set of genes from one DNA site to another. The three

terms, relative to their order above, imply decreasing violence while increasing interrelations in movement. When specifically considering the definitions with the closest connections to the corporeal implications of these terms, we can also see that they move from a macro conception to the micro: first entire bodies and groups of bodies who are forcibly displaced, then parts of bodies transplanted to or from different parts of their own or other's bodies, and finally, genes changing order or sequence. The scale of movement across borders affects the relative strangeness of the crossing; the perception of strangeness and the likelihood of rejection would logically seem to vary based on both the force behind the crossing (the violent expelling of someone from their home with displacement) and also how hospitable the new location is (arguably more hospitable then for mutual interchange in transposition).

In all of these nuanced words describing corporeal movement it is implied that the body is a spacious, open, place that allows for movement within the body or between bodies and destabilizes the conventional inside/outside duality and also brings to question the very nature of bodily displacement. Nancy considers the body itself and its relation to others and the world around it in terms of spacing.

> Le monde des corps est le monde non-impénétrable, le monde qui n'est pas d'abord soumis à la compacité de l'espace (lequel, comme tel, n'est que remplissement, au moins virtuel), mais où *les corps articulent d'abord l'espace*. Lorsque les corps ne sont pas dans l'espace, mais l'espace dans les corps, alors il est espacement, tension du lieu.
>
> *Partes extra partes* : ce qui est impénétrable, ici, ce n'est pas l'épaisseur massive de la *pars*, c'est au contraire l'écartement de l'*extra*. Jamais un corps ne « pénètre » l'ouverture d'un autre corps sauf en le tuant […] Mais un corps « dans » un corps, ego « dans » ego, ça n'« ouvre » rien : c'est à même l'ouvert que le corps est déjà, infiniment, plus

> qu'originellement ; c'est à même ça qu'a lieu cette traversée sans pénétration, cette mêlée sans mélange. (*Corpus* 27-28)

There are important aspects to this passage that must be delineated here as they will continue to resurface and be called into question when considering how bodies interact with one another in the various literary texts, films, and performances analyzed in this project. In referring to *partes extra partes* Nancy posits the body as parts that exist alongside, exterior, or beyond each other. This is a core aspect of Nancy's philosophy, that bodies themselves have space, and that these spaces of bodies create openings, which he calls *espacement*- "spacing"- and which speaks to how bodies create their own presence by dislocating themselves. This spacing could be considered a form of auto-exile – the body distancing and dislocating itself from itself or from other bodies. In *At the Limits of Presentation: Coming-into-presence and Its Aesthetic Relevance in Jean-Luc Nancy's Philosophy* Martta Heikkilä underlines the inherent existence of spacing in the human body, according to Nancy, stating that "This implies that the existence of the body always extends outside of itself as it is exposed to sense: to itself and to the world. All being is being towards something (être-à), which signifies that senses emerge only out of relations between singular beings" (Heikkilä 76). She, like Zsuzsa Baross in *Encounters*, focuses on the potential for opening up to the outside and for the transformation of the body because of its distancing and dislocating. Baross situates this consideration of the body in spatial terms within the concept of a "heterogenous, discontinuous, anomalous but still spatial concept of *topos* (ectopie)" and elaborates about the ways in which the body is constructed in spatial terms open and in relation to the outside:

> A skin folded and refolded, a body open by multiple orifices – mouth, ears, eyes, anus, nostrils – to an outside: vomit, excrement, tears, hair, sweat, nails … ; or again, as

> movement, as fall, as displacement, but still *in* space or again the body as *espacement*, spacing – at once referring to the interval that opens with an 'écart,' in the immanence of displacement, but also, as the gerund form of the verbal, as becoming 'spacious'. (Baross 67)

Baross illustrates Nancy's postulation on the body as spacious and open by using Nancy's own terms: espacement, écart. She extrapolates from Nancy's use of these terms the immanence of displacement as well as the potential for transformation – the process of "becoming spacious" in which transposition and transplantation play a part. She also brings attention to specific openings, orifices, and gives attention to the ways in which the body interacts with the outside in very biological terms, i.e. vomit, excrement, tears, etc. This exposition of permeable membranes of the body draws attentions to the paradoxical ways in which Nancy posits the body and its spaciousness. According to Nancy, the body is permeable but not penetrable, implying that the body is open to another body for contact and coming together but only to point that it is invaded. Penetration would deny distinction, and the body celebrates distinction because this distinction is exactly what allows for contact, for encounter.

The constant self-distancing that creates space also creates an openness to the other. These complex tensions between the borders of the body, and thus also between borders of the Self and the Other, affect how one conceives of our own identity and our interdependence or relationship with others. The distinct body that is also open to the other, entirely permeable is further complicated by Nancy as he focuses on the distinction of the parts of the body—the inexhaustible corpus, he even repurposes the word, of a body's different features and parts. The body becomes disembodied and instead a list of parts. J Hillis Miller suggests that "Nancy disintegrates "the" body, since there is no "the" body, into a potentially endless grotesque list of

body parts. He does this in such a way as to turn "the living body" of myself or the other into a fragmented, dismembered, corpse, or into the "images" thereof" (Miller 256). The fragmentation of one's own body as a dismembered corpse, or a corpus of parts, is evident in how Nancy discusses the body in *Corpus.* "Un corps est une image offerte à d'autres corps, tout un corpus d'images tendues de corps en corps, couleurs, ombres locales, fragments, grains, aréoles, lunules, ongles, poils, tendons, cranes, côtes, pelvis, ventres, méats, écumes, larmes, dents, baves, fentes, blocs, langues, sueurs, liquers, veines, peines et joies, et moi, et toi" (*Corpus* 105). As Miller suggests, the list of parts is long, seemingly unending in this long sentence connected together by commas. Each word represents a dismembered part of the whole of the body and also a broken-down fragment of the sentence, all linked together by the spaces and commas and open to the next word to form the whole. Nancy also chooses to mention more unpleasant parts and body fluids: nails, moles, veins, liquids, sweat, foams. He also includes orifices that can connect the body to its outside—slits or meatuses – and tendons that connect parts of the body together. Each part can also have its own part; the heart is broken down, or perhaps the nail, when referring to lunules.

Nancy also presents the body as beyond the physicality of its parts though, stating that the body is the local colors, shadows, joys, and pains. It is its affect and its relation to others, and it is important to note, that Nancy also suggests that the body is the image that it offers to other bodies. In this way, the body is thus existing in relation to the other bodies- as how other bodies perceive the image offered to them[11]. Though for Nancy, the body as an image is less of a

[11] This idea of existing as an image perceived by others will play an interesting and important role in the analysis of Marie NDiaye's *Autoportrait en vert* where we see that the identities of characters are uncertain and constantly shifting, reflecting the perception she has of them.

discussion of performativity as it is for Judith Butler, for instance, but rather the body is the exposure of the being. It reveals the hidden identity and also presents the person to be in contact with the world around it. Nancy challenges the idea of materiality of the body and even that such a thing as "the" body exists[12], which then introduces a relativity that shapes interrelations: "L'entre-les-corps ne résesrve rien, rien que l'extension qu'*est* la *res* elle-même, la réalité aréale selon laquelle il arrive que les corps sont entre eux exposés. L'entre-les-corps est leur avoir-lieu d'images. Les images ne sont pas des semblants, encore moins des fantômes ou des fantasmes. C'est comment les corps sont offerts entre eux, c'est la mise au monde, la mise au bord, la mise en gloire de la limite et de l'éclat" (*Corpus* 104). Images are not likenesses nor phantoms or phantasms – not stand-ins for something else. Nancy does not offer an explanation for what these images are but rather implies a process – offering oneself to one another, being born into the world. It is a process of mediation and connection and one that is done voluntarily.

Nancy attributes our separateness – spacing and distinction – from one another to our bodies which constantly self-distance, but at the same time he also posits the body as open and offered to one another. The body has a dual function whose balance seems to be delicate and complex. Contributing to the intricate and multifaceted nature of the role of the body to preserve separateness but still be open and offered to one another, Nancy presents these roles as voluntary and natural and presents the crossing of the *spacing* of bodies as violent. The assertion of this crossing as violent links specifically to ideas of displacement, transposition or even

[12] Much feminist work on bodies presume the existence of "the" body – see, for instance, Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1994); Rosi Braidotti, "Toward a New Nomadism: Feminist Deleuzian Tracks; or Metaphysics and Metabolism," in Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy, ed. Constantine V. Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski (New York: Routledge, 1994); and ibid., Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

transplantation –forcibly removing, tearing someone away from one space to place them in another. According to Nancy, “Deux corps ne peuvent occupier simultanément le même lieu. Et donc, pas vous et moi en même temps au lieu où j’écris, au lieu où vous lisez, où je parle, où vous écoutez. Pas de contact sans écart. Le fax va vite : mais la Vitesse est de l’espacement. Nous n’avons, vous et moi, aucune chance de nous toucher, ni de toucher aux entrées des corps” *Corpus* 51). If we accept that contact requires displacement, then it is a forceful by nature, which logically leads to his argument that bodies are impenetrable and that penetration cannot occur without killing (*Corpus* 27, 57). This violence in touching, and in penetration, is central in Zsuzsa Baross’s *Encounters* in which she presents the violence of encounters not as a violence of fusion nor of absorption (or one could read this as assimilation in the context of the geopolitical body) but rather a violence of the collision. She focuses on the force of the encounter, the shock it creates, and the interruption of order. The encounter is violent because its force brings change. She states that the “encounter is not a mutual exchange (of influences, body fluids or breaths, or ideas, or even touch). It is not an inter-action” (9). But rather, “to encounter is to intervene” (10), and I would imagine, it is to intervene by intruding into the space that Nancy calls the gap, *l’écart*, which is the very condition for the encounter. One cannot encounter another if there is a not first a separation between the two, and it is touch that Nancy proposes as the vehicle for such encounters and one that holds great power. Baross offers the example of the power of touch in Denis’s *White Material*: the “touch of black hand on white boy’s skin drives the latter literally mad, out of his world, if not of the world itself” (5), and such is the case in *Chocolat* as well as other of Denis’s movies. We will see this same power of touch in the content of the film for Denis’s *L’Intrus/The Intruder*. Yet, it is also in Denis’s filming that touch occurs, her *montage*

haptique, as seen in her assemblage of shots, the touch of the camera on its objects/bodies, the touch of the image on eye of the viewer.

Denis's cinematography invites the viewer to experience the divisions and intrusions between bodies- and thus more clearly understand the broader applications being made by way of her own use of 'haptic visuality' that differs from Marks's theory[13]. *L'haptique* for Derrida is not just "'la vision rapprochée' mais [le] rapprochement en tous sens et pour tous les sens, au-delà du toucher, c'est une postulation *continuiste,* un continuisme du désir qui accorde tout ce discours au motif général de ce que Deleuze et Guattari, d'après Artaud revendiquent sous le nom de "corps sans organe" (*Le toucher, Jean-Luc Nancy* 143). Denis's montage and editing of close-up shots show corporeal fragmentation and symbolic juxtaposition of these images to connect geopolitical border crossing to the bodies the camera shows. The ways in which the camera can also "touch" the viewer, here touch meaning to directly affect rather than a more physical, haptic touch, refers back to embodied affect in cinematic spectatorship[14], which I will continue to explore in the coming sections.

Vers Nancy

Leading up to their intersectional work on the idea of intrusion in the early 2000s, Claire Denis and Jean-Luc Nancy both had successful, prolific careers in which they both treated questions of alterity, of the body, and how the two intersect. Nancy participates in a complex, interwoven philosophical conversation with the works of Martin Heidegger and Emmanuel Levinas, among others, on the study of being and otherness. He also re-envisions concepts of

[13] A theory developed by Laura Marks as discussed in relation to Denis by scholars such as Laura McMahon, Jules O'Dwyer, and Kath Dooley. I will return to this theory later in the chapter.
[14] See Vivian Sobchack, Anne Rutherford, or Martine Beugnet, for instance.

community and relationship[15]. As a white, French girl who grew up in various countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Denis creates films that address her own questions on being a stranger at home and the ways community is formed based on race, sexuality, and coloniality. Her films and inquiries about identity often relate to the color of skin and the palpable tension she felt in colonial Africa between blacks and whites. Skin and the body in general become prominent characters in her films as she explores that which separates us and how we might relate to one another. Both Denis and Nancy participate in a similar conversation addressing foreignness (both *étrangeté* and *étrangèreté*) and community early in their individual careers. It is unsurprising then that eventually they intentionally create a dialogue together around similar themes. Jean-Luc Nancy wrote an essay in 2001 about Claire Denis's film *Beau Travail* (1999) while at the same time Claire Denis was reading Nancy's essay *L'Intrus.* She also read *Le toucher, Jean-Luc Nancy* that Derrida wrote in 2000 about Nancy's work. She was filming *Trouble Every Day* (2001) at this time but could not get *L'Intrus* out of her head, so she contacted him seeking permission to do an adaptation of *L'Intrus.* Since this initial contact, the two have continued to engage in dialogue: Nancy has written several essays on her films; together they made the film *Vers Nancy* in 2002 before Denis pursued her adoption of *L'Intrus/The Intruder* in 2004; and they published a book together in 2005. As Streiter notes, "Such a steady dialogue is an exception even in France where film and philosophy in general rhyme more easily than in other countries" (50) and the dialogue influences significantly each other's work. What allows for this dialogue is the notion of trans, at least in the way Nancy considers it. In his 2005 essay, *L'Intrus selon Claire Denis,* written in response to Denis's film (*L'Intrus/The Intruder*), Nancy describes this relationship much like that of a feedback loop of mutual inspiration: "Il aurait été légitime

[15] See, for instance, *La communauté désoeuvrée*. Paris : Christian Bourgois, 1983. ; *Corpus*. Paris: Métailié, 1992. ; *Être singulier pluriel*. Paris: Galilée, 1996.

d'attendre que l'auteur du livre *l'Intrus* vienne témoigner de l'effet produit sur lui par le film qui déclare avoir reçu de ce livre 'une inspiration.' Ce n'est pourtant pas ce que je ferai. Ou plutôt, je ne le ferai qu'en essayant de démêler un peu ce que le film, à son tour, m'inspire" (1).

In a lecture that Claire Denis and Jean-Luc Nancy offer together at the European Graduate School in July of 2009, Nancy humorously explains that when Denis offered him the script to read before production of the film, he saw absolutely no connection between it and his essay. He continues, indicating that even after seeing the film, he still saw no relationship between the two. Though he was happy to take any credit for inspiring a fantastic film by Denis, and even suggested jokingly to be included as an "actor", he offered her the option to remove his name and reference to his essay, but she insisted she kept it because his work had inspired her. It was only in beginning to understand her idea of inspiration that he began to see the intricate relationship between the two works. As he continues to discuss this idea of inspiration, he comments "Je ferai le pari d'avoir ainsi rencontré, au moins par un biais ou par un angle, la ressource invisible de l''inspiration' de ce film et de pouvoir comprendre comment, en dépit de l'irrécusable, irréductible et bienvenue hétérogénéité qui sépare le film du livre, le premier fait retour vers le second et l'entraîne, dans ce reflux, au-delà de lui-même" (1). The one serves to bring the other beyond itself; here, he is already implying an interrelation that leads to transformation. This unusual but monumental relationship could perhaps be attributed to their likeness, perhaps experiences and/or interests in common. Yet, it is important to note that it is also representative of a much larger interest in themes of foreignness (*étrangèreté*) and strangeness (*étrangeté*) at the time that goes beyond interests of Denis and Nancy. Nancy's *L'Intrus* was commissioned by Abdelwahab Meddeb, who wanted Nancy to participate in the issue 9 & 10, *La venue de l'étranger: Errance, Séjour, Hospitalité, Hostilité* from Fall 1999 of

his journal *Dédale*. Denis was approached to participate in a collection of short films for a project entitled *Ten Minutes Older: The Cello*, a follow-up to *Ten Minutes Older: The Trumpet*, which was also a series of vignettes that explored ideas of time. This two-part project was conceived by the producer Nicolas McClintock and was released internationaly in 2002. Each film is ten minutes long and treats the universality of human experience. According to Nancy, the disruptions or dislocations of community is one of the greatest universal challenges of human experience: “The gravest and most painful testimony of the modern world, the one that possibly involves all other testimonies to which this epoch must answer (...) is the testimony of the dissolution, the dislocation, or the conflagration of community” (*Inoperative Community* 1).

It is not just Nancy, though, that posits this disbanding of previously understood communities as a pivotal challenge. If we widen the lens, as does Anja Streiter in her article *The Community according to Jean-Luc Nancy and Claire Denis,* it is clear that Denis and Nancy are part of a generation who must make sense of a post-colonial, and post-communist world. Streiter brings forward the overlapping questions that Denis, Nancy, and their contemporaries address.

> There was no longer any refuge to be taken either in ‘La Grande Nation’ or in international communism. The post-poststructuralist philosophers, heirs of Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, Althusser and Lacan, as well as the post-Nouvelle Vague filmmakers, heirs of Godard, Truffaut, Rohmer and Rivette, found themselves in a world that had lost its horizon. Their work, be it film or philosophy, is marked by the question of community. What are ‘we’? How do we relate to each other and what is it that separates us? How can we manage to be together? What do we share and how? What is our common ground and what our isolation? What does it mean to touch one another? (Streiter 50)

These questions, attributed here to Denis and Nancy and other philosophers and filmmakers of their generation, about how we relate to one another and what separates us, continue to reign in the next generation of writers especially within the framework of exile studies. Born in the early 1940s, Denis and Nancy belong to a generation marked by war, colonization and de-colonization, and as Streiter highlights, community was no longer defined by "La Grande Nation" nor by the hope for international communism. Yet, the nature of Denis and Nancy's dialogue and relationship goes far beyond the generational similarities that impacted each of their stories. The connection is more intimate and their works share a unique bond in the way they consider the body and touch. Especially in *L'Intrus,* Denis and Nancy turn inward to the body and the connection between one's body and one's identity and the connection between one's body and other bodies in order to approach their questions of how people manage to be together, how they connect or don't, and in what do they find common ground. They both explore these notions of body and touch in relation to rupture, displacement, fragmentation, and ultimately violence. These same explorations are at the heart of the next generation's experience as well—a post-colonial generation marked with movement and hybridity—and this is especially the case in exile narratives and now with globalization and robotization.

Yet, exile studies have overlooked Denis and Nancy's corporeal approach to considering intrusion and foreignness, and instead, focuse on geopolitical borders, which reinforce divisions of outside/inside and ideas of marginality and Otherness. This is precisely why my dissertation focuses on the corporeal analysis of intrusion and exile to the work of contemporary authors Wajdi Mouawad and Marie NDiaye who, like Denis and Nancy, also have life experiences or aspects of their identity that could categorize them as intruders but who exist in a liminal space neither on the inside nor the outside. It is from this tension that Mouawad and NDiaye can offer

insight into questions on intrusion and community, and also arguably why transgressions of corporeal borders (bodies moving in and out of other bodies, identities existing detached from bodies or multiple identities in one body, etc.) play such a prominent role in their oeuvres. Their literary bodies of works offer a space in which one can consider the physical human body as its own permeable place from and into which one can be exiled. Their experiences being both on the inside and the outside, also the case of Denis and Nancy, allow them, and their literature, to be guides to demonstrate how the exile experience of their generation can be seen as more widely-applicable when considered through a corporeal lens.

Denis and Nancy place *Vers Nancy* (2002) in an "entre-deux" space: on a train ride to the border of France. The choice of setting is of course symbolic; in addition to the *huis clos* aspect of a train journey, there is also obvious significance of movement towards a border[16] as well as the figurative sense of being on a philosophical journey as well as the literal one. During the trip, two of the passengers discuss immigration and acceptance. By way of the interview form, they approach the larger questions of intrusion and community from this more traditional lens of geopolitical displacement and foreignness, as opposed to corporeally in Denis's or Nancy's *L'Intrus.* Yet, they still situate the conversation within the larger question of the universality of the human experience, which was the theme of the project *Ten Minutes Older: The Cello*. The connection between immigration and the broader human experience is achieved in two ways: the first is thematically through the philosophic conversations between Nancy and Ana Samardzija

[16] The train setting is also reminiscent of Maissa Bey's *Entendez-vous dans les montagnes* in which the protagonist encounters a former *pied-noir's* granddaughter and an Algerian Soldier. The conversation that transpires in the train car progresses towards the recognition of a need to heal the wounds of the past and work towards an anamnesis. The characters reveal their previous repression of the traumas lived. Their personal stories of pushing aside memories of the war also symbolize the collective amnesia. While the conversation causes discomfort, they acknowledge the need for narration, for sharing of stories and memories, in order to heal. The train serves as a space of encounter and a symbolic journey, a function that I will attribute to the theater in the fourth chapter of this dissertation.

who is a French immigrant woman and philosophy scholar originally from Belgrade. The conversation moves from the concrete discussion of her desire to be imperceptible, not perceived as a foreigner, to the more abstract, yet broadly applicable, discussion of the limits of identity- its incapacity for intrusion. The conversation, which symbolically occurs on a train heading towards the border of France and Switzerland, takes the viewer on a journey from the practical conversation on immigration to the more theoretical applications on identity and intrusion and reveals the connections between the specificity of exile and a larger human experience.

Vers Nancy opens with the camera looking down directly onto a body of water with its gentle ripples and light glistening over the shadows while extradiegetic cello music fills the viewers' ears suggesting a peaceful journey. The screen turns black, showing Denis's name and the film's title as the noise of a train approaches from the distance. The black of the title screen cuts to a blur of gray light and shadows suggesting fast movement and further emphasizes the lack of clarity of the scene: it is imperceptible visually. However, it can be deduced through the diegetic sound of the train juxtaposed with the image of framed, blurred, movement. This lack of clarity in visual perception but that is revealed in other ways is symbolically significant as an opening to the film since the conversation between Nancy and Samardzija begins with the discussion of Samardzija's desire to remain imperceptible. It is also of interest that the first person shown is Nancy with a close-up of his face as he discusses what it means to be imperceptible. He explains to Samardzija that imperceptible means that you cannot be seen, but the French immigrant who expressed having desired to remain unseen when entering France is not yet visible on screen. Again, there is an interesting, symbolic tension in the way that Samardzija is shown/viewed: the camera shows more of her face than it does that of Nancy but is positioned farther from her. Is it able to intrude more by showing more of her face, or her

emotion, but still remain more distant? Is she more clearly noticeable even though she is held at a distance? Samardzija responds to Nancy indicating that yes, she did want to be imperceptible, unseen, because she did not want to be perceived as foreigner. She did not want to disrupt order. This is the first time that the viewer is aware that she is a foreigner. There is nothing about her physical appearance that would cause her to stand out or be automatically perceived as an 'outsider'- as someone 'other' than French. Yet, one can suppose that other factors might give her away or reveal her identity, and she feared the response. The viewer, by way of the camera, is positioned directly next to Nancy, at a slight distance from Samardzija, yet as I will later discuss, not as far away from the Intruder of the film- a black man. One can see that the camera positioning reveals the gaps between groups of people: the Eastern European woman not as distant as the black man – though it is never clear as to whether he is French or not. Visual perceptions are again accorded a high importance, which will play an important factor in the discussion of Marie NDiaye who is French but is perceived as a bit of an intruder because she is black.

It is Samardzija who initiates the transition in the conversation to Nancy's idea of intrusion, and in so doing, creates a connection between her experience as an immigrant and Nancy's more theoretical discussion. As she asks how he decided to approach Intrusion, the camera is again pivoted, this time showing a distant corridor that is full of windows and doors. It is narrow with lots of vertical lines that break up the frame and create a greater sense of fragmentation and division. The corridor also introduces a liminal space; it is an inbetween space and a potential point of entry and exit, as well as intrusion, and this is the image given to the viewer just as Samardjiza finishes discussing her fear of rejection and of being deported and asks Nancy about his idea of intrusion being within every foreigner. The camera moves from this

liminal space and shifts back to their faces, one at a time, with medium close-ups such that we see each face and neck, and the blur of landscape behind them through the window. The shift in visual focus from in-between points of passage to the faces of the individuals reflects Nancy desire to shift the conversation. He responds to her question by indicating that he wanted to move away from question of how we welcome the foreigner. He explains, "ma première réaction était vraiment de me dégager de la convention, disons, de l'accueil de l'étranger. On est d'accord sur la nécessité d'accueillir l'étranger, disons, c'est ça qu'on veut mais il y a une manière d'insister de normaliser de faire une norme de l'accueil de l'étranger de l'accueil de différences de respect de l'autre et cetera qui aboutit à faire comme s'il n'y avait aucune étrangeté" (qtd. in Vers Denis, 1' 22"). He argues that one must keep what is foreign about the foreigner, not erase it in the welcome. The camera pivots back and forth between the two, also with a medium close up that shows the hand's movement, the facial expressions, and the blue of the transient background. Yet the two passengers who are sitting across from one another and actively engaged in a conversation are almost never shown in the same frame throughout the whole film. The camera adds distance between the two people who are otherwise close to each other in proximity, sitting across from one another on the train, and as two people who know one another since Samardzija is Nancy's student. Then, once again, the camera creates distance between people as it moves from Nancy and Samardzija and looks into blackness – a mysterious, unidentified blackness. The viewer cannot see the people s/he hears speaking, but instead sees a bit of light ahead in the darkness shown by the camera. To add to the uncertainty, there is a sense of movement from the camera that contributes to the erroneous expectation that one is perhaps staring into a tunnel. This technique serves to destabilize the expectations of the viewer and create a sense of discomfort in the unknown of the intruder who is about to be introduced. Laura

Marks explains that “Haptic images can give the impression of seeing for the first time, gradually discovering what is in the image rather than coming to the image already knowing what it is. Several such works represent the point of view of a disoriented traveler unsure how to read the world in which he finds himself” (Marks 139-140). Denis’s extreme use of close-ups, here of the character’s face, does disorient the traveler and so much so that it is unclear what the image is.

The disorientation adds to the uncertainty, discomfort, and general sense of malaise felt by the viewer. These feelings then become associated with the black man who is seen as an intruder when the camera zooms out to another extreme close up- though less extreme- of a black man’s cheek, nose and eye. It is worth exploring the spurring of uneasiness in relation to Cataldi’s work on emotion and embodied affect in cinema. Cataldi sees emotion as tied to movement and to what she calls a “radical displacement of oneself”. Emotion is the crossing of borders from oneself to the world. She insists, “The deeper the emotional experience, the more blurred and de-bordered the world-body border becomes, the more we experience ourselves as belonging to or caught up in the Flesh of the world” (Cataldi 115). Though the emotion felt with the introduction to the man lurking in the corridor in *Vers Nancy* is minimal, it does force the viewer to question his/her assumptions about reality when s/he discovers that the initial perception of the image—blackness with a small spot of light—was as s/he had imagined it to be.

The fragmentation of the image caused not only by the cadrage of the close-up but also by refracted light also displaces the object of it gaze. As Gilles Deleuze discusses in *Cinema 1*, there is a deterritorialization of the face as object of the close-up : “Le gros plan garde le même pouvoir, d'arracher l'image aux coordonnées spatio-temporelles pour faire surgir l'affect pur en tant qu'exprimé” (Deleuze 137). In addition, Deleuze also argues that close up causes a loss of

individuation. The face is pushed beyond a recognizable form. This technique is part of a larger cinematic style in which Denis uses the camera to create fragmentation and disembodiment in her characters and does so in a way that is symbolic of their broader existence as "others". Unlike the white faces of Nancy or Samardzija, the camera touches the black man's face and breaks it into fragmented pieces. The camera focuses in on the texture and shadows of his dark skin. It reveals the raised mole on his nose, open pores and uneven surface at the corner of his nose and eye. It shifts down slightly exposing the coarseness of the hair above his lip, then on his chin. The camera has intruded into his personal space, zooming in so close that it is as if the lens is touching his cheek. This touch is intrusive and brings attention to the fragmentation of his own body as well as the distance between him and the others on the bus. He is the intruder – into their space, their conversation – but is also the only one that the camera intrudes upon so closely. There is a paradoxical parallel in the violence of the camera intruding upon the intruder who forces his entry into the space occupied by Nancy and Samardzija.

This intrusive use of touch in Denis's film is remarkably different from Laura Marks' theory of haptic visuality. McMahon in *Withdrawal of Touch* sums of such difference in terms of intended effects of the camera's touch:

> The model of haptic visuality described by Marks relies on […] an understanding of touch as a relation of mutual intentionality, presence and continuity, a model drawn from Merleau-Ponty. By contrast, Nancy's deconstructive model of touch seeks to avoid this phenomenological turn. Inherent to Nancy's touch is a mode of distancing or separation, a paradoxical relation to which his extensive writings on the subject variously refer as spacing, fragmentation, interruption, discontinuity and withdrawal. (31)

The distance created by the camera from the intruding black man, which is reminiscent of Nancy's Touch, is suggested in the interchanges between extreme close-ups that intrude upon his body and longer shots that emphasize separation. Denis's use of light to create shadows and reduce the visibility of the man and his separation from the background. The man is sometime hidden by how close the camera is to his body – he is unrecognizable. As the scene continues, Denis creates a montage of closely edited, short, extreme close-up shots places parts of bodies, one after the other, in relation to one another. None of them seem to exist naturally in the space they are in because parts of bodies are displaced within the frame of the shot but from the rest of the body by the zoom of the camera. The result is two-fold: firstly, the extreme close-ups ensure symbolic focus on differences, even minute, rather than erasure of them. Secondly, as opposed to the distance it created earlier when maintaining Nancy and Samardzija in different frames, here the camera erases the space between the three characters, placing them next to each other, one frame touching the next. The gap between them is bridged by the camera even while it accentuates differences, suggesting then that it is not difference that causes distance. During this cinematographic exchange, Nancy explains though that intrusion is caused by homogenization and profound immunization and links it to the Schengen zone, as well as the United States and other nations that have a strong identity. He presents the impossibility of entering into a homogenous zone and retaining one's own heterogenous identity. He calls this the limit of identity. Throughout the ten minutes, light from the window mediates our view of each of the three of them – they lurk in the shadows or are over exposed, which demonstrates the extent to which our perceptions our influenced and mediated, but Nancy takes this idea even further indicating that the most determinant factors or events in his life were not foreseen. His discussion ends with the idea that we cannot plan to welcome the Stranger without assimilating him and

erasing difference. Thus, the stranger would have to enter by surprise, would have to intrude without welcome. Because of being unexpected, and forcing change, this experience can be disturbing and perhaps even undesirable. Yet, he presents it as ultimately positive: “j’ai jamais rien prévu, c’est vrai, tout vient d’ailleurs” he says, assuring he means even his job, something positive. At this moment, juxtaposed with the idea that the unknown is positive, the intruder who had until now remained distant in the liminal space of the corridor finally enters. Though, the intrusion is not at first clear: the camera cuts to the door, framed on the mid-section. The man is considered the intruder because he entered into the space of their car, sat next to them thus imposing himself in their space, and then asks a question further intruding into their conversation. His question is mundane: he asks when they will arrive but still Nancy asks for him to repeat himself. There is a gap in communication. The black man asks again, and Nancy says about 10 minutes – the actual length of the film. While the black man responds saying that it was short and agreeable, Nancy disagrees suggesting it was a bit long, *quand même*. The camera is on Nancy’s face, looking straight on for the first time, as if from the point of view of the intruder. The enigmatic ending poses the question of what exactly was long – certainly not the train ride, unless length is more determined by distance here – distance separating people, distance travelled perhaps – and not the ten minutes that had lapsed.

It is clear that the intrusion of the black man into the physical space of the train car and space of the conversation has changed Nancy, if only in the fact that he is then more exposed with the camera showing his face straight on for the first time. Yet with the end of the train ride, which is also the end of the film, the encounter seems to come to an end as well. This raises the question of temporality and intrusion and how continued presence of the stranger perhaps affects identity differently than the initial intrusion. Yet, one would have to presume that once the

intrusion has occurred, the disruption of order of the encounter necessarily left each of them different than before.

Adoption and Filiation

Claire Denis offers an innovative voice in narrative film-making and is critically acclaimed for films that project compassion and respect for a wide variety of people, people who tend to be marginalized or even ostracized in society. In addition to her inclusive narrative lens, Denis is also known for her interesting and unique cinematographic style that relies very little on dialogue for story-telling and instead on her camera shots, editing, and extra-diegetic sounds. She creates a rhythm to her films that can often be choppy and emphasizes the discontinuity in her narrative. Her films weave dream-like sequences of the past, prophetic visions of the future, with violent realities such that time takes on an intangible but still haunting presence, almost as if it is a character in her films. Intertextual references are also interwoven into the fabric of her cinema with references to literature such as Chester Himes or Melville, as well as other films like Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Petit Soldat*, for instance. *L'Intrus/The Intruder's* main character Louis Trebor, the man who gets the heart transplant, was played by Michel Subor who also starred in *Le Petit* Soldat. Such intertextuality becomes even more explicit with her 2004 feature film *L'Intrus/The Intruder*. Denis is clear about the inspiration of her feature film *L'Intrus/The Intruder*, indicating that it is based off of a short essay by Jean-Luc Nancy with the same name. Yet the film is, at best, loosely based on the 40-page memoir of Nancy's heart-transplant and upon first viewing it, Nancy himself suggests that Denis does not need to give credit to him for inspiration given how little the two have in common. Denis is intentional about the intertextual dialogue and insists on the implied connections between Nancy's autobiographical text and her puzzling film on internal and external journeys into the heart of strangeness. Nancy professes to be happy to be connected

to Denis's film and continues the conversation with an official response to her film in which he explains that Denis's *L'Intrus/The Intruder* is not an 'adaptation' of his essay but an 'adoption'. He raises the question of filiation, of relationship, and continues the lineage of honest reflection on foreignness, intrusion, and ultimately on human interconnectedness – or isolation. In so doing, he also argues that there is indeed a link between geopolitical and corporeal exile that is most evident in the similarities between how both are experienced.

Adoption. Not adaptation. Nancy uses the term adoption intentionally when describing the relationship between Denis's film and his essay. This choice serves to suggest that the film introduced much more than re-telling the story with just a change in register, or even including other revisions. Nancy's essay has no plot, no story line—there are only philosophical musings on questions of identity and foreignness associated with transplants, a form that is well-represented in Denis's filmic use of fragmentation. Denis espouses these themes and creates a story around a man, Louis, whose illegal heart transplant drives the plot of the film, but whose journey is much more focused on the interruptions in his own filial ties. Zsuzsa Baross's discussion of the difference of adaptation and adoption in her book *Encounters* is interesting in the way that she conceives of what adoption is. She suggests that adoption invents a relation whereas adaptation is more or less faithful, respectful of the original. She posits that adoption takes charge of its "object". Denis adopts the book as one adopts a child, "gives it a wholly other future, a future unthinkable/unimaginable from the place where it was found" (6). There is an element of hope, of creating new relationships, of bringing about relationship from isolation. Similarly, Nancy's choice of the word adoption also encompasses the idea of filiation and incorporates possibilities for natural, chosen, and broken filial ties – a theme often explored in Denis's films. Yet it is not just the themes in Denis's *L'Intrus/The Intruder*, present, too, in other

films, that represent the idea of filiation and adoption (unnatural relationships). Her process of film-making is also considered a creative form of filiation according to Nancy.

> Précisons-le tout de suite pour qui ne le saurait pas : le livre ne contient aucune histoire que le film aurait pu adapter (sauf à se transformer en documentaire médical, qui n'aurait alors, en vérité, gardé du livre aucune 'inspiration'). Comme il m'est venu un jour de le dire, saisi par l'assonance, Claire Denis n'a pas adapté mon livre, elle l'a adopté. (Or c'est en particulier d'adoption que parle son film.) Le rapport entre nous n'est pas le rapport relativement 'naturel' que suppose une adaptation (un simple changement de registre ou d'instrument), mais le rapport sans naturel ni évidence d'une parenté qui doit tout à son élaboration symbolique. Que ce soit là, en dernière instance, la vérité de toute parenté – c'est peut-être aussi l'une des leçons du film, tout comme mon livre fait penser qu'il n'y a pas, pour finir 'de corps propre' véritable : et ce 'tout comme' a déjà engagé le système complexe et délicat des correspondances, des 'inspirations' ou des contagions entre nous. (*L'Intrus selon Claire Denis* 1)

Here Nancy creates a parallel between the relationship between Nancy and Denis, between the film *L'Intrus*/*The Intruder* and his essay *L'Intrus* and relationships in general. Both the film and essay propose that lineages are symbolic and unnatural, and he even questions the existence of one's "'true' proper body" indicating that instead of autonomous, we are all involved in a "complex and subtle system of correspondences, of 'inspirations' or contaminations between us" (Nancy qtd in Beugnet 72). These three words all involve an interconnectedness but differing implications for the type of relationship – correspondences suggest connections or links, whereas inspiration has a positive connotation and contamination a negative one. Contamination can also include the medical idea of infection and contagion but also more broadly rendering something

unsuitable, impure. There's obviously much potential in this system of interaction but also not a clear understanding of the links or interwoven complexities. This same idea of uncertainty in relationship is a central theme in Denis's film:

> Les généalogies sont lointaines, improbables ou incertaines. C'est bien ce que nous indiquaient les photographies des ascendants chinois de l'homme d'affaires avec lequel Trebor s'entretient à Papeete. Rien n'est dans la génération ni selon la descendance : tout est dans le départ, le passage, la dérive et la loi qui soumet tout retour à ne jamais revenir au même. L'intrusion de l'autre est la règle. S'il est une morale politique silencieuse dans ce film, c'est celle qui refuse toute assomption d'identité et de naturalité, y compris - et c'est sa pointe la plus fine - celles qui s'identifient par les noms de " métissage " ou de" créolité". L'intrusion est plus forte, moins réductible et plus troublante qu'aucun mélange : car elle va déjà du même au même, ici de Trébor à Trébor. (*L'Intrus selon Claire Denis* 2)

Nancy underscores the nature of relationships in Denis's film and focuses on movement and highlights instances of leaving to signify ruptured relationships. The ideas of departure, passage, and drifting away never to return are then met with the idea of intrusion, which seems contradictory in terms of directionality of spatial movement. Whereas the other terms are creating gaps, intrusion occurs when entering. This then presupposes that symbolically intrusion still implies distance according to Nancy – something to be explored further below in regards to the relationship between intrusion and encounter – but it is important at this point to note that such movement and discussion of distance between people alludes to Nancy's expanding borders of the ties and relations that impact us. Far beyond families or "natural" lineage (one could extend this to other clearly defined communities), Nancy emphasizes the impact of even

uncertain connections with the Other – one can never return to the same – the same Self, same place, same person – because like the river that flows through the backdrop of the film, one is constantly changing, shifting, moving with the impression left by the intruding Other.

Jean-Luc Nancy's Intruder

L'Intrus is a hybrid work, both autobiographical and philosophical. While intimate and deeply personal, Nancy presents his experience from a distance. However, it is not the operation that he seems to be distanced from but instead his actual body: he recounts factual events in a first-person narrative, boldly revealing his deepest emotions but the first person-narrative is complicated by his detachment from himself. He presents his body as separate from the "I" of his narrative. Philip Adamek points to the notion of detachment in both the representation of the Self and the body:

> One confronts a voice that unrelentingly questions itself, its unity, location, and legitimacy. The 'narrative identity' at times detaches itself from the body whose experience it recounts. (The "body" [le corps] is spoken of where one would normally say "me" or "I," and so the narrator seems to abandon the narrator's privilege of pronoun and veer towards the role of an exterior observer.) The "I" is assumed as often as it is shirked or discussed as being split, abandoned, or dispersed. This elusive narration, coupled with the dislocated, anachronized, and pluralized expropriated body [corps] or heart that it describes, is reason enough for resisting recourse to the category of the autobiographical. (Adamek 189)

Adamek brings attention to the lack of unity in narration to probe the characterization of autobiography for the purpose of further analyzing from where the essay's sense of intimacy

arises. Genre classification and creation of intimacy are only tangentially connected to my analysis of the detachment in Nancy's work. My interest lies in Nancy's estrangement from his body as seen through the split "I" or the "pluralized expropriated body." The experience of a heart transplant affects the way in which Nancy perceives his body and his identity and also how he experiences himself. He expresses this directly: "Il n'est pas difficile de se représenter la complexité de l'ensemble étranger qui intervient ainsi au plus vif de « moi ». Passons sur les proches, et passons sur moi- « même » (qui pourtant, je l'ai dit, se dédouble)" (*L'Intrus* 19). He also articulates this idea through the narrative identity of his writing- his body spoken of as detached from himself. He sees and presents himself as outside of, detached from, or "othered" from his body, a displacement of oneself from oneself. Nancy calls into question his own relationship to his use of "I" as a subject pronoun, and perhaps the use of "I" in language entirely. He reflects on the "Empty identity of an "I" –"L'identité vide d'un 'je' ne peut plus reposer dans sa simple adéquation (dans son 'je=je') lorsqu'elle s'énonce : 'je souffre' implique deux 'je' l'un à l'autre étrangers (se touchant pourtant). Il en de même de 'je jouis' (on pourrait montrer comment cela s'indique dans la pragmatique de l'un et de l'autre énoncé): mais dans 'je souffre', un 'je'excède l'autre. Cela se ressemble, dans doute comme deux gouttes d'eau : ni plus ni moins" (*L'Intrus* 39). He proposes the foreignness of the Self as implied in the way one discusses oneself. The Self is divided and relates to itself in either positive or negative ways – even rejecting oneself at times.

Martine Beugnet also discusses this use of language to demonstrate his estrangement indicating, "In the book, Nancy conveys the process of self-estrangement that occurs before and after the transplant through the recurring switch from the first-person account to impersonal or passive voice (using passive impersonal forms, 'on', or passive infinitives) where the subject, the

narrator, becomes the object of the enunciation" (Beugnet 36-37). Language becomes an indicator of Nancy's own sense of his Self and distancing from himself, which is, indeed, symptomatic of corporeal exile. It demonstrates the space, the gap, that exists in his Self – perceived body and identity. However, it also becomes a tool that Nancy employs to close the distance between himself and others. Likely because of his philosophical background in community, foreignness, and the Other, he engages in this discourse – in relation to his heart transplant – in a way that bridges the gap between his experience and a larger exile narrative that until this point he has only analyzed, not participated.

In *L'Intrus,* Nancy positions his own experience with corporeal detachment and intrusion (that of the transplanted heart) within the larger theoretical discussion of foreignness and hospitality typically associated with exile studies. I will come back to these issues in Chapter 4 where I invert Nancy's analytical gaze to consider exile (again, typically discussed as displacement along geopolitical lines) through the lens of corporeal displacements, separations, detachments, and intrusions in relation to Wajdi Mouawad's *Seuls* and *Soeurs*. In this way, instead of just presenting bodies (of exiles) who experience hybridity and detachment in migration across geopolitical borders, I will present bodies, like that of Nancy, as being themselves imbued with this hybridity and detachment, which will serve towards two purposes: the corporeal lens brings to the forefront considerations of immunity and rejection to the current theoretical scholarship on hospitality, and proposes a broader understanding of exile – that occurs as one's detachment from oneself due to a variety of reasons including in this case a heart transplant.

Strangers are Always Intruders

> L’intrus s’introduit de force, par surprise ou par ruse, en tout cas sans droit ni sans avoir été d’abord admis. Il faut qu’il y ait de l’intrus dans l’étranger, sans quoi il perd son étrangeté. S’il a déjà droit d’entrée et de séjour, s’il est attendu et reçu sans que rien de lui reste hors d’attente ni hors d’accueil, il n’est plus l’intrus, mais il n’est plus, non plus, l’étranger. Aussi n’est-il ni logiquement recevable, ni éthiquement admissible, d’exclure toute intrusion dans la venue de l’étranger. (*L’Intrus* 11)

Nancy’s introduces the idea of the intruder acting with force, and with an implied violence that emphasizes the violation that occurs when entering without permission or the right to do so. Rape is a clear and non-complicated example of an aggressive, violent intrusion within the context of the body but Nancy’s description of the stranger as intruder is certainly more complex. To be an intruder, by definition, one lacks invitation and welcome; interestingly Nancy positions this idea as inevitable for the role of the stranger. The stranger (*l’étranger*)– and with the French term, we could also read foreigner, which is why he differentiates between strangeness (*étrangeté*) and strangerness (*étrangèreté*) that both comprise what in English and what in this dissertation I discuss more broadly as foreignness—must include an aspect of the intruder:

> [S]a venue ne cesse pas : il continue à venir, et elle ne cesse pas d’être à quelque égard une intrusion. […] Accueillir l’étranger, il faut bien que ce soit aussi éprouver son intrusion. Le plus souvent, on ne veut pas l’admettre : le motif de l’intrus est lui-même une intrusion dans notre correction morale (c’est même un exemple remarquable du *politically correct*). Pourtant, il est indissociable de la vérité de l’étranger. Cette correction morale suppose qu’on reçoit l’étranger en effaçant sur le seuil son étrangeté : elle veut donc qu’on ne l’ait point reçu. (*L’Intrus* 11-12)

He posits the stranger, and foreigner, as at its essence, and unavoidably, a disturbance and unable to be received. This postulation is based on that which is moral for the stranger as much as it is/could be for the benefit of the rejecting party because he asserts that receiving the stranger would also mean making him less strange, thus changing his identity. This danger (or depending on your perspective, advantage) of effacing the "strangeness" (*étrangeté*), the difference, rings true to the (post) colonial discourse on assimilation. The conversation is not new but asking these questions in relation to his own heart and own body does open a fresh perspective on the notion of corporeal exile.

Nancy re-envisions the stranger by applying this role to his failing heart, the new heart he receives, as well as to space and even to death. First, it is his own heart that is described as becoming a stranger: "Il me devenait étranger, il faisait intrusion par défection : presque par réjection, sinon par déjection" (16). The vocabulary Nancy uses brings attention back to the idea of a foreigner as the stranger and the intruder. Establishing this relationship creates an intentional parallel in experiences of his heart transplant and the immigrant exile experience. Defection referring to the desertion of one's country placed in relationship with rejection and dejection that could be viewed as two sides of the same coin: rejection has the violence of being pushed out or destroyed when considering the rejection of a new heart, and then the sadness of dejection when it is the Self who forces its own removal. This interplay between rejection and dejection and the implied difference in who is responsible for the removal of the unwanted part also enforces the idea that the body is not unified. Here, the body is in conflict with itself, and Nancy presents his failing heart, and his body's rejection of its replacement, as experiences of exile by using language of banishment and expulsion that is also used when discussing a person's displacement from a community or country.

Nancy also complicates the binary conception of inside/outside when discussing a part of his body – his heart – that is, and is intended to be, inside of his body but which exists as a stranger and intruder. "Mon coeur devenait mon étranger : justement étranger parce qu'il était dedans. L'étrangeté ne devait venir du dehors que pour voir d'abord surgi du dedans […] Je n'étais déjà plus en moi. Je viens déjà d'aillers, ou bien je ne viens plus" (17). The idea of an elsewhere "in" his body forces a reconsideration of spatial determinations of what it means to be on the inside or on the outside and implies a connection to ideas of belonging and foreignness as not necessarily spatially determined. In relation to his heart's failure to be continue to be a part of his body, Nancy demonstrates that foreignness and strangeness can come from the inside and even be a part of the Self. This notion of the 'stranger within' alludes to Julia Kristeva's *Étranger à nous mêmes* in which she, too, suggests that the foreigner lives within us, as a hidden face of our identity. She proposes that the rejection of the foreigner brings attention to, or perhaps even stems from, the destruction of the Self – our inability to integrate our own foreignness[17]. Her text elaborates an acceptance of the foreigner – external and internal – because she proposes we are all foreigners if only we acknowledge it and suggests that 'identification with' can lead to 'welcoming of.'

Though Nancy's discussion of his heart as a 'stranger within' does bring attention to a parallel between experiences of rejection, unlike Kristeva, he seems to propose the inevitability of said rejection in his discussion of the immune system and his natural bodily response to intrusion. The immune system rejects that of the other and does so to protect the Self. "Identité vaut pour immunité, l'une s'identifie à l'autre. Abaisser l'une, c'est abaisser l'autre. L'étrangeté

[17] It is important to note that she brings to her discussion of foreignness as a more universal questioning of identity her experience and perspective as a foreigner, as an immigrant of Bulgarian origins.

et l'étrangèreté deviennent communes et quotidiennes" (33). Again, Nancy uses two different words to represent the double strangeness that occurs in the possibility of rejection. The stranger is the grafted heart that his body identifies as an outsider and then attacks. The strangeness is himself, changed by the medication. Nancy explains that this medication lowers the graftee's immunity which allows him to tolerate the stranger inside him. Essentially, it makes him a stranger to himself so that his immunity to otherness does not cause him to reject that which he needs. Certainly, the positioning of Kristeva in regards to her experiences, from a cultural standpoint, and to her approach is not the same as that of Nancy who speaks of transplant rejection, the reaction of immune system and the physiological, the psychological, existential impact of this on him. Because of this, Nancy demonstrates a necessity of rejection and complicates the possibility of Kristeva's acceptance through identification.

Nancy furthers this complicated view of rejection and foreignness in his discussion of the treatment he was given to lower his immunity so that his body would better tolerate the new heart, the intruder. He elaborates, by reducing his body's immunity medicine makes him his own stranger, a stranger to his immune system's identity. The body becomes less itself and less autonomous in order to accept the other, in his case through the introduction of immuno-globulin into his body. Nancy explains how the immuno-globulin that he is given to reduce the rejection of the heart actually comes from rabbits and is intended for this "anti-human" application -- he points out that the pharmaceutical laboratory notice even states it as such. Nancy elaborates that the medicine given to him not only makes him less "himself" by reducing his immunity to the transplanted heart, but also it is intentionally "anti-human" and perhaps "post-" or "trans-human": "On croise une contingence personnelle avec une contigence dans l'histoire des techniques" (14), and even further, "La vie scannée est reportée sur de multiples registres dont

chacun inscrit d'autres possibilités de mort" (35-36).What does that mean to be anti-human? If we consider the goal and impact of the immuno-globulin treatments, it is to reduce the effectiveness of our own antibodies. The human body is made to protect itself from infection with an ability to recognize and destroy foreign cells, foreign "bodies". When the body's blood meets a foreign body (cell), it produces an antibody to fight the invader. So, the anti-human function of the immuno-globulin is then to reduce the body's ability for self-protection. This is, of course, ironic since the intravenous immuno-globulin is actually introducing helpful antibodies such that the body does not attack and destroy the life-saving organ. Here the body needs additional intruders (immuno-globulin) in order to make it less itself (weakened immune system) for the purpose of protecting an invader (transplanted heart) that is essentially the only thing keeping the body alive. This complex relationship in the body between antibodies (foreign and self-produced) and organs (foreign and 'native') brings to light the relationship between necessity and host (hospitality) – something to be discussed at greater length later. As Nancy argues, there is never just one intrusion. "[D]ès qu'il s'en produit une, elle se multiplie, elle s'identifie dans ses differences internes renouvelées" (32). By reducing the resistance to the intruder (new heart), the medication also awakens other strangers who were living dormant inside: "Ainsi, je connaîtrai à plusieurs reprises le virus du zona, ou le cytomegalovirus, étrangers endormis en moi depuis toujours et soudain réveillés contre moi par la nécessaire immuno-dépression" (32). New invaders in the form of side-effects or illness also plague Nancy's prolonged life: headaches, convulsions, exhaustion, and with a weakened immune system, he becomes more susceptible to other diseases including cancer from which he will eventually die. He also explains that the treatments for strangeness actually send him further into a life of strangeness, in which he is constantly monitored, assessed, tested and in which he has to

fear the outside world and the germs it could introduce to his weakened immune system. He expresses a paradox within his existence: he proclaims self-exteriorization ("*extériorisation constant de moi*" (33), a language that refers back to the idea of corporeal exile) and his becoming the "Other", but he is also warned against outside threats. His existence is a constant struggle between needing and fearing outsiders, and this fear is rooted in real, physical, biological threat to his life. The way in which he verbalizes his existence though ties the biological processes to the abstract conditions of "strangeness" *(étrangeté)* and again with a lexicon that acknowledges a spatial dimension of displacement associated with geopolitical exile.

Later when he is being treated for the cancer that creeps in because of his lowered immunity, he describes his cancer and his treatments as violent intrusions and attacks on his body:

> Le cancer est comme la figure mâchée, crochue et ravageuse de l'intrus. Étranger à moi-même, et moi-même m'étrangeant. Comment dire ? (Mais on dispute encore de la nature exogène des phénomènes cancéreux.) Ici aussi, d'une autre manière, le traitement exige une intrusion violente. Il incorpore une quantité d'étrangeté chimiothérapique et radiothérapique. En même temps que le lymphome ronge le corps et l'épuise, les traitements l'attaquent, le font souffrir de pluseiurs manières – et la souffrance est le rapport d'une intrusion et de son refus. (37-38)

The lymphoma is personified with the verb gnaw, giving it a bestial quality. It is an active, violent agent against the body, which is a logical and even typical way of describing cancer. Susan Sontag discusses the power of the metaphors associated with cancer (as well as AIDS and other illnesses). "Disease is seen as an invasion of alien organisms, to which the body responds by its own military operations, such as the mobilizing of immunological "defenses," and

medicine is “aggressive,” as in the language of most chemotherapies” (Sontag 9). She elaborates, in the setting of public health, disease is still seen as the alien “other” and is described as invading a society (instead of an individual body). Still military language and metaphors rein: we are to stage a fight, battle, war against cancer (or AIDS, or syphilis) in order to conquer or defeat the enemy. Yet, these military metaphors contribute to the stigmatization of certain illnesses, especially illness that are perceived to alter the person. Sontag claims, “the most terrifying illnesses are those perceived not just as lethal but as dehumanizing, literally so” (Sontag 38), and she offers the examples of mutations of the skin rendering the leper’s “lion face” or a kind of rot as in syphilis. Cancer, too, is thought to be a lessening of the Self. Yet, it is important to also emphasize that such metaphors also contribute to creating a fear of foreigners. If cancer and AIDS are spoke of as invaders, or infectious agents that come from the outside then outsiders are possible threats. Sontag explains historically a direct link between imagining disease and foreignness, acknowledging that diseases have had foreign origins and were often carried by soldiers or missionaries. While no longer as accurate of a depiction, Sontag underlines the political power of the continuation of such rhetoric. “Epidemic diseases usually elicit a call to ban the entry of foreigners, immigrants. And xenophobic propaganda has always depicted immigrants as bearers of disease” (Sontag 62). In relation to AIDS, she explains Europe profited from the fear of disease to augment the fear of immigrants and “protect” itself against foreigners, whereas in the United States, it was considered “the gay plague” and used towards anti-liberal protest. Regardless of the target, outsiders are associated with death. Phrases such as “the invader takes up permanent residence […] The body’s own cells become the invader” (Sontag 18) lead to fear of contamination and a desire to increase immunity in relation to the body, or in the case of immigration, a fear of change and a desire to close borders to anyone who is different. The word

virus has become synonymous with change, mutations, or transformations. In the same way that the "virus" can alter cells, it can also alter identity – either personal or collective. Nancy goes further to once again connect the suffering of intrusion more specifically to that of displacement – feelings of being lost:

> On sort égaré de l'aventure. On ne se reconnait plus : mais « reconnaître » n'a plus de sens. On n'est, très vite, qu'un flottement, une suspension d'étrangeté entre des états mal identifiés, entre des douleurs, entre des impuissances, entre des défaillances. Se rapporter à soi est devenu un problème, une difficulté ou une opacité : c'est à travers le mal, ou bien la peur, ce n'est plus rien d'immédiat – et les médiations fatiguent. (39)

The word *flottement* gives a sense of purposelessness, of wandering, or lack of direction. In addition, there is an aspect of liminality in being *une suspension* between different states- neither in one nor the other. What is more, the states between which he is suspended lack identity themselves resulting in even greater feelings of being lost. Suffering is related to not only incapacities but also to lapses which bring attention to the idea of gaps, of passage, perhaps in time but perhaps also of space. Gaps and a spatial dimension of his body's experience with strangeness repeats throughout his essay. He presents space as an intruder: "la transplantation impose l'image d'un passage par le néant, d'une sortie dans un espace vidé de toute propriété ou de toute intimité, ou bien au contraire de l'intrusion en moi de cet espace : tuyaux, pinces, sutures et sondes. (26).

In regards to the actual transplant, he describes himself as being closed open; it is not that they opened him wide "*béant*" but that the gaping open "*béance*" cannot be closed. He conceptualizes his journey in sickness and wellness, and in treatments, in a way that easily demonstrates a connection to the spatial displacement associated with geopolitical exile. Space

(and time) separate people, separate bodies, just as it separates himself from his own body. "Entre moi et moi, il y eut toujours de l'espace-temps : mais à present il y a l'ouverture d'une incision, et l'irréconciliable d'une immunité contrariée" (36). Nancy refers to himself as two Selves and implies that the gap between him and his Self is common, it has always been there. What is new is the revelation of his body at odds with itself – it also has always housed its own enemies, but now they are exposed, and it is through the incision, the opening to the world that his own personal irreconciliability comes to light. "Mais les ennemis les plus vifs sont à l'intérieur : les vieux virus tapis depuis toujours dans l'ombre de l'immunité, les intrus de toujours, puisqu'il y en a toujours eu" (33). While there are threats of germs and sickness that come from the outside, he is his own worst enemy. It is with this idea, our enemies lurking within, that Denis begins her adoption of Nancy's treatment of intrusion.

Tactility and Touch – A study on fragmentation and distance

Claire Denis's *L'Intrus/The Intruder*[18] is an adoption of Nancy's essay, but it is also a piece of a much larger, ongoing dialogue between Nancy and Denis. Derrida has also inserted himself into the conversation with his 2005 essay meditation on the theme of touch specifically in Nancy's work. Denis produced a short film, *Vers Nancy/Towards Nancy* (2002) that is also in direct relation to the same questions of foreignness and intrusion; Nancy wrote his own detailed response to Denis's film, and in interviews Denis also refers to Nancy's *Noli me tangere: essai*

[18] The film is itself a co-production with participation across national lines, and while Denis is a French director and the majority of the film is in French, even the use of French is disorienting for the audience since translations of other languages such as Korean, Japanese, Tahitian, or in this case Russian, are given only in English and through subtitles. The name of the film is also a source of confusion and even internal inconsistency; it is both *The Intruder* and *L'Intrus*. It was released with its English name, which also appears on the DVD and internet databases like IMBD but the title in the film appears as *L'Intrus*. Even in the films production and distribution, it is crossing over borders and embracing hybridity.

sur la levée du corps (2003). The two have even participated together in a series of radio interviews for *France Culture*. The relationship they have formed and exposed to their public is centered on complimentary approaches to similar questions and a willingness to participate in the dialogue together, taking advantage of one another's crafts and experiences. Martine Beugnet explains Denis's experiences of being an 'invisible intruder' as a contributing factor to her ability to and propensity for tackle these questions of foreignness with a different perspective. Denis grew up in the era of decolonization and spent her childhood in various Sub-Saharan regions of France's (former) colonies. In the 1960s she returned to the 'métropole' as a teenager. Beugnet describes this as "a double practice of foreignness, abroad, and in her 'own' country, which she did not know and where, in similar yet fundamentally different ways than in Africa, she felt like an outsider again", then further explaining that "on her return to France, she would live through the more banal experience of becoming an invisible intruder, an exile at 'home'" (Beugnet 31). The question of a banal experience as an invisible intruder, and exile at 'home' continues to be fundamental point of departure for this study as it is also a point of connection and similarity between Denis and the other two authors whom I will study in the next chapters and whom can be described, too, as invisible intruders.

Beugnet explains the importance of such an experience in the work of Denis: "From the start, Denis thus drew on her personal knowledge of feeling rootless to explore issues that have remained at the heart of her filmmaking: the deeply perplexing questions of identity and alienation, assimilation and rejection, desire and fear inseparable from the post-colonial malaise that affects France with particular acuteness" (Beugnet 31). It is logical that Denis would resonate with Jean-Luc Nancy's research and philosophical musings on notions of intrusion, foreignness, otherness, selfhood and identity, community, and transculturalism. What is

unexpected is how his experience of a heart transplant can feel so inspiring and so similar to her own experiences that while related, are also so very different. The rhetoric of foreignness *(étrangèreté)* used in *L'Intrus* in relation to corporeal experiences, or that employed in reference to illness as discussed by Sontag, becomes of a point of departure for Denis (and Mouawad and NDiaye) who sees emotional and psychological connections and universality even between disparate life experiences.

In *The withdrawal of touch: Denis, Nancy and L'Intrus*, Laura McMahon positions Claire Denis's film *L'Intrus/The Intruder* in relation to the work of Laura Marks (2000, 2002) and Vivian Sobchack (1992, 2004) on tactility and texture in film, positing, however, that Denis's L*'Intrus/The Intruder* "stages a much more ambiguous relation to touch, one that is ruptured and interruptive, one that asks us to think both with and beyond the terms of the phenomenological model elaborated by Marks" (McMahon 29). Her analysis of Denis's film is careful and thoughtful and done in relation to not only Jean Luc Nancy's essay *L'Intrus* but also *Nancy's Noli me tangere*, his philosophical work on touch in *Corpus*, and Derrida's response, *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy*. McMahon is clear to explain that she does not consider her work in opposition to various approaches on filmic touch but that it does "probe conditions of immediacy, presence and exchange upon which recent theories of embodied spectatorship may be seen to rely" and proposes another possibility in how one thinks about touch in film- "in terms of withdrawal, separation and interruption" (McMahon 37). McMahon's work brings to attention Denis's use of 'haptic visuality,' but my analysis contributes to the scholarship on Denis's *L'Intrus/The Intruder* by revealing how her filmic investigation and focus on touch bring attention to the importance of fragmentation, rupture, and challenges of encounter, ultimately

demonstrating a relationship between fragmentation and relative closeness/strangeness in *L'Intrus/The Intruder*, which I will further develop in this section.

Whereas Nancy's essay is about the singular experience of a heart transplant, Denis's film "extends imaginatively far beyond the grafted organ of the text, in order to pursue its own fragmentary, oneiric narratives of exile, loss and regret" (McMahon 187). Denis weaves together traces of stories, lives, and various intrusions to remind "us that protected borders, both corporeal and territorial, are also sites of potential fragility and risk" (McMahon 188), and Denis's montage of frames showing movement between corporeal and territorial borders brings attention to their overlapping nature. This intersection of spaces is central to my reconsideration of exile and questions of foreignness and intrusion within the context of corporeality. The first shot of the film is a still frame in medium-close up of Katia Golubeva's face emerging from darkness with an extra-diegetic announcement that "Tes pires ennemis sont à l'intérieur, cachés dans l'ombre, cachés dans ton coeur" (*L'Intrus* 00:00:01-00:00:11). This enigmatic revelation sets the tone for the film; the voice is estranged from the body and appears from beyond the borders of the screen, the body's borders are obfuscated by the darkness, and while the main character Louis is implied in the warning, the unnamed young Russian woman's (Katia Golubeva) direct stare at the camera's lens pushes the message beyond the borders of the film and its characters to directly address the audience who will from that point forward be abandoned, like Louis's sons, to decipher the puzzling (un)realities experienced. Additionally, this short bewildering prologue introduces the transplant – the heart intruding a body – and invites the allegorical sense of enemies intruding into the heart.

Later in the film, the young Russian woman whose presence haunts Louis throughout, alludes once again to the difference between figurative and literal changes of heart. Later in the

film Louis is seen walking through an unidentified Asian city with a man. The two had just enjoyed a meal and drinks at a local restaurant, speaking in English, even attempting to sing Elvis. The camera follows Louis Trebor and his acquaintance from beyond. The spectator is only offered an obstructed view of the two characters and their interaction because it is too close, but rather than creating a feeling of intimacy, the close up shot resulting in a fragmented view of the characters augments the feeling of hostility. Louis pleads that she stop hounding him because he has a sick heart. She coldly replies, “Not any more. It’s just empty. Your heart isn’t sick anymore. It’s just empty”[19] (*L'Intrus* 01:12:47- 01:12:55). The young Russian woman’s retort, which gains even greater importance due to the fact that she says very little in the course of the film, is simple and repetitive and emphasizes that while time has passed, and the heart has changed (been replaced by a new, healthy heart), Louis’s fatal flaws remain. The physical sickness of the heart is conflated with that of the figurative, and she hauntingly reminds him, and us, of her earlier warning – our worst enemies are hidden within, in our hearts. This is a “metaphorical play on the notion of transplant, which simultaneously describes the effect on an individual’s corporeal and psychological identity of the grafting of a foreign organ, and the mutation of the geopolitical body at large, as it is subjected to an influx of outsiders” (Beugnet 37). Yet regardless of the influx of outsiders, we see ultimately that regardless of the borders crossed – those in of time (before and after the operation) and space (from country to country), and even the transplanted heart crossing into his own body – there is no escape for him or for his isolated existence.

[19] The young Russian woman has found Louis in an unidentified Asian city and speaks to him in Russian; the subtitle is in English. This exchange is representative of the polyglottic film where languages are interchanged often without acknowledgegment of the fact that the change could pose a problem in understanding.

For insofar as Denis brings to her viewer's attention questions of intrusion in *L'Intrus/The Intruder*, she equally puts forth the theme of rejection. Louis is rejected by almost all of the characters in the film. Though, it was first Louis who abandoned and rejected many of them. Louis has a son in France with whom he seems to have little relationship. We see the son approach Louis on the side of the street and reject him – calling him a lunatic and showing little interest in his father other than taking his money. After the son who lives in France dies, Louis returns to Tahiti in search of his other son, whom he'd left long ago. Louis's rejection of his life in Tahiti, his son and his son's mother, as well as his friends is made clear by the state of his dilapidated hut as well as the rejection he faces from the community upon his return. His son has no interest in seeing him, and he is told that the village is not his place anymore. Louis had put money in an account for the son he'd abandoned years before, but the son refused to take it. Louis tried to buy him a sailboat and also when he realized that his body was rejecting the new heart, he hoped to leave his son his inheritance. But, the son refused it, and in refusing the inheritance he symbolically refused any filiation to Louis, an ultimate rejection.

Aside from the thematic references to rejection, Denis's cinematography also emphasizes division and space placed between people. As mentioned above, Laura McMahon focuses on the dimensions of withdrawal, separation and interruption as seen through the sense of touch in Denis's film and presents this in relation to current theories on embodied spectatorship. Rancière refers to these spaces created in fragmented cinema as *écarts*, which is precisely the term Nancy uses in regards to touch. Gaps are necessary for touch. When beings touch each other the move beyond the edge of themselves, over the separation, to the edge of the other. Touch requires separation but also willingness to bridge the gap, to move towards one another to be able to touch. Whereas, through the motif of rejection in *L'Intrus/The Intruder* any instances of touch

seem to occur as characters pass in opposite directions or in violent encounters. There lacks harmony and fluidity in the characters's touch, just as there does in Denis's cinematic touch as seen in her excessive discontinuity in time and space and (ir)realities between scenes, hand held camera and shaky camera techniques, and a fragmented, disjointed montage – a *montage haptique,* termed by Rancière (*Les écarts* 56) in reference to Bressonian fragmentation to underscore the gaps created that result in a texture and even mobility in the gaze created in the montage of different frames.

Additionally, I contend that her cinematographic analysis focused on touch also reveals themes of exile and loss. In the film, Louis Trebor observes groups of illegal immigrants who are hunted by customs officers. Though these scenes are interspersed without commentary, as if a backdrop or to offer parallel movement to Trebor's journey. Also, Trebor has been trained to kill, he is also hunted though, by ghosts of his past – and once again there is an inversion to the expected structure of power and definition of enemy. While Trebor is alert to the presence of external intruders, Denis presents a case cinematographically for the greatest threat being from within—his heart – a message that opened the film. The new heart does not free him from his past and continues to be a threatening presence throughout the film. Denis's cinematography shows countless intrusions including the crossing of national borders as seen through the use of flags or other culturally signifying landscapes, the camera's focus on windows, doors, and other vertical frames in the camera's field of vision to show characters crossing these borders with bodies or point of view shots to show the characters' visual intrusion on a scene. Throughout these shots and scenes, the camera continually comes back to the imprisonment of his heart's failure and the transplant. Scene after scene shows Trebor laying down on a bed, shirt open so that the audience are visually reminded of his transplant because of the scar. He is also often

filmed touching his scar that at times is red, inflamed, and causing him pain, suggesting infection, rejection, and almost giving the scar its own place as an intruding body on the body of Trebor. Denis's tendency to use close up shots that fragmentize the body into parts while focusing on the visual textures in the frame contributes to the view of the scar as its own entity (body) with the capacity to colonize Trebor's body. Trebor's hand constantly caressing the scar also demonstrates his relation to the scar – it is strange[20] and other to him. His touch brings the viewer's attention to the otherness of the scar as well.

Touch, according to Nancy, can exist because there is a space between subjects, an interval to be traversed, and this gap, an *écart* as he calls it, is the condition of the encounter. Yet Denis's film seems to reveal a lack of encounter and intimacy and rather an inability to traverse the gap: it is ever present and made more profound by the haptic visuality of Denis's cinema as well as the multitude of vertical lines in her shots that divide the frame and imply greater division and fragmentation, and also mirror the borders that are central in the motif of the film. Following the prologue's whispered warning of enemies lurking within, the first scene of the film sets the stage on the French-Swiss border. The very first shot is divided in half vertically by a fence. It is clear that we are at a border checkpoint because of customs signs, officers, and French flags. There are many vertical lines breaking up our line of vision and creating intervals in the frame. It offers an aesthetic for the theme of illegal trespassing that will be broached from many interwoven perspectives. Denis employs recurring sequences of close up shots with cuts

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[20] Here is an example of the overlay between Nancy's étrangeté and étrangèreté: the scar is a constant reminder to Louis of the strangeness (*étrangeté*) of the foreignness (*étrangèreté*) inside of him. Louis, like Nancy, exists both inside and outside, as self and other, and wrestles with this strangeness and what that means for him and who he is or is not. Louis requests a young man's heart for his transplant, not that of an old man or a woman because, he says, "Je suis un homme je veux garder mon caractere." Yet, in terms of his character, his figurative heart has not changed, nor is it allowed to by the other characters in the film.

from one to another, each time offering a different perspective but always too close, that thus show fragmented and obstructed views. These shots are also often framed such that there is a clear division inside/outside division, such as through a window or door frame, and to create discomfort for the viewers because of their closeness to the characters, especially with close up, over the shoulder shots and the panning camera movement along the body. This type of filming of bodies is not unique to this film but rather characteristic of Denis: "Claire Denis films bodies, not subjects. She films the neck, the hair, the skin of the back, the pubic hair in the water, the hand pressing against the flesh. Filming, she invents bodies, and filming bodies, she invents, simultaneously, a cinema" (Baross 84). This filming of fragmented parts of bodies is part of her style, a style that requires the viewer to re-assemble these pieces in their minds to compose the figure of the body and its relation to the other composed bodies around it. We are presented with an "operating table of decoupage – cinematic and conceptual – that cinema (Godard) and thought (Aristotle) come, not to resemble, but to resonate with respect to their operations of cutting, of inserting fault lines that join what they separate in a new relation of a different order" (Baross 14). This operation of cutting and joining shots, offering up the possibility of new relations in a different order, seems to aptly describe the frequent montages of close up shots in *L'Intrus/The Intruder*, especially in regards to Denis's treatment of bodies and their fragmented parts. Yet, I would argue that just as often the relationship is left unclear, and perhaps even the 'parts' seem to have been left on the table beseeching the viewer to do the reassembling. Denis offers potential relationships of the fragmented pieces of and in her shots, while never imposing an order on the viewer.

Her way of editing can also be seen as another metaphorical transplant, juxtaposing fragmented pieces to underscore the transformation that occurs through their interplay. Moments

in time, space, reality and fantasy (as represented through what seem to be nightmare dream sequences as suggested by cuts back to Trebor asleep in the shadows of a dark room) are imposed one upon another without regard for any continuity. The juxtaposition of images and scenes that have been cut up and reconnected in new ways is symbolic of the transplanted body, as well as the exiled body who exists in the hybridity of multiple nationalities, multiple languages, multiple passports, multiple experiences, etc. just like Louis Trebor in *L'Intrus/The Intruder*. There are traces, like scars, that help connect the different shots for the viewer and that point to the transplantations Denis is representing (here of people, notably Louis, as well as organs). The viewer is tethered to some semblance of order through clues such as language, street signs, and advertisements, as well as to the remnants of the organ transplant as seen as an actual scar on Louis's body. Yet, these clues only offer a modicum of clarity; they suggest rather than explain and force the viewer to remain in the anxiety and tension of the film, and of foreignness (*étrangèreté)* and border crossing more broadly. Language certainly helps situate the viewer in a geographical space—Tahiti vs. Korea, for instance. Yet, language also functions to emphasize the feelings of strangeness (*étrangeté*) that can be associated with foreignness (*étrangèreté*). The language spoken does not always match the visual clues given in a scene, nor the expectations one might have for the language that would be spoken, because langauges, like the people speaking them, cross over borders.

Borders and border crossing are constantly present in Denis's film and always presented as a source of anxiety and danger. Borders are the site of illegal trafficking and unwanted intrusions: the package found in the truck at the French-Swiss border, people sneaking across this same border, black market organ trafficking, people trying to break into house spaces and winding up dead. In addition to these thematic elements of danger associated with border

crossing, Denis also contributes to the viewer's feeling of anxiety and discomfort through the use of silence; Louis is almost mute and the film has very little dialogue. Also, diegetic sound is limited and replaced with discordant and ominous music that at suspenseful points in the film mimics the rhythm of heartbeats. Additionally, dogs play a symbolic role of gatekeepers who signal the viewer, as well as sometimes the characters, to the potential danger associated with intrusion; for instance, dogs allerted Louis to the presence of strangers outside threatening to invade his home and the border agents to immigrants looking to illegally enter France. Dogs were also present in his fantastical dream sequences when he was dragged through the snow and left to die or when the hunters came upon a dead body and a dismembered heart laying on the snow, and I would argue these dogs were present in the dreams to alert Louis of the danger that would come with his transplant—foreshadowing both the death of his son and Louis rejection of the new heart.

Beugnet draws an analogy between the body and the nation that acts like it must protect itself from invading species: "while the virtual and actual circulation of images and human bodies across national divides increases, an ageing, post-colonial western world appears to retreat, arguably more than ever before, behind the illusion of a unified and integral identity, and occasionally reacts like a besieged body, as if seized in paranoiac fear of hidden takeovers" (Beugnet 35). Denis enhances Nancy's important analogy with her own masterful use of cinematography and adopts, and furthers, his discussion on irreducible strangeness (*étrangeté*), the impossibility of reducing difference without simultaneously erasing existence, and how this reality may impact the ways in which we conceive of hospitality.

Nancy positions the body as open and spacious and argues that such porousness allows for engagement and interaction. Yet, penetration occurs only in violence. One must be separate

and distinct to continue to exist. In this chapter, I have considered especially the question of rejection, in relation to Nancy's heart transplant and the link between his transplant and the staging of corporeal border crossings in the works of Denis, specifically in relation to racial and colonial tensions. Sontag offers language and the use of metaphor in illness as a point of connection but also demonstrates the potential peril that comes from positioning illness as a foreigner, intruder, outsider. The language demonizes the outsider, presenting it as a dangerous contaminate. The process of rejection in a transplant is the same as the one in a viral infection. Immunity is a process of protection. Nancy and Denis use similar language, similar metaphors as described by Sontag, but do so intentionally in part to complicate the notion of rejection. Such confounding is achieved through a re-writing of borders and understandings of the Self and Other. Nancy's body rejects that which is attempting to save him (the transplanted heart) and in the medicinal attempt to prevent this rejection, his body begins to reject itself and allow the body to mutate in such a way that it causes further destruction. The outside body, in this case the grafted heart, did not attack, nor did it cause sickness or death. The inside (anti)bodies attacked because of perceived intrusion, which led to its own detriment. Nancy proposes a circumstance in which the act of rejection itself becomes the enemy. Denis's *L'Intrus/The Intruder* stages the simultaneous hunting of immigrants and of Trébor, the deplorable main character who is a trained hunter but who is himself hunted (and haunted) by his past. He is his own worst enemy, having made choices to abandon his family resulting in loneliness, isolation, and regret. The important question of lineage and origins surfaces in Denis's adoption of Nancy's essay, even in the word they use for the relationship between the two works: adoption. Ruptures in lineage cause pain and suffering: Louis Trebor goes so far as to hire a pretend son.

Derrida uses the concept of the *greffe* in writing to discuss different iterations of writing that are placed together to create a bigger whole, like a tissue graft that is transplanted to and becomes part of another body. These parts can be made up of citations from other texts that leave their own traces, or one could say scars, which prove the existence of the Other present on the body/writing. Here we see overlap with Derrida's concept of citationality, as well as a reference back to Kristeva's view of strangers as scars. But grafting goes beyond the use of quotations; themes, styles, even languages are sometimes grafted together to create a new morphology of writing. This idea of a hybrid creation in writing that comes from the mixing of parts through a process of grafting could apply to the interrelated writings between Denis, Nancy, and Derrida who each added their own texts, in response to the others, as part of a larger conversation. Each text or film is an iteration in the process of transformative grafting where the authors build upon the works of one another. If we also consider this interdependent process of transformation as part of identity creation, it illuminates a complex relationship to origins that will prove useful in the following chapters. Origins are not a point of departure nor something to be preserved or forgotten. Rather, origins are perhaps the points of intersection where the grafting is visible; they appear as traces of relationships to other people, reflections of experiences, and scars of traumas lived. Human identities are grafted into hybrid existences, and the origins of each transplanted part testify to how interrelated people truly are.

Chapter 3- Disembodiment: The Unclassifiable and Inhabited Bodies and the Non-Corporeal Entities in the works of Marie NDiaye

Introduction:

Marie NDiaye conceptualizes exile in terms of a detachment from her literary community and affords little to no significance to national borders, such that she claims the French countryside is more of an exilic space than is cosmopolitan Berlin because it is removed from a literary and arts scene. This perspective is made more complicated and dynamic, though, by NDiaye's continued efforts to remain outside of the public eye, which would suggest a self-imposed exile as an escape, a freedom she longs to afford herself. Marie NDiaye is "one of the very few contemporary French writers whose work is, without exception, praised by critics for its excellence [and] consistently identified as one of the strongest literary voices to have emerged since the 1980's," (*Fame* 69) as notes Lydie Moudileno, but she is also a bit of an enigma in the public eye. Moudileno explains that NDiaye's strategies to control her visibility and her perception by the media and the public, suggesting a complicated relationship between her sense of the Self and perceptions from the outside – and idea that will factor into the reading of her texts later in the chapter: "The first [strategy] has entailed playing down, or at least distancing herself, from her "African" origins. When she was first published, though her family name gave away a connection to Senegal, her physical body, and therefore her "race," remained invisible" (70). NDiaye has gone even further, as well, and has responded in interviews by explicitly distancing herself from her race and her Senegalese origins.

Nicki Hitchcott recounts NDiaye's response when being called an "African writer": "never having lived in Africa and having scarcely known my father (I am of mixed race), I cannot be considered to be a francophone novelist, that is a French-speaking foreigner" (Hitchcott 24). She is clear (and accurate) in her response: she is French and thus a French writer. Yet at times she has been misperceived as an African or francophone novelist, which speaks loudly to public ideas of what it means to be black and how that is or *is not* compatible with being French. NDiaye is black, and the color of her skin rests in the minds of her fellow citizens who can often ignorantly view her through a francophone lens (francophone often suggesting French-speaking countries outside of France) even though she is French, like Franz Fanon. However, unlike Fanon, her relationship to and perception of her own race and the color of her skin is not part of how she conceives of her identity:

> When NDiaye won the 2009 Prix Goncourt for […] "Three Strong Women," the American media reported it — accurately — as the first time a black woman had won the prize. NDiaye, who is the French-born daughter of a French mother and a Senegalese father she never knew, expressed surprise over this characterization; despite a self-imposed exile to Berlin, she considers herself thoroughly French. While her writing often explores issues of race, gender and nationality, it also lingers in the gaps and cul-de-sacs of interiority in a way that makes identity itself hard to pin down. (Gentry par. 2)

From this we can glean some puzzling ideas associated with identity construction. NDiaye was surprised by the categorization of being the "first black woman" to have won the prize. The classification of being a black woman is not central to her self-identity so seemed like an ill-fitting categorization. Also, NDiaye's identity as thoroughly French is set in opposition in the

quote to the categorization of being a black woman, suggesting that "Frenchness" is mutually exclusive from "blackness", which further places race in opposition to what is understood by "national identity". This questioning of race, color, and national identity resurfaces in her interview with Andrew Asibong in which NDiaye maintains, "I am unable to see myself as a Black woman. In fact, I don't believe I can actually see myself. This comes back to the question of being a woman who writes. I don't see myself as a woman who writes or as a Black woman who writes" (199). Again, there are several layers to unpack: she does not see herself as a black woman, nor as a black woman who writes, or even a woman who writes. Though a black woman writer is particularly how she is seen by others. She presents a view of her identity separated from how she would be identified- her differences are invisible to her. Yet, in the social and political climate in which she grew up, she was perceived as a visible (black) intruder in the the largely white spaces of France where she was born and grew up, making her an intruder at home. On the other hand, her French identity is rendered invisible by racial assumptions equating Frenchness to whiteness. These identity struggles are similar to those portrayed in exile narratives for immigrants who never quite feeling accepted or "seen" for who they are. NDiaye's theater reflects these themes but does not treat immigration specifically. Because of this dynamic relationship between identity construction and perception, NDiaye is a particularly suited author to consider when re-envisioning exile. I would argue that her feelings of exile may have begun far before she lived removed from literary society in the French country side and before relocating to Berlin. Feeling an exile at home, in her own body, was a central part of her identity even as a child specifically because she was a black child with a white mother growing up in her suburb of Paris.

NDiaye left France later in life and moved to Berlin in 2007 with her French husband Jean-Yves Cendrey, who is also a writer, and their three children. Yet, it is her time in France that she describes in terms of exile, not her move to Berlin. In an interview with Hannah Taïeb et Soukaïna Qabbal of *Vivre à Berlin*, NDiaye explains why they left France: "Il y avait à la fois à l'époque un désir de vivre ailleurs, de quitter le sud-ouest où j'habitais avec mon mari et mes enfants et à la fois le désir de ne pas vivre en France sous Sarkozy. Il avait une sorte de dégoût après cette élection, ça a été le déclencheur" (par. 10). Media[21] presented NDiaye's move to Berlin as exile, but in the same interview with *Vivre à Berlin*, NDiaye expressed feeling even more connection to the literary scene while in Berlin than she had previously in the small town in France where she and her family had been residing:

> En fait on se sent moins exilés ici que quand on habitait dans un village de 200 habitants en pleine Gironde, on voit ici beaucoup plus de Français du monde littéraire qui viennent de Paris que quand on habitait à 750 kms de Paris au fin fond du Val d'Aquitaine. Donc de ce point de vue-là, on était plus en exil là-bas, ici on l'est moins mais de toute façon si on a choisi la campagne ou ici c'est parce qu'on préfère être en retrait. (par. 11)

NDiaye clearly draws a distinction between geographic borders and feelings of exile, indicating that because she is more connected to the French literary scene, she is in fact less exiled in Berlin than she was in rural France. She is less exiled in Berlin because it is a city, because French

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[21] For a few examples see:
"C'est comment de vivre exilée de la scène littéraire française ?" (Vivre A Berlin par. 12)
"despite a self-imposed exile to Berlin" (Gentry par 2)
"Mais Marie NDiaye, 45 ans, ne fait rien comme tout le monde. "Réfugiée" à Berlin, elle a d'abord décliné la longue tournée hexagonale (Salons du livre, librairies) que tout lauréat a coutume d'effectuer" (Payot par.2). While "réfugiée" is not synonymous with "exilée", refugees are exiles who flee for safety.

literary people visit Berlin, and because there is a larger literary scene. The countryside of France was removed from literary life. NDiaye defines exile in terms of feeling disconnected from a group of people, and in this explanation, exile is not a function of geographic displacement but the feeling of being removed from certain groups- in this case French literary circles. NDiaye also describes this voluntary exile, the choices to live in the countryside and Berlin, as a preference for staying in the background. Exile allows for her to live a life withdrawn from the public. One can also imagine though that a life *en retrait*, in the background, unseen, unbothered could be lonely and hurtful if not chosen.

The labels placed upon people and perceptions of their identities can also push someone into the background or on the outside of a particular group. As a mixed-race child to a white mother in a predominantly white community, it seems unlikely that NDiaye was able to escape the label of being black. In response to the assertion (see above) by NDiaye that she does not see herself as a Black woman, Moudileno properly contends that "Such statements suggest a naïveté about the dynamics of racial identification in France today, as if one's difference were not defined and constructed primarily by the other's gaze, as Fanon and Sartre have convincingly shown" (Fame 70). Drawing attention to Fanon's seminal work in *Peau Noire Masques Blancs* on the separation from one's body and its perception by others, in this case *le regard blanc,* Moudileno questions NDiaye's ability to de-racialize her body and her identity. Fanon elucidates the power of the outside gaze in regards to the relative objectivity/subjectivity of the body of color:

> « Sale nègre ! » ou simplement : « Tiens, un nègre ! » J'arrivais dans le monde, soucieux de faire lever un sens aux choses, mon âme pleine du désir d'être à l'origine du monde, et voici que je me découvrais objet au milieu d'autres objets.

> Enfermé dans cette objectivité écrasante, j'implorai autrui. Son regard libérateur, glissant sur mon corps devenu soudain nul d'aspérités, me rend une légèreté que je croyais perdue et, m'absentant du monde, me rend au monde. (Fanon 88)

Fanon describes his own existence as exiled from the world because of his extreme objectivity: he is an object among other objects which suggests a degree of invisibility. Fanon feels imprisoned by his status as object, which is itself a form of exile. He is exiled from the world because he is not recognized as a person, and he indicates that it is the look of the other, in this case the white other, that can liberate him through recognition of his existence. Yet the power of this white gaze of course also has the potential for the reverse affect, such as the inability for NDiaye's black body to be perceived as French, to exist outside her race, thus causing her to be an outsider in her home. According to Fanon, to be black is to be the Other, and "Etre "l'Autre", c'est se sentir toujours en position instable" (Fanon 61). This unstable position of "Other" exists along lines of racial difference but can equally describe the lot of the Exile as Other—always insecure, unsteady, and not at home- in one's country of origin or current residence, and perhaps in the context of what I call corporeal exile, insecure in one's own body. The feelings associated with the condition of being an exile, and thus an Other, and growing up Black in White France are arguably similar, and also, both shape identities, regardless of NDiaye's attempts to distance herself from her father's African origins.

The construction of personhood and one's understanding of the relationship between identity and the body is inextricably tied to race, according to Fanon, but also to how one is viewed by and interacts with others:

> Et puis il nous fut donné d'affronter le regard blanc. Une lourdeur inaccoutumée nous oppressa. Le véritable monde nous disputait notre part. Dans le monde blanc, l'homme de couleur rencontre des difficultés dans l'élaboration de son schéma corporel. La connaissance du corps est une activité uniquement négatrice. C'est une connaissance en troisième personne. Tour autour du corps règne une atmosphère d'incertitude certaine. Je sais que si je veux fumer, il me faudra étendre le bras droit et saisir le paquet de cigarettes qui se trouve à l'autre bout de la table. Les allumettes, elles, sont dans le tiroir de gauche, il faudra que je me recule légèrement. Et tous ces gestes, je les fais non par habitude, mais par une connaissance implicite. Lente construction de mon moi en tant que corps au sein d'un monde spatial et temporal, tel semble être le schéma. Il ne s'impose pas à moi, c'est plutôt une structuration définitive du moi et du monde- définitive, car il s'installe entre mon corps et le monde une dialectique effective. (Fanon 89)

In stating that understanding one's body is something that occurs in third person, Fanon describes a sense of being outside of himself: he sees and understands his body from a white and western perspective. His construction of the Self is discussed in the third person as well. It is not being imposed on him, but is coming to being on its own, in a seemingly detached way. It also only occurs in so far as his body exists in the space and time around him. Yet, he does acknowledge external constraints to his understanding and construction of the Self: this space and time are both constrained by those in power around him, which translates to White people who make up the "in" group. When discussing *Le Juif*, another marginalized group, he goes further to say that the Jewish person's identity is determined by others and perhaps nothing more than a general agreed upon perception by a group in power. "Je suis sur-déterminé de l'extérieur.

Je ne suis pas l'esclave de "l'idée" que les autres ont de moi, mais de mon apparaître" (Fanon 95). This idea of being slave to how one appears to others is an idea that NDiaye combats in her own personal life by rejecting classifications of Francophonie and attempting to manage her public persona, and also her writing- both in terms of genres and her characters – also push against the classifications placed upon them. There is a generational difference between Fanon and NDiaye in the way she defines herself. Yet, the issue of exteriority is central for both, just in different ways. Fanon argues that person of color can feel a stranger to the western world as a whole, exiled from European culture, from the subjectivity offered by the White gaze. Whereas NDiaye self-imposes exile through a withdrawal from the public gaze, and intentionally presents constantly morphing characters to complicate the possibility of casting perceptions on identity. I will further discuss such disconnects between the Self and outside perceptions as it relates to corporeal exile in this chapter.

Trans-corporeality is a notion that sheds light on NDiaye's corporeal exile through its presentation of the relationality of bodies with other bodies (both human and nonhuman) in the world around them, and thus providing a framework though which to consider her spectral characters, characters' metamorphoses, and her characters' movement across and between their own and different bodies. NDiaye's works have characters whose bodies transform and go beyond their original corporeal constraints, characters that enter other characters' bodies, and characters who do not have a physical body. These characters' bodies are moving, shifting, and changing, and the characters themselves are existing beyond corporeal confines; they are trans-corporeal. Certainly, other contemporary authors writing in French also have trans-corporeal characters – ghosts, zombies, morphing characters, etc. are not unique to them, of course. However, the personal backgrounds of NDiaye and Mouawad and their experiences as intruders

contribute to the creation of texts that push boundaries of expectations around human bodies, especially when put on-stage. Other contemporary authors treat noncorporeal and hybrid bodies[22], but either the authors themselves do not have liminal existences or the texts in question are not theatrical texts: the multiple layers of embodiment present in theater are important for this study. On stage, there are characters, the actors' bodies and their embodiment of the text on stage, as well as their interactions with others actors and the audience members.

NDiaye and Mouawad's theater is of particular interest, too, because they push the boundaries of reality in regards to embodiment by including spectral characters and necessitating a dynamic link between embodiment and staging to reflect the presence of noncorporeal or hybrid beings, bodily morphing, and identity transformation. In his mise-en-scene, Mouawad utilizes technology and special effects, especially video projections, to layer space and time on stage and offer a hologram-like presence for spectral characters. He also uses screens to separate his stage and veil the visual cues of bodies. NDiaye's plays have been put to stage by other directors who have also relied on symbols and manipulation of sound and space to achieve a "presence through absence" for spectral characters. The only non-theatrical text I analyze in this chapter is *Autoportrait en vert,* and it is included because as a self-portrait, it dialogues explicitly with NDiaye's own experiences and perceptions of corporeal exile as seen through the ambiguity and elusive qualities of the "women in green"[23] in the text. *Autoportrait en vert* (2005) offers its

[22] Calixthe Beyala or Ken Bugul from Cameroon and Senegal respectively, for instance, or Caribbean authors Patrick Chamoiseau or Danny Lafferière from Martinique and Haiti, respectively, are just a small number of numerous examples.

[23] The "women in green" are a series of mysterious and constantly shifting characters that Marie, the narrator of *Autoportrait en vert*, meets throughout the text. They are strange, alluring- even seductive, magic and function to move along the story, as well as destabilize the reader. The "women in green" seem to represent both people of NDiaye's past, as well as parts of her own identity, and even concepts of femininity, motherhood, and relationships in general. There will be a much larger discussion of these women in the section dedicated to this text.

own categorization of genre in its title, self-portrait, yet Ndiaye does not conform to such boundaries, offering at times a narrative form more similar to a novel. Having been commissioned to write an autobiographical text, NDiaye's choice to veer from this directly, and complicate the reader's understanding of the genre is a reflection of the hybridity in NDiaye's personhood and also her apprehension towards revealing the intimate.

Greenness takes on multiple meanings in the text but are all associated with femininity. The green women are mean, sexually erotic, powerful, distant and cold, and, perhaps most notable in the context of corporeal exile, the women are constantly morphing. Greenness is associated with a blurring of identity but one that can also inspire jealousy. Ultimately, though, being Green is being Other – including the exoticism and allure associated with the foreigner in immigrant narratives, as well as the crisis of identity. In his *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes makes reference to the Martian, who in the Western mind is green, as the epitome of the outsider and foreigner, likewise so are these women. Warren Motte notes in his article *The Greening of Marie NDiaye* that "Each of these women in green – whatever else she may be – is radically *other*, and her otherness infects the women who come into contact with her, such that they, too, come to feel contingent and out of place" (495). Motte's choice of the word infect suggests the transference of greenness to others, and while the women in green may feel out of place, they are intriguing and alluring- even inspiring to the narrator who is moved to tell their stories. Otherness/greenness is portrayed with complexity. Significantly, NDiaye associates herself with such greenness in the title *Autoportrait en vert*: the image she is offering of herself (the self-portrait) is in green. This title and its association with greenness, the women in green, and radical otherness raises questions about how NDiaye sees herself.

Unclassifiable bodies- Characters

In *Autoportrait en vert,* Marie NDiaye discusses the women in green who are unidentifiable, constantly shifting, and morphing. She highlights the precarious nature of their identities both because of the instability but also because identities exist in relation to others and others' perceptions. Marie NDiaye's approach to what and who is real, considering the questions she poses in relation to Rancière's discussion of the aesthetic regime. Her fantastical approach to characters in this text also proposes an extreme interdependence of people who exist only in relation to the reception and perception of others. Challenging form, transgressing genres, and valuing multiplicity are par for the course in the works of NDiaye. Lydie Moudileno and Warren Motte, in *Si être écrivain*, the editor's note to their special issue on NDiaye, emphasize the *worlds* of NDiaye and their diversity:

> En évoquant les « mondes » de Marie NDiaye au pluriel nous avons donc voulu souligner—comme chez Balzac—la grande diversité de l'ensemble : diversité des genres (roman, théâtre, nouvelles) ; diversité des lieux (une France indéfinie, un Bordeaux précis, la Guadeloupe, le Sénégal), des personnages, et bien sûr des modalités narratives. […] Qu'on les dise « fantastiques », « cruels », « opaques », ou au contraire saisissants de réalisme, les mondes de NDiaye nous intriguent parce qu'ils sont, comme on a pu le dire de l'écrivaine elle-même, inclassables" (1).

They identify various multiplicities – genre, locations, characters, and modalities of narrative. Moudileno and Motte rightfully describe these worlds as fantastical, cruel, and opaque while focusing on the fact that these worlds, the various diversities and NDiaye herself, are unclassifiable. For this study though, it is important to consider the intent of such cruelty, which is to cause discomfort in the reader and push her audience to consider the ills and cruelty hidden in daily life. Her cruelty is not just thematic, though. It also works in an artistic sense; her writing

is *inclassable,* disorients and haunts its reader. This call to awareness becomes more complicated in her theater though as her choices to push boundaries weigh more heavily on stage and with greater implications when considering scholarship on affect in theater. We will see below that staging cruelty is challenging, especially as it relates to theatrical embodiment of unclassifiable characters- beings and bodies whose existence can even transgress reality.

While here I will focus on NDiaye's many unclassifiable characters, as mentioned, the question of genre cannot yet be dismissed as I discuss NDiaye's self-portraiture text, *Autoportrait en vert* (Mercure de France 2005). While she designates the genre in the title, autoportrait, NDiaye does not conform to conventions of self-portraiture:

> Self-portraiture is an interpretation of oneself and the world, and of the profound link between the two. That's why self-portraitists ask who they are at the time of writing, not how they came to be who they are. That's what distinguishes it from autobiography. Self-portraiture puts a spatial structure in place, in which different aspects of the self-portraitist's identity will then be outlined. What is outlined and produced within this structure is a stranger to the times, and isn't assigned a particular time or duration. This is why self-portraiture is non-narrative and non-chronological; it often functions by association of ideas or by themes. (Poverel 2-3)

Yet, *Autoportrait en vert* is a hybrid narrative, a mixture of a novel and a non-chronologically dated journal; it is completely hors-genre. The title already makes reference to the women in green, who are driving force of the narrative, and implicates herself in the reference, as well as the portrait she is giving of herself. NDiaye includes autobiographical glimpses into her life- naming her actual husband, referencing her childhood in a Parisian suburb to a single mother and her absent father. She also spent time living next to the Garonne, the river that occupies a central

role in *Autoportrait en vert*. Yet these are cursory details[24], superficial and not very enlightening to who NDiaye sees herself as, or on what her interpretation of herself in the world might be. They do, however, offer false intimacy, and I would say even a false sense of hospitality directed toward scholarly criticism, journalists, and eventually the reader, with NDiaye. With the inclusion of specific autobiographical details, especially when in the form of a diary, the perception is a hospitable invitation into the personal space of the life of Marie NDiaye who has positioned herself as narrator and writer. However, the narrator is inhospitable in her encounter with the reader, as she is with the media and critical scholarships, never even offering a name and forcing the reader to exist in the troubling uncanny of her stories. She does not want to be framed by the stereotypical visions of her and attempts to resist the ontological dilemma of the Black as described by Fanon: "L'ontologie, quand on a admis une fois pour toutes qu'elle laisse de côté l'existence, ne nous permet pas de comprendre l'être du Noir. Car le Noir n'a plus à être noir, mais à l'être en face du Blanc" (Fanon 119). The reader's experience encountering the narrator and her *Autoportrait en vert* (constantly questioning what is real, to whom we are being exposed, and to what extent we can trust our perceptions) reflects the experiences the narrator has with the women in green: she is forced to question if the person is who she thinks it is, or if she exists at all. She resists the easy classification of people, focusing instead on the complexity of characters and their constant transformations.

[24] For example, Marie the narrator in *Autoportrait* has four children unlike Marie NDiaye who only has three, a discrepancy that would likely go unnoticed. Yet, if the reader is privy to this information, it can serve to further disorient and destabilize the reader and contribute to her dominant theme of *être et paraître*. Interestingly, the number of children is even a point of confusion and inaccuracy in scholarship on *Autoportait en vert*. Giguere, for instance, asserts that the "narrator reveals that she has five children" (60). Whereas, Polverel identifies the number of children as one of the "autobiographical elements that enable us to connect Marie Ndiaye and the narrator" (3), suggesting that the narrator and NDiaye both have the same number of children. Certainly, autobiographies can include fictional elements, and fiction can include autobiographical details, but it does offer an example of the destabilizing effects of NDiaye's text, its dubious autobiographic details, and the general questioning of reality it causes among scholars.

The photographs in the text only serve to further the reader's disorientation by functioning contrarily to expectations of seeing portraits of the narrator in her self-portrait text. Instead, *Autoportrait* begins with a photograph that does not connect directly to the text follows: it is of the back of a young woman who is out of focus and staring out at green trees and brown cliffs, seemingly from the top of a mountain. This continues to be the case with the other images that punctuate the text but that are not connected directly to NDiaye's past. Instead, the reader is shown photographs of the river, portraits from family archives from the beginning of the twentieth century, and photos taken by photographer Julie Ganzin, blurry images of a woman, alone, with her back to the camera. Two of the photos taken by Ganzin, the first and last ones, are titled "Décrire;" yet they do not describe the text, and rather portray something entirely different. Shirley Jordan points to this gap between the images and text and its narrative function:

> The written text makes no mention of them: they are unaccountable apparitions, or intrusions, which further create enigma by their cloudy or time-damaged quality or their unconventional composition. [… She argues] that the photographs that punctuate this text but that are partially decoupled from it serve persistently to dis-locate the autobiographical self, transferring our attention away from NDiaye as a private individual and back to her writing. (Jordan 62)

There is a disjunction between words and images, like there is between writing and seeing and also between performed and perceived identities, which refers back to ideas of stereotypes, displaced conceptions of the Self, exiling oneself from the public view. In *La chambre claire*, Roland Barthes draws our attention to the tension between public and private space in relation to photography. During the age of photography, the private broke into the public sphere as part of a change in social values; there arose great desire for a public consumption of private lives. The

increasing interest in the private lives of celebrities, for instance, corresponds to notions of dispossession as well as hospitality. The object of the public gaze is dispossessed of his or her right to live undisturbed and unseen and in this way, is forced into hospitable relations with the public. This projected responsibility echoes that which the psychologist placed upon the son in *Les grandes personnes*; he was coerced into welcoming his biological parents into his chest, into the private space of his body. His body, at once considered a private sphere, was forcibly entered by his biological parents, which is arguably more violent than a photograph. However, the unwelcome intrusion is similar in terms of dispossession of control over one's private space as well as the forced interrelationality that the entry through photography represents. NDiaye seems to be responding directly to this challenge. Though hoping for clues into NDiaye's world through the photographs, the reader is kept at an impersonal distance, which is in itself illuminating. NDiaye is known for her more private posture as an author, and it seems that the inclusion of the photos reveals more about her desire for discretion than about her personal life. NDiaye was approached by Mercure de France and was invited to participate in their *Traits et Portraits* project. It seems that her agreement to contribute to Mercure's project did not alter her elusive status as a writer; it did, though, reveal a strong message that the unwillingness to divulge is an act of prudency, and one could even say an act of resistance as well. She resists the potential categories and stereotypes about identities available in images and considered by scholarly critique or the press: black, woman of color, feminist, feminine, immigrant, etc. Speaking specifically in relation to Fanon's *Peau noire masques blanches*, Homi Bhabha concurs that the viewing of the black body leads to its destruction.

> The black presence runs the representative narrative of Western personhood: its pas tethered to treacherous stereotypes of primitivism and degeneracy will not produce a

> history of civil progress, a space for the *Socius*; its present, dismembered and dislocated, will not contain the image of identity that is questioned in the dialectic of mind/body and resolved in the epistemology of appearance and reality. The white man's eyes break up the black man's body and in that act of epistemic violence its own frame of reference is transgressed, its field of vision disturbed. (*Location of Culture* 60)

The act of viewing the black body is itself problematic, and according to Fanon himself, the colonial subject is always "overdetermined from without" – from image and fantasy. While here Fanon recognizes the colonial subject is identified from the outside, Bhabha also speaks to the processes of self-identification, as well as imposed, indicating that the first condition is "to exist is to be called into being in relation to an otherness, its look or locus. It is a demand that reaches outward to an external object" (63). Yet it is this conception of being in relation to an Other that leads to the colonial desire argues Bhabha: "the phantasmic space of possession that no one subject can singly or fixedly occupy, and therefore permits the dream of the inversion of roles" (63). He also argues that the place of identification is a space of splitting, trying to occupy both spaces at once, which results in liminality. Finally, the third condition in the process of identification is that it is always the "production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image" (64). NDiaye seems to both resist this claim and also play with her readers' expectations of identification through image. Her characters are constantly transforming, but they do not adhere to the perceptions or images of them. The narrator fails to achieve a fixed image of the women in green whose metamorphoses escape image productions.

In terms of the text itself, NDiaye retained control over her self-portrait to avoid overexposure and misinterpretations. *Autportrait en vert* is itself elusive and a complicated web of questionable realities. In this way, it mirrors the evasive image of NDiaye in the public view:

> Prior to the publication of *Autoportrait en vert* NDiaye wrote nothing autobiographical and remained unfashionably resistant to journalistic probing of her private life. When she accepted an invitation to contribute to the recently launched Mercure de France Traits et portraits [Features and Portraits] series, whose express purpose is to provide a forum for exploring the visual in autobiographical projects, her aim was to create a self-portrait that would be in tune with her habitual elusiveness. (Jordan 2)

Overall, it is easy to assert that NDiaye succeeded in this aim[25]. "In fact, rather than being connected through similarities between their lives, the strongest link between the author and the narrator is that they both hesitate to divulge details about themselves" (Giguere 62). Not only is the self-portrait in tune with her habitual elusiveness, it is also in tune with her tendency to put to question classifications. In this case, the classification of genre - self-portraiture – ends up being dissonant with what the literature does which is to confuse and the unwillingness to divulge, which NDiaye describes as prudent in *Autoportrait*, can be revealing though. I would argue that if, as Poverel states, "Self-portraiture is an interpretation of oneself and the world, and of the profound link between the two", then actually *Autoportrait en vert* could be seen as incredibly enlightening on how NDiaye sees the world and her place in it. She describes a questionably safe, non-trustworthy world full of constantly shifting, and sometimes hostile people. This inhospitableness necessitates the "habitual elusiveness" that characterizes both the narrator and NDiaye's ways of relating to the world around them because being elusive offers a form of

[25] One does have to consider if these same questions would arise if she were a man. Are there greater expectations for women to be hospitable to the outside world, to invite their audience into their private life? If so, NDiaye certainly resists such assumptions. "Il [mon père] accable de son dédain moquer les hommes qui écrivent, advantage que les femmes … si elles sont jolies." (*Autoportrait* 82) Her women in green do just the opposite: their encounters are elusive, distant, and cold. They escape categories and are troubling to the narrator and the reader.

protection. This type of judiciousness reveals a complicated worldview on the part of NDiaye. She expresses greenness as an inspiring and alluring quality and something with which she even associates given that her *autoportrait* is itself *en vert,* but at the same time the narrator, like NDiaye, protects herself by keeping distance between herself and the women in green.

As so far as *Autopotrait en vert* is *about* anything, it is about Marie's encounters with women in green set to the back drop of a rising Garonne on the verge of flooding, which is, too, green and an allegorical woman itself. These women in green are characters who may wear green clothes, have green eyes, or are associated with green in some other way, but they are also symbols of feminine struggles- of power, seduction, mystery, fear, and insecurity- and also aspects of the narrator observing them and the writer creating them. Among these women in green are a teacher, a woman haunting a house like a ghost, Marie's former best-friend who married her father, and even NDiaye's mother. Most of these women are in roles which should be trustworthy and safe, but greenness is anything but warm or dependable. The narrator watches the women in green, listens, but always handles herself with restraint to remain distant, safe, and an observer. In her first actual, interactive encounter with Katia Depetiteville, one of the many women in green, she acknowledges this prudency. After having walked past Katia's house several times over a period of weeks, she finally meets her and recounts, "Elle se présente, très courtoise, obligeante, me dit son prénom, et son nom que je savais déjà. Sa parole reste suspendue. Elle attend que je me fasse connaître comme elle vient de le faire. Je suis prudente, je ne dis rien (32). This is not the first time that the narrator expresses an anxious point of view around revealing herself to others. Earlier in the text she becomes nervous concerning what she may have shared with her friend Cristina but takes comfort in knowing that she certainly would not have said anything since it is "contraire à ma nature" (22). The narrator, like NDiaye, proves

to be uncomfortable and untrusting of the world and people around her. She is wary of sharing or opening up and prefers privacy and distance, true to what we know of NDiaye. The narrator is an observer more than a subject of the narrative, and in this, the *autoportrait* does offer an interpretation of the world and NDiaye's place in it. She, too, is an observer of the uncanny[26]- the strange, mysterious, and even surreal- that occurs in the mundane of daily life. Yet, NDiaye also seems to remain on the outside, a position that supports the idea of an exilic identity regardless of the fact that only recently did she decide to leave France and move to Berlin, Germany. NDiaye's identity as a writer is also very much connected to her tendency to transgress borders- of reality, of genre, of bodies even, all of which are ever present in this text.

Autportrait en vert follows in suit, like the greater corpus of her writing it plays with the fluidity between imagination and reality, achieving this in part through ambiguity in her writing. The Garonne has its own green and menacing, and allegorical, presence: it is beautiful and powerful, but also a threat to safety since it is on the verge of flooding throughout the diary entries. The Garonne is given qualities of one of *Autoportait'*s elusive characters, presenting it as "une femme en vert" itself: "Nous attendons, nous surveillons. Ce n'est pas sur un quelconque Vieux Père que s'exerce notre vigilance, ce n'est pas sur le Mississippi ce n'est pas sur le Rhône ni sur le Danube : il ne fait de doute pour personne ici que la Garonne est d'essence féminine. Ce soir elle est brune, lourde, comme bombée" (10). This citation is the end of the first section of the text and is followed by another image. The image appears at first glance to be a panoramic of trees and tributaries of the river intertwined between tree stumps and patches of land bifurcated

[26] Whereas, the connections to violence and sexually based violence with the uncanny are applicable to *Les grandes personnes* in regards to the desire to keep the pedophilia silent but being revealed, *Autoportrait* seems to draw upon E. Jentsch's uncanny depending on "intellectual uncertainty" and Freud's application.

by a large tree trunk in the foreground. Yet a closer look reveals that two photographs of the exact same scene from a slightly different angle are connected by a vertical, thick, black line. The photographs do depict a part of a river but nothing resembling the Garonne described in the text whose water level is rising and threatening to flood. The image shows calm serenity and light peeking through. It is inviting. Though it is also confusing since it transgresses expectations. The following page begins a new section labeled "2002". There is no month, contrary to the previous entry, which is "December 2003". Also, the text spans twenty pages instead of just two and begins with a very short first paragraph : "Comme je la voyais chaque jour devant sa maison, il m'a été longtemps impossible de distinguer entre cette présence verte et son environnement" (11). The *présence verte* is described separate from its environment but given an invasive, penetrating quality since she cannot distinguish between the two. It also refers back to the title of the text itself – the *autoportrait* is also in the greenness that is taking over. The enigmatic, single-sentence opening to this section is rendered even more puzzling by NDiaye's language. Instead of indicating whom the narrator sees specifically, she refers to her with the pronoun "la", which could be referring to anything/anyone feminine. Because of the juxtaposition between this sentence and the image of the river, and because it comes directly after the description of the Garonne as an "essence féminine", the reader is led astray in regards to whom the "la" refers thus positioning the river as an allegorical woman. It was impossible for her to distinguish between the *présence verte* and *son environnement*. At this point the reader considers the river as a green presence, like the presence of the green women who would follow in the story, and the environment could be a description of the green trees surrounding the river in the preceding photographs. However, the narrator brings to question her own perceptions in that she acknowledges an inability to distinguish between the two presences. She also implies the

power of the green presence and its ability to penetrate the world around it. It takes over, it inhabits its environment, just as the greenness of the women will later inhabit the narrator.

As the narrative continues it becomes increasingly clear that there is another woman in green to which the "la" refers, though pages go by before she is officially introduced. What is more, when the narrator asks her children if they see this woman in green standing beside the banana tree, they unequivocally respond that they do not. The narrator exploits the children's inability to see the woman to explore questions about appearance versus reality and the relativity of reality. The self-awareness of the narrator to the possibility of seeing someone who exists in a different realm of reality is arguably more chilling and disconcerting to the reader who can no longer trust a narrator who even questions herself. The narrator wonders if she can believe that her children really do not see the woman. If the woman is there even when she is not. If the woman waits for her. She asks her children, "Si vous voyez quelqu'un à chaque fois que vous passez devant sa maison, est-ce que cela signifie qu'il est là tout le temps ou seulement quand vous passez devant sa maison ?" (17), but they have no response, shrug their shoulders, and runs off to the courtyard of the school, which inflicts the memory of yet another woman in green from the narrator's childhood. Polverel poses the question about the dangers to the reader who is enticed to enter this unwieldly universe created by NDiaye:

> If things aren't real, isn't it dangerous to lead people to believe that they are? This is a question that spans Marie NDiaye's story, is it not? Isn't it problematic for readers to leave aside their concept and perceptions of reading to dive into the flooding of the Garonne with Marie NDiaye, to the point of almost drowning? *Auto-portrait en vert* is towards someone, for someone. Marie NDiaye addresses repeatedly the reader; it creates the illusion of orality, "Did I say that?" Yet the reader's place isn't easily found in Marie

> NDiaye's work, because she provokes the reader with an introverted text. It's a perpetual interrogation of oneself on the part of the reader. The story could be stifling, devastating if it wasn't segmented to allow the readers to find their bearings and get their breath back. (4)

There are two important aspects of this citation to explore. First, what is the potential danger of positing mysticism or other unrealities as real such that readers leave aside their own perceptions to fall head first into the sorcery of NDiaye's worlds? NDiaye's work pushes the question of what is real to an extreme. In the tradition of Rancière and his aesthetic regime, closely aligning fiction and reality, and she separates them both from ideas of untruth or lies. In *The Distribution of the Sensible* underlines this distinction between fictional realities and any sort of unreality.

> This actuality itself raises a twofold question: the general question of fiction's rationality, i.e. the distinction between fiction and falsity, and the question of the distinction - or the indistinction - between the modes of intelligibility specific to the construction of stories and the modes of intelligibility used for understanding historical phenomena. (Rancière 35)

While Rancière is discussing the role of art, using fictions to compose a narrative of reality that can be conceived and understood, it seems that NDiaye seeks to blur ideas of reality even further by applying fictional narrative to natural and sociopolitical spaces- especially in relation to the family, social degradation, exploitation- not just artistic ones. NDiaye is not only using fiction and art to help people see a more common narrative of reality, but more so to demonstrate a multiplicity of realities. Polverel advances that the reader almost drowns in the potential flood that weaves in and out of the narrative with a looming, threatening presence that never comes to fruition. Yet, at the very least, drowning suggests violence, lack of control or feeling of

overwhelm. This effect on the reader relates directly to the second part of this citation- the place of the reader. The narrator seemingly speaks directly to the reader which offers a false sense of intimacy but also trust. The reader feels connected to the narrator through these direct addresses, yet, the narrator never really discloses very much. In fact, one never quite knows if any of the information we are given is actually real. Our expectations for an intimate portrait of the narrator, and author Marie, furthered by the direct addresses is instead met with confusion and uneasiness. Marie, the narrator, struggles to know what is real in the world around her. The reader experiences this same struggle to know what is real in the text. We are invited into a parallel experience in which we begin to questions ourselves and others: is anything what it seems? According to Rancière, "Fabrication of stories is linked to a certain idea of history as common destiny, with an idea of those who make history. […] Thus, it is not a matter of claiming that 'History' is only made up of stories that we tell ourselves, but simply that the 'logic of stories' and the ability to act as historical agents go together" (Rancière 38-39). Autoportraits are usually factual narrative. However, rather than to understand reality through fiction, NDiaye seems to be using her theater to destabilize any notion of rational reality and destabilize notions of identities, causing anxiety and uneasiness in her reader to suggest that rather than finding a greater truth in her art, she is instead revealing a world in which the only reality is constant shifting and transformation.

The narrative flows with a fluid movement from one woman in green to another, which serves to exacerbate this disassociation with a tangible reality. Even when discussing physical bodies, they are not associated with particular people. The narrator describes that all the women are wearing shorts and sandals and asks "Où est la sensualité là-dedans? Dans la bride un peu lâche qui laisse flotter le pied et fait claquer le talon contre la semelle, ou dans la vision des

jambes dévoilées ? Où est la sensualité, et est-il nécessaire que les jambes soient belles, qu'elles soient luisantes, lisses et allongées ?" (20). The body – here legs and feet - displaced from its owner, or perhaps is not owned at all. Also, the bodies take on properties of the river: moving, changing, morphing, transforming. They are constants in the narrator's life but exist as an abstract, or even a source of conflict since she cannot rely on them to be constant or reliable. This unpredictability raises the question of how women's bodies are exploited in both "normal" and extreme situations – exploited for their sexuality, for their appearance, and their value to others even in the quotidian but also in violence and oppression against women's bodies in, for example, rape and rape culture, human trafficking, pornography, etc. Women's bodies are regulated, manipulated, and even owned by others. This estranged relationship between the women and their bodies suggests corporeal exile in two different ways. First, the people are exiled from their bodies as they morph and change and cannot rely on their bodies as a stable home, just as is Fanon who is first and exclusively seen as a Black man. In the above description of the bodies, the legs, feet, and ankles were discussed separately from the rest of the body and certainly from the person to whom they would normally be attached. NDiaye seems to comment on the dispossession of women's bodies through objectification and violation but in a way that reveals how this corporeal exile can and does exist in daily situations, not just extreme ones. Second, it can also suggest corporeal exile between bodies: one body is exiled from another which is seen in the isolation the narrator feels, a type of self-imposed exile in regards to relationships. She meets her friend Cristina but is not actually sure if it is her or someone else. "C'est alors que je tombe sur Cristina, mais dès l'instant où je la vois je ne sais plus si c'est elle, ou si c'est Marie-Gabrielle, ou si c'est Alison – non pas que m'échappe son prénom exact : entre ces trois femmes, je ne sais simplement plus qui est celle-ci" (21). As soon as she sees Cristina,

she already questions if it is her. Cristina's appearance, her body, does not identify her. The narrator is clear to specify that the confusion is not one of remembering a name but actually not being able to determine her identity. Through the conversation with Cristina, the narrator deduces that it probably is not in fact Cristina since she does not have children, but this person does. However, she is still uncertain that it is not Cristina and wonders if it is not whom it might be: "Dans mon souvenir, Cristina, mon amie, n'a pas d'enfants. Dans ce cas, qui est cette femme-là ?" (23). She does not assert that the woman does not have children but qualifies her statement by including that according to her memory Cristina does not have children. Her lack of clarity on whether or not someone is her friend, while having a conversation with her, is grounds for questioning the narrator's sanity: How does she have no idea? Is she so far from reality? Yet, as in most of NDiaye's writing, relative lucidity and sanity are not necessarily tied to societal norms or even laws of nature. NDiaye creates her own worlds that require the reader to reconsider what is accepted as normal, sane, or real. Here the narrator forces us to consider what is important when identifying a person. The woman removes her sunglasses, and Marie realizes she doesn't recognize her. Thus, other physical attributes were insufficient, and sunglasses were enough of a disguise to confound the narrator. What does this mean for Cristina, and her identity when her physical appearance or her role as mother are not enough to identify her to one of her close friends? Does she exist only as she is perceived or named by others? Eventually the "actual" Cristina approaches in pink shorts, only after many mentions of being unsure of who she is. The narrator later refers to the first woman as the "fausse Cristina" saying, "Aussi bien je me trompe et cette scène m'en rappelle d'une presque pareille, cette dernière fictive, tandis que l'autre proviendrait simplement de la vie de la fausse Cristina" (29). Her identity becomes defined by a misperception. She is false, counterfeit, fake, even an imitation even though there is

no mention that “fausse Cristina” presented herself as someone else. She is unidentified or misidentified but whomever the woman was is less relevant than the fact that she was a “false “Cristina”. Like Fanon in *Peau Noire*, she exists as the inaccurate perception of someone else. She is in essence exiled from her own identity by the misidentification by the narrator. When considered in relation to the genre of self-portrait, looking back to Poverel’s definition- “Self-portraiture is an interpretation of oneself and the world, and of the profound link between the two” (2) - is this NDiaye’s tongue-in-cheek response to being asked to participate in the portraits project? The narrator demonstrates that identities are constantly shifting and transforming, but also, they can be constructs of perceptions or misperceptions as Fanon pointed out. In this way, NDiaye does not veer from Rancière on what is “real” so much as adds another dimension: creating a tension between reality and fiction that parallels that between identity and misperception.

This tension between reality and perception, and specifically in relation to the existence of people extends beyond Cristina to all the women in green. “Il me fallait vérifier que vous existiez” (32), says the narrator, referring to Katia Depetiteville, the “femme en vert auprès du bananier”. Also, it is not only a question of if she exists or not, like if she is a figment of the narrator’s imagination, but it is a doubt that she exists as she claims to, or more precisely, as she believes she exists:

> Je ne crois pas tout à fait à ce qu’elle est. Je ne pense pas une seconde qu’elle invente – le nom qu’elle m’a dit être le sien est d’ailleurs celui qu’on m’avait donné. Mais il me semble qu’elle a revêtu les qualités de quelqu’un d’autre, sans le savoir elle-même. Ce n’est pas très clair. Je dois m’expliquer plus exactement. Je crois que la femme en vert, qui m’a dit s’appeler Katia Depetiteville, n’est pas Katia Depetiteville, et je crois que si je

> demandais au village une description de Katia Depetiteville, on ne me décrirait pas cette femme-là, la femme en vert…" (33)

Two fascinating parts of this citation are the fact that Katia Depetiteville is said to have taken on qualities of someone else without even being aware, and that regardless of the fact that Katia has self-identified as Katia, the narrator questions it because others in the village would describe her differently. Both of these aspects demonstrate what little control Katia has over her identity, according to the narrator. How Katia sees herself does not reflect reality in the same way that others perceptions of her does. Narrator admits that she does not think Katia is making up the name, and that she has taken on qualities of others without even knowing it. This is not an occasion of pretending to be someone else but rather genuine discrepancy between who Katia believes she is and how she would be perceived by others. This struggle is also relevant to Marie NDiaye, as discussed earlier in the chapter, who is perceived to have a connection to Africa and associated with being a francophone writer, though she is actually a French-writer, and has no connection to Africa. This incongruity also offers another view of corporeal exile. Does Katia, or NDiaye, live in a self-imposed and desirable exile in which they seek privacy but also isolate themselves from false perceptions of their own identity?

The narrator's position in the world of *Autoportrait en vert* is that of an observer. Instead of discussing her own actions or describing herself, her feelings, or own actions (in her *autoportrait*), as the "writer" of her journal (like NDiaye's own role), she offers descriptions of what she observes in the people around her but in so doing also transforms them and reveals the troubled relationship between the characters and their bodies. In her encounters with the women in green, both the narrator's and characters' identities are not necessarily attached to appearance

or a body and are also morphing. The superficial role of the women in green's bodies relate to how Fanon describes the body identity, or percept, of Blacks:

> Alors le schéma corporel, attaqué en plusieurs points, s'écroula, cédant la place à un schéma épidermique racial. Dans le train, il ne s'agissait plus d'une connaissance de mon corps en troisième personne, mais en triple personne. […] J'existais en triple : j'occupais de la place. J'allais à l'autre... et l'autre évanescent, hostile mais non opaque, transparent, absent, disparaissait. La nausée... (121).

Like the transparent, absent bodies of Black people whose body image was reduced to their skin, NDiaye presents a series of women, who too, are either invisible or perceived in multiplicity, and who are often unsure of their own identities or are indistinguishable from other people. In the case of the multiple wives of one of the characters, Ivan, the women's identities are almost so indistinguishable that one can replace the other without much difficulty or even cause of concern to those around them, with exception to the narrator. The first wife hung herself. Jenny, who found the first wife's body, became the next wife. Jenny then also kills herself from overdosing on medicine. Both of these women were evidently depressed, and ultimately downgraded, given their suicides but no information is given about their mental state, about their lives or marriages. Marie goes to visit Jenny's parents to offer and to find comfort for the loss of Jenny. However, upon arriving she notices that Ivan already has a new wife who is at Jenny's parents' house. They were all drinking coffee on the terrace as if it was completely normal that Jenny had died, that Ivan had already remarried, that the new wife would be visiting the deceased former wife's parents. The public including scholars, media, and readers, who might naturally be curious about the reactions and relationship between Ivan's deceased wife's parents and his new wife (without Ivan even present), are given further cause for questioning by the narrator who was disturbed by

the scene. However, the parents, who were completely at ease with their coffee guest, were perturbed instead by the narrator inquiring about the quick remarrying. They never responded- happier not to think about it. This progression of wives, one after the other, further brings to question the existence of the women's identities outside of their role as wife. Ivan has no role in the text other than a conveyor belt of women in green, at least two of who killed themselves. These women have the impression of being expendable – specifically because they are identified only in relation to their marriages to Ivan. These wives relative lack of identity is complicated though by the fact that there is no information even given about Ivan: at least these women, even in their depression and suicide, are given the power of being women in green.

The women in green can be categorized by their indistinguishable nature, as well as their propensity to morph and transform- often such that their own identities are unknown even to themselves. Even Marie's own mother in described as a *femme en vert,* but also as "métamorphosable à l'infini"[27] (82). Women appear, disappear and reappear under different forms. Marie's former best friend who married Marie's dad had brown eyes that turned green when she lost her identity as a person to her status as wife and woman in green. Multiple women were mistaken for Cristina, and even Katia, one of the most developed women in green in the text who lives in isolation allowing some semblance of identity is believed to take on another form. Marie indicates, "Je ne l'ai jamais revue. Je n'ai plus jamais entendu parler d'elle. Oh, elle reviendra – mais sous quelle forme ? Elle reviendra – comment savoir ?" (87). The transient nature of these women who take on new forms is problematic in terms of their own identities but

[27] Referencing here Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and thus also connecting her mother and other women in green to Kafka's characters who feel powerless to understand or control what is happening, even perhaps feeling crushed by the authority's expectations, and perhaps for this reason struggle to have a clear concept of self-identity as they are struggle to bare the weight of pressures placed on their bodies and their beings.

also for their relationships. Marie whose entire narrative is about these women laments that if they disappear, she could not even prove their existence. “Je redoute de me considérer moi-même comme un être insensé si toutes ces femmes en vert disparaissent l’une après l’autre, me laissant dans l’impossibilité de prouver leur existence, ma propre originalité” (88). First, she poses large existential questions about how to identify someone who is constantly changing, morphing, and transforming and if someone’s identity even exists if it cannot be proven. These questions also bring to attention issues of mortality, identity preservation (and creation) in the minds of others, and the futility, perhaps, of trying to identify and prove these existences. Second, she also ties such questions back to her own existence. If these women, who are connected to the narrator, disappear she would be left in the impossibility of proving their existence and her own originality. What is most interesting here is that her originality – singularity, uniqueness, the aspects of herself that are solely hers – is dependent on the women in green. The extent of such dependence can also be seen in the fact that she dreads considering herself crazy or foolish if these women were to disappear and then be impossible to prove. The narrator does not dread the perception of others – that others would consider her insane – but that she would consider herself (*me considérer*) as such. Even her self-perception and confidence in her own sanity are dependent on existence of the women in green. These questions emphasize the shifting borders of the Self and the precariousness that exists when in relationships with others.

Portraying Bodies

The shock factor in NDiaye’s works comes from her words and especially the way she highlights the silence around disturbing and violent parts of society. Yet, there is a challenge that comes with the visual when staging her plays that can alter the shock value. Her 2011 play, *Les*

grandes personnes, includes pedophilia, cultural appropriation, and even murder as themes but her play is much more about outright denial of our flaws and the absurdity of what society has come to accept. She achieves this end in part through her use of supernatural characters who have been exiled from their bodies (by death) are not limited by the bounds of corporeality, which is difficult to portray on stage, and they thus possess a strength over the characters who are still alive and in human bodily form. One such power of non-corporeal beings is the ability to inhabit other spaces and other bodies sometimes even forcing human characters to leave home – while introduced in this section, the inhabitation of bodies will be further discussed later in this chapter.

Marie NDiaye's works brilliantly cross genres to candidly portray the pain and struggle of daily life rings clear, whether seen in the banality of the quotidian or in the extraordinary of sorcery and fantasy that often characterize her work. Her plays often forsake reality and its limitations for a fantastical, supernatural world. Her 2011 play published by Gallimard, *Les grandes personnes*, luminously balances both aspects—the ordinary and the supernatural—in order to bring attention to that which society chooses to ignore. However, instead of focusing on the scandal of pedophilia, or even the secondary indignity of cultural appropriation, she illuminates the outrageous denial and violent silence which surround them. NDiaye uses the fantastic to highlight the absurdity of what we have accepted as reality. She presents opposition and incompatibility and also focuses on the absurdity of the continuous dialectic. The fantastic expression is one of hybridity, of fusion, and in which NDiaye (re)consideres the quotidian in light of the supernatural super-imposed over reality. Her use of the fantastic brings attention to the intersections of potentially inharmonious ideas and spaces (i.e. western and indigenous), then

it is also a representation of conflicts and crossings of borders, whether geographical, political, cultural, or in this study of NDiaye- corporeal.

Transporting such fantastic elements from the page to the stage requires consideration of the portrayal of spectral characters. Ghosts and other characters who exist outside of rationally accepted corporeal forms (i.e. the biological parents in *Les Grandes personnes* who exist as talking beings who live inside of the chest of their son) lack of physical space on stage complicates NDiaye's acceptance of the supernatural in prosaic reality. The play is about two reunited couples who discuss how life has unfolded. One couple had two children, both of whom disappeared over a decade before. The internationally adopted son, named "*Le Fils*" (indicative of how his identity as an individual is fairly inconsequential to his significance as the adopted child), had always lived with his biological parents physically living in his chest. He fled his loving, adoptive family because the parents in his chest demanded revenge—they asked the son to kill his adoptive parents. The daughter committed suicide just before the departure of her brother and has returned as a ghost to haunt her family. The second family has an obedient, successful son named "le maître"—a school teacher—who comes and dines with his parents every night. Yet his parents refuse to listen when he tries repeatedly to admit that he violates his students. Active denial of the truth is a central and important theme in the text. Additionally, the play brings to light questions of the potential harm that "helping" can do, here in the context of international adoption. It also questions power and relational hierarchy, lineal transmission of pain and suffering, as well as the fluidity of corporal boundaries. The "opportunity" of a life in the West with a wealthy family has not solved all of the orphaned boy's problems. This is evident in the tyranny held over the boy's life by his biological parents who exist as speaking beings living in his chest. They occupy such a place of power that his decisions become based on

them—his biological parents have taken over his body and his life, symbolizing the extent to which his past determines his present and future. The anger of the parents and desire for revenge commentate on the philanthropic efforts of the adoptive parents who represent the general population of "do-gooders" who, despite the best of intentions, may have a negative impact on the communities/peoples they try to aid. Additionally, the power of these parents who do not possess their own body but have inhabited their son demonstrates the body as a space that can be invaded and taken over. This supernatural existence of the parents (and of the ghost sister whom we will later encounter) are examples of the fantastic used in NDiaye's text – their existence in his chest is never questioned, thought to be strange or out of the ordinary. No one considers if he is telling the truth, nor questions the son's sanity – even before other characters hear the parents' voices themselves. However, the fact that NDiaye presents these supernatural characters as a very natural part of the quotidian further highlights her reconstruction of reality. Such re-writing of corporeal bounds cannot be achieved in the same way by performance, though, which is naturally limited by the confines of corporeality in a way that the page can exceed.

Christophe Perton, the director of the theatrical performance of NDiaye's *Les grandes personnes*, acknowledges the challenges this important and strategic literary device poses for theatrical production : "Le plus difficile a été de convaincre les acteurs qu'il ne fallait pas chercher à justifier les situations et les exagérations de Marie NDiaye […] Pour ma part, j'ai évité d'insister sur les éléments de fantastique, car ils sont déjà très présents dans l'écriture. J'ai cherché à traduire le fantastique de manière douce et subtile" (*Jeune Afrique*). His intention was to do justice to the subtlety of NDiaye's foray into the ghostly. He believed it was important to represent the fantastic in her work with refinement, which is obviously the most appropriate approach for the work of NDiaye, whose use of the fantastic never approaches the gaudy or

ostentatious. However, any visual portrayal of something that exists outside of our corporeally defined reality risks being reductive. The stage implies, and perhaps even requires, a stronger connection to physical dimensions of reality—at least in the fact that there is a real body, or a real image attributed to these characters. Of course, there is a precedence of using projections and other digital media to push the boundaries of theatrical space[28]. Nonetheless, in producing NDiaye's theatrical texts, the decision has to be made as to whether or not to give her non-corporal beings a body or at least some sort of form or image, a decision that inherently impacts the reception of NDiaye's story. There is an interpretation being made, a decision about how they do or do not exist. Including characters, the parents, who live inside of their son's chest is outside the realm of possibility when limited by physical bodies on stage. NDiaye writes these parents as speaking characters who are part of the reality of this family's life. Even a video projection and their voices coming from a speaker on the son's body still brings attention to the fact that they are being superimposed, that they are artificial, that they are outside of reality, which is not the intent of the text. Choosing not to attach an image to them, though, also limits their power in the play, which is also not representing the actuality of their role. In an interview with the magazine *Jeune Afrique*, Adama Diop, the Senegalese actor who plays the role of "*Le Fils*" in *Les grands personnes*, explains his own difficulty with playing the role, "Ce qui frappe au départ, c'est le mélange entre réalisme et fantastique. Quand tu te rends compte que le fils adoptif a ses deux parents naturels qui vivent dans sa poitrine, entre son cœur et ses poumons, que la fille est une revenante, tu te demandes aussitôt comment tu vas faire passer ça de manière concrète sur une scène de théâtre." This is exactly the challenge of the expectations of the stage—the necessity of concretely portraying something that is outside the bounds of reality. In

[28] Contemporaries such as Robert Lepage or Wajdi Mouawad, for instance, successfully interweave many media in order to transgress corporeal limitations.

NDiaye's *Les grandes personnes,* the parents who live inside Diop's character's chest are listed as "Ceux qui logent dans la poitrine du fils (voix)" (9). They are included and given the same space and recognition as other characters. They are subject of the verb *loger,* meaning to stay as if the chest was a hotel or a space of accommodation. She also indicates though that the characters are voices. If there were people living inside of someone's chest (whether as spirits or in some small physical corporeal form), you could not seem then through the son's body. Presumably, though, you could hear them – just as you can hear a stomach growl or a joint crack. Perton's 2011 mise-en-scene of *Les grandes personnes* at La Colline Théâtre National in Paris included these characters as voices but voices that are heard from off-stage. While a reasonable and practical production decision, it is also one that results in reduced presence on stage for these characters. It also diminishes the impact of the idea that these voices are supposed to be actual characters inside of the son's body – not just a spirit or a voice. In the text, NDiaye dares to explore the unmentionable and the invisible by creating a domain in which corporeal, temporal, and other earthly boundaries are fluid or even non-existent. She exposes the body of the son as open to others, as inhabitable. In this way, the body is a threshold—a place of entry and departure, and sometimes, like in this case, for multiple identities. The body may or may not even be a holding space for identity; it can willingly, or unwillingly, become inhabited by an Other, which then becomes part of the Self. This fluid and transitory view of the body in relation to other bodies and to our sense of "self-hood" challenges our understanding of our interconnectedness. All of this is accomplished in part through the use of the supernatural and fantasy in her work and characters.

In addition to reconsidering the boundaries of the body and individual identities through the proposition of such extreme interdependence, *Les grandes personnes* uses the fantastic genre

to unmask the reality of suffering, pain, and lies even in "perfect" seeming families. The conversations between or the haunting silence of the ghostly characters speak out against the denial and avoidance of violence in the plays. Also, these fantastical supernatural characters contribute to a motif of the absurd that further reveals the absurdity of all that goes "unsaid" in the play and in life. The cliché of the ghost under the stairs is important to render her status of phantom obvious in the written play since she is described as the returned sister. "Ma soeur est là, dans l'escalier" her brother says (*Grandes personnes* 72), and when she does come in the house, her family interacts with her as if she is alive. The mother of "le maître" says that she is dead, but the parents completely ignore her and continue on as if she is alive. There are physical descriptions of her, "peau froide" or "lèvres glacées" (72), that indicate to the reader that she is likely an apparition, but the parents and the brother interact with her as if she is still alive. This treatment of ghosts is an important feature in African Literature especially in relation to the representation of slavery. The slave is represented in extreme liminality – both alive and dead, human and ghost. Achille Mbembe explains this liminality as "extreme forms of human life, death worlds, forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life that confer upon them the status of living dead (ghosts) [. . .] experienced through the corruption of the senses as well as through the horror that accompanies wars and outbreaks of terror" (*African Modes* 239). This liminal experience of the living dead is also a prominent motif in Caribbean literature where zombies are present as haunting memories of the slave trade as well, in addition to other "terrors" that may have resulted in the dispossession of one's body. Mbembe identities different processes by which African subjects have been transformed into liminal, zombie-like character. In addition to slavery, he includes colonization and apartheid as

factors that led to an alienation and deracination,[29] elements that take the characters out of their bodies and render them zombies. Alienation and deracination relate to the concept of dispossession and are not only central elements in the dehumanization of the colonial/postcolonial subject, according to Mbembe but also play a role in corporeal exile. Mbembe indirectly describes the process by which someone is exiled from their humanity and returned to a monstrous, half-alive half-dead body and focuses on power structures as a signifying element in this change. He identifies the first step as a separation from oneself. "This separation is supposed to result in a loss of familiarity with oneself, to the point that the subject, having become estranged from himself, has been relegated to an alienated, lifeless form of identity" (3). Alientation here is not only in relation to Others but to the Self and in feeling less connected to the Self, one feels less alive and less human. The second step of dehumanization, according to Mbembe is "disappropriation" which he describes as material expropriation and dispossession, similar to Butler and Athanasiou's dispossession, and which is "followed by a unique experience of subjection characterized by the Other's falsification of the self, resulting in a state of maximal exteriority (estrangement) and deracination" (3). The estrangement and deracination he discusses are similar to what Fanon describes as his experiences with his own identity in relation to race. The issue is one of imposed perceptions of identity, which are a common theme in NDiaye's texts, especially *Autoportrain en vert* in which the women in green's identities are constantly shifting and being (re)created based on interactions,

[29] See, for instance, A. Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialisme* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1950); C. Hamidou Kane, *L'aventure ambiguë* (Paris: Juilliard, 1961); F. Eboussi Boulaga, *La crise du Muntu* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1977); id., *Christianisme sans fétiche. Révélation et domination* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1981). Butler actually engages in Mbembe's discussion and underscores the de-genedered, de-racialized body who focus is entirely on "power" and retrapping power lost. In this, there is another element of dispossession and corporeal exile inferred—a disassociation with gender and race through the process of reappropriation of status that while beyond the scope of this study is still relevant to note.

assumptions, and observations. Mbembe discusses this experience of estrangment specifically within the context of the African subject, but NDiaye applies it beyond this framework to include all those who are green, who are alien, who are Others. Mbembe's third stage in the process of complete alienation and dehumanization is degradation. "Being enslaved is supposed not only to have plunged the subject into humiliation, debasement, and nameless suffering but also a social death characterized by the denial of dignity, dispersion, and the torments of exile" (3). Torments of exile continue in the texts studied in my dissertation, with similar degradation and debasement as a result, and appear as a source of inner conflict as well as cause for dispossession and dismemberment in contemporary literature in french-speaking parts of Africa as well as the Caribbean and even outside these geographic bounds. Amy Ransom discusses the prominent figure of the zombie in Haitian-Quebecois literature in authors such as Gérard Etienne, Émile Ollivier, and especially Dany Laferrière, explaining that it has taken on the figure of estrangement.

> Dans l'écriture migrante de la diaspora haïtienne, cette expérience du pays natal comme invivable et de l'exil comme paradoxe se traduit par excellence dans la figure du zombi. Depuis la parution du zombi dans le film d'horreur anglo-américain (Ellis) à la déclaration de René Depestre qui affirme que «[1] 'histoire de la colonisation est celle d'un processus de zombification généralisée de l'homme », les forces centrifuges ont cherché à universaliser le zombi comme figure de l'aliénation. (65)

The Zombie functions as a symbol of alienation in these authors' exile narratives and within a Haitian Vodou culture. However, the figure of the living dead as a character symbolizing alienation and exile extends beyond Haiti and beyond exile narratives. The presence of

ghosts/living dead in NDiaye's theater is a central feature in the creation of the concept of corporeal exile; they are beings who are exiled from their human bodies. We know that NDiaye does not associate herself with the "l'écriture migrante", however; her writing of exiles fits outside of the more typical scope of immigrant writing. What is particularly interesting about such characters in NDiaye's works though is that while they reveal the violence of society and the alienation and zombification, so to speak, of people, they are not humiliated or degraded characters. They are strong, powerful, and alienating themselves. They are also, largely, women. When the bodies are removed, the women are less constrained. These spectral figures also reveal the absurdity and also weakness around them.

In *Les grandes personnes* the sister character has returned after a long, mysterious absence and is residing under the stairs. This cliché, the banal representation of a ghost who lives under the stairs, further underlines the absurdity of "grown-ups" who refuse to accept reality to the extent that they actually assent to that which is unreal (i.e. refusing to admit that she is dead). The silence around her death also contributes to the overall absurdity of the silence of adults and society – the extent to which adults avoid speaking the truth, speaking up against societal ills, and are complicit in their silence. Such denial and silence is especially shocking around the teacher's pedophilia: there is a silence around the unspeakable truth of a teacher who molests his students with the implicit permission of parents who prefer to ignore the situation. In this way, through that which is unsaid, *Les grandes personnes* is a powerful and shocking play. Martine Antle speaks to the important, but often overlooked role that denial plays in the theater of Marie Ndiaye, highlighting that "Son théâtre tourne autour d'une problématique fondamentale : la mise en place d'un dispositif du déni et de l'illusion sur ce tout qui touche aux questions sociales, raciales, et les modes de violence auxquels est confrontée la société contemporaine" (Antle 5-6).

Andrew Asibong's *Marie Ndiaye: Blankness and Recognition*, the first and only book length project focused entirely on NDiaye offers a reading of *Les grandes personnes* that focuses on family dynamics and ultimately concludes that the play falls short of revealing anything new to the questions considered:

> NDiaye wishes to push her audience. It feels as if, in this short play, she is brainstorming ideas about parenting in a wild and multi-directional manner, seeking, on the one hand, to situate evil within the stock melodramatic trope of familial 'secrets and lies', on the other, to suggest that all childhood experience is potentially traumatizing, on a third – in keeping with the suggestion that NDiaye is made up of at least two people! – to hint, here and there, at the omnipresent possibility of inappropriately sexualized parent– child interaction and, on a fourth, that much of the blame can be laid at the door of the parents' racialized insensitivity. There is nothing wrong with such a wealth of theories, of course – why should the malaise not come from all of these things and more? – but rather that so few of the ideas are properly developed, with the result that they all begin to feel a little throwaway (Asibong 139).

While Asibong is not wrong that the different dynamics of the family that may have contributed to such misery are not developed, perhaps that was never the intention. *Les grandes personnes* is not a discussion of what has gone wrong but instead a revelation of silence and denial in family structures but perhaps more importantly in society at large. The family is just one concentric circle of dysfunction; the town and nation are implicated as well. It is not only the Maitre's parents who refuse to listen to their son and acknowledge that he has been violating his students, but also the parents of the students. Moreover, Antle points to the name Karim as an indication

of cultural and political implications of violence and silence : “Par son prénom, qui renvoie à un des 99 noms de Dieu en Islam, le petit Karim absent incarne non seulement un enfant victime de pédophilie, mais aussi un enfant d’origine musulmane, ce qui dote la pièce d’une dimension culturelle et politique supplémentaire” (Antle 10). The refusal to hear and accept what is being done to the absent from stage victim, Karim, becomes a much larger accusation when considering Karim symbolic of larger invisible victim, people of Muslim origin living in France. People who do not have a voice, who are not seen, and whose victimization is voluntarily overlooked. The teacher admits to his parents that he violates his students, but they are unwilling to hear the truth: “Maman, je viole mes petits élèves” to which she responds, “Ne raconte pas n’importe quoi, mon chéri” (30). The mother of Karim, Madame B, directly confronts the Teacher and reveals the truth to the other parents at a school meeting. These parents are not given names; they are each called *Parent d’élève* and form a group identity of anonymity. Their lack of personal identity lends them to be perceived as the whole of the community, or perhaps again, the nation, which makes their blatant dismissal of reality and truth more both viler and more plausible. According to Antle, “La défense du Maître dans la pièce prend rapidement la forme d’une affaire nationale au point que, comme l’exprime un des parents d’élèves, la défense de la nation l’emporte sur la vérité : ‘nous préférons toujours être dévoués au Maître et à notre patrie commune qu’à quelque vérité que ce soit !’ (*Grandes Personnes* 36)” (Antle 10). NDiaye unabashedly points to patriotism, to devotion and loyalty as threats to justice and explicitly extends such indictments beyond the immediate community who remain allegiant to the perpetrator of rape and molestation. Though the shock of the play resides in the responses (or lack of) of the parents rather than in the pedophilia itself, a topic that only receives cursory treatment.

Just as NDiaye did not directly address the topic of pedophilia because her focus was on the adult reactions, she also did not situate the adoption within a particular cultural or historical context. The reader is not told from where the child was adopted. This choice emphasizes pitfalls of philanthropy and the erasure of cultural heritage in general rather than being grounded in a particular context of colonial history that could trigger implicit reader bias. Instead, if the reader does insert assumptions about the child's origins or its potential well-being before or after adoption, it is evident that this is entirely imposed by the reader and not implied by NDiaye. In this way, NDiaye simultaneously reveals and erases the potential "savior" mentality present in colonial discourse. By removing the child from his origins and cultural heritage, the adoptive parents unwittingly unleashed great violence on their son, putting him into a situation arguably more dangerous for his emotion/mental well-being than that from which they "saved" him (i.e. the orphanage where he'd been residing). Significantly, the appropriation of this boy and his past is portrayed as its own extreme situation that has an important, determining factor in both his individual identity and his family construction. It is also, then, this uprooting that leaves the boy susceptible to being dispossessed from his own body. Here the dispossession is forced upon him, as opposed to the voluntary dispossession that Butler and Athanasiou recommend. The parents have a position of power in his body and on stage. They were not only spoken of but spoke themselves — about their anger, their hatred, and their control over the son. However, they were intentionally without identifying details. "Ils n'avaient ni nom, ni visage, ni domicile ou sépulture connu" (41). One is then left to wonder, is it their violent death that has left them nameless, faceless, and without a tomb where they could be respected and remembered? Or, was it the removal of the son thus leaving no one to remember or carry on the tradition of their family and origins. Did the French adoptive parents erase the memory and thus identity of these people

when they took the son away? If the latter then NDiaye seems to propose that an awareness and preservation of origins is central to maintaining a non-conflictual sense of personal identity. Also, while the lack of identifying details of the biological parents emphasizes a lack of connection to the son, it also allows for us to see the triangular biological parent/child/adoptive parent relationship more universally, which again points towards an idea of community based on common experience and especially common suffering.

In leaving out identifying details regarding the places of origin of the Son, and *Madame B*, NDiaye is essentially de-ethnicizing and de-racializing the characters – simultaneously capitalizing on the chance to focus on the universality of family and suffering and commenting on the pitfalls of erasing a person's racial, ethnic, and cultural origins. Portraying such bodies on stage where skin color, hair, clothes, and physical attributes of bodies are seen then becomes quite a challenge. Christophe Perton ran into this dilemma with his 2011 staging of the performance as he cast the roles with actors whose bodies are easily classified especially along lines of race. His decision to cast the son ("*Le Fils*") and the pupil's mother (*Madame B*) with a black actor and actress, respectively, was in no way neutral. Immediately Perton adds an element of race to the play that was not present in NDiaye's play and invokes a long history of racial tension stemming from colonization. Not only does the family adopt a child out of a desire for a second child and "la conscience d'une action utile et généreuse" (*Grandes personnes* 42), but the black skin of the boy suggests that they do it presumably from an African country, perhaps a former French colony, but certainly a country who suffered from Western appropriation and historical and cultural erasure through colonial conquest and discourse. The Son becomes more of a symbol of colonial lies: wealth and power in France "saving" a backwards, victimized Africa(n). While NDiaye is intentionally deconstructing the image of the powerful West through

the powerlessness of the adoptive parents, especially relative to the biological parents, the assumption, or decision, by Perton that the adopted child came from Africa indirectly perpetuates the stereotypical image of the orphan black child. NDiaye escapes the bounds of visual implications of human bodies on stage and can avoid historical, racial connections, instead focusing on familial and community breakdowns and silence. She also leaves her reader to rest in the discomfort of considering their own biases and assumptions about the characters. Perton, though, must reveal is his own. Arguably, he could have chosen to use technology and project non-descript forms rather than human bodies, or a white, European child for instance, from a country that does not have the long, dark history with France. While such choices would avoid the racial charge present in his performance, they would also interfere with the perceptions of the audience and possible political implications.

The pupil's mother, who is named Madame B, which does not reveal race or cultural origins in any way, is identified as an outsider in NDiaye's text. This role as outsider is important because it distances her from the community who has decided to accept the pedophilia occurring in the school. "Madame, qui êtes-vous?" (34), a parent inquires, to which she replies that they have only been there for six months and their name does not yet hold weight in the community. "Encore une de ces nouvelles familles" (34), another parent responds. Clearly, she had spoken out because she did not know the ways of the village. Outsider, yes, but her difference stands out much more clearly when racialized on stage such that the audience cannot ignore or forget her black skin. The racialized view of marginalization is an important commentary to make given the prevalence of racial tension in France, but NDiaye has not adequately addressed it in the play because she intentionally steered away from race. Thus, the introduction of the racial element by Perton without further demarcation then rings hollow. Through the intentional de-racializing of

the community "Outsider" symbolized by the character of the Madame B, NDiaye seems though to suggest that the conception of community is perhaps different according to different cultures and historical contexts. Also, NDiaye wants to escape the essentialization that has historically been place on her; she wants to be identified as a writer, not a woman nor a Black. Yet, she perhaps also demonstrates the possibility for shared suffering (ostracism) traversing different communities because of her intentional minimal description of Madame B, focusing instead on her relative position outside of the in-group circle of parents who grew up in the town and are loyal to what they know beyond reason.

Inhabited/ing Bodies

Marie NDiaye writes noncorporeal, spectral characters who inhabit spaces around them, including other people's bodies. In the case of *Rien d'humain*, the description of one of the characters is ambiguous, but she is presented in a ghostly way. As far as *Les grandes personnes*, the son has his biological parents living in his chest. These characters are understood to reside in the physical chest of their son but no longer have their own body. In addition to the literary tradition of the subversive function of these beings, their existence defies rational laws of the boundaries of physical bodies. The inclusion of ghosts, voices and spectral characters as noncorporeal beings in her plays suggests the ability for a Self to evolve outside of its own body or also to inhabit other bodies. Such Selfhood becomes a challenge to represent when producing NDiaye's theater since typically characters are embodied on stage or are represented by use of technology indicating their supernatural existence. These characters are themselves exiles for they are beings who have emigrated from their bodies. Additionally, the section will highlight the ways in which NDiaye's texts explore the power and ability of these noncorporeal beings to

force exile upon others by transgressing the borders of the son's body in *Les grandes personnes*, and also by protecting the apartment in *Rien d'humain* from intrusion.

In NDiaye's theater, one can see the body as a home to multiple identities, not just the person whose body it is, which thus raises the question of who is at "home" or who is "exiled" in this corporeal space. When referring to the body as a home, I am considering it a space in which beings/identities may reside, but also implying a certain degree of comfort and ease that one might associate with home. An immigrant might not feel *at home* in his new country, nor in his former. The feeling of being without a home is often associated with exile and is interesting to consider with respect to the body. What might it suggest if one does not even feel at home in their own body? In *Les Grandes personnes,* the Son lives with his biological parents in his chest. Even though the characters are spectral and thus do not appear as characters on stage, they are presented as speaking characters: "ceux qui logent dans la poitrine du fils (voix)". With the verb *loger,* meaning her to receive accommodation as if at someone's house or at a hotel while visiting, there is an implication of hospitality- being invited, or at least permitted, to stay. In this situation, though, they have forced themselves into the son's chest. The son explains to his adoptive parents, "Oui. C'est à l'adolescence que j'ai commencé à les sentir se tortiller en moi, comme s'ils étaient soudain devenus trop gros pour ma poitrine, tous les deux, le père et la mère qui m'avaient mis au monde, et puis ils se sont mis à parler" (39). He describes their presence in a physical way. He felt them wiggle inside, as if they had become too large for his chest. He physically feels them inside him. They also have the capacity to grow, to become too big to fit. As they push on the boundaries of his body, they also essentially force him out of it; he no longer feels at home in his body. Here again, NDiaye presents a critique of the relationship between parenthood and the nation and the exiling force of patriotism. It also implies that he did not invite

them in, nor did he even know they were there before this point, and when they do start to speak, they request revenge- the murder of his adoptive parents. Their words are violent and fierce, and he cannot quiet them. They have control over him, and he ultimately leaves his home- the house where he lived with his adopted parents.

There are multiple layers of exile in *Les Grandes personnes* to explore, including the Son's departure from his childhood home and the biological parents' departure from their own bodies to be living in his. Yet, first, I would like to bring to light the question of foreign adoption and NDiaye's criticsm of cultural transmission, memory, and preservation. Like in many of her works, NDiaye unabashedly brings to question the "help" offered by well-meaning individuals and suggests that there is also harm that can occur. In this case, she broaches the sensitive topic of international adoption. The biological parents of the adopted son had presumably died. The adoptive parents were kind and loving. However, NDiaye presents a deep-seeded anger as a result of betrayal in what would normally be conceived as a position situation. The biological parents who lived in the chest of "their son" were far from at peace with the situation. "Leurs voix furieuses et ou gémissantes sortaient par ma bouche avec un terrible écho. Rien ne leur convenait, jamais ils n'étaient heureux ni en paix, ils m'appelaient « leur garçon » et voulaient en vérité que je leur rende justice" (*Grandes personnes* 39). This "justice" they sought was also very extreme- death. They wanted "their son" to kill his adoptive parents, which makes quite a statement on the extent of their resentment. The son ends up demanding of his adoptive parents to accept all three of them—him and his biological parents living in his chest—if they are to have any relationship. This raises many important issues on memory and preserving ties to origins and not just among adoptees. The adoptive parents took the boy out of the orphanage in order to give him a loving family in another country. However, they also took him away from

ties to his past, cultural roots, place of origin. In this way, he is an exile in the geographic, displaced persons sense of the word- he was forced to leave the "home" of his ancestors.

Moving to the next layer of exile, the son is dispossessed from control over his own body. The biological parents occupy such a place of power that his decisions become based on them. When considering what "to be at home" feels like, I would contend it has to do with a sense of freedom to occupy a space fully and authentically. Like its English equivalent "make yourself at home", the French idiomatic expression "fais comme chez toi" gives this impression: take off your shoes, have a snack, feel comfortable here, be at ease. This comfort is not, though, representative of the son's experience in his own body. The son reveals to his adoptive parents, for the first time, the presence of his biological parents in his chest and the reason he had left years before. The son could not continue to live with both parents; he felt torn and feared the violence inside of him. The voices were furious and full of rage as they insisted he kills his adoptive parents and while he tried to silence them, they just demanded revenge. NDiaye demonstrates the visceral experience of lost origins through these characters, as well as the vulnerability of the body and the individual to the other. The Son is powerless to his biological parents despite the fact that it is his body:

> Le Fils: Ils me demandaient de vous tuer et de les venger.
> Je les entendais sans cesse.
> Là, entre mon cœur et mes poumons.
> Ils étaient gros, et j'étouffais.
> Je n'aurais la paix qu'une fois la chose faite.
> Mais comment? (43).

Despite the fact that the son suffers from their presence, they "oppriment mes poumons et pèsent sur mon coeur" (45), the psychologist he saw for help insisted that it was his responsibility to offer his body in refuge to them. The psychologist did not grant the son propriety over his own

body, even when parts of his body became inhospitable to him. Instead, the psychologist confirms that this character's body should indeed be beyond itself; it is open to Others just as Butler and Athanasiou argue in their dialogue. The Son has been dispossessed of ownership of his body, which causes him pain and suffering—both physically and emotionally. Yet, he does not close his body off to others as a protective response. Instead, he accepts (and is pushed to accept) his corporeal dispossession. In order to feel at home in his own body, the son had to come to terms with retaining pieces of his past and demand a space for them to be present in his current life and in relation to his adoptive parents. He was torn between his past and his present/future until he created a Self in which all parts were welcome and unified.

In *Les grandes personnes*, as well as in *Rien D'humain* and others texts, NDiaye avoids the bounds of corporeality altogether by introducing spectral characters who do not have a human body form. *Rien d'humain* is an interesting title for this play that reveals the abhorrent behaviors that have come in the name of propriety. Humain can mean humane, giving the impression of "nothing good" for a title. It also means human, though, and alludes to the fact that there is, at least, one non-human character. Also, more generally, this brings into question existence outside of corporal bounds. Women especially fall into this fate, a Self exiled from her body, or perhaps it is the body that is exiled from the Self as the character continues to have affect over others while the body ceases to exist. These women, such as the daughter in *Les grandes personnes* or Djamila's daughter in *Rien D'humain* are not portrayed as victimized in any way or lacking because of their a-corporal nature. The characters possess a strong presence, and even a power over others- though not necessarily a positive one. From the first mention of the daughter in *Les grandes personnes*, NDiaye alludes to her haunting presence. "Elle est venue te visiter aussi?" (11) is the third line of the show. Eva, the mother, asks her husband Rudi, the

father, if he has been visited by their daughter. Though it is not yet apparent to whom the "elle" is referring. Nonetheless, NDiaye already suggests her that she is a ghost through her use of the verb *visiter*, which presents ambiguity from the start of the play considering that Eva insists to her friends that the daughter is living. "Elle vit, elle est là, hein, Rudi?" (12). Eva looks to her husband for affirmation, which he offers by making reference to seeing part of her body- her face. In fact, both Eva and Rudi repeat almost the exact same justification for believing she was living.

> Rudi: Il me semble.
> J'ai aperçu sa figure, ses joues étaient creuses.
> Je l'ai trouvé vieille mais elle n'a que trente-
> quatre ans.
> C'est pourtant ma fille, ma petite.
>
> Eva: J'ai l'impression qu'elle nous hait plus.
> J'ai aperçu sa figure, ses joues étaient creuses
> je l'ai trouvée vieille et laide mais elle m'a regard-
> ée avec bontée. (12)

Both parents describe their daughter in a formulaic manner with repetition that rings false, giving the impression of rehearsed confidence and the performative nature of their expressions. They explain away the peculiarities: she appears aged due to stress and suffering whereas their faces are still young and full of life because of the ease of a wealthy, luxurious existence- something they would both give up if they could have their children back. Not only what they say but also the form of their comments hints at the world of denial and superficiality in which they live. Even their response to their returned daughter is machine-like, automatic and detached. It represents the sterility of their home and their social milieu but also underscored their unwillingness to speak the truth.

In *Rien d'humain*, there is also a spectral daughter and also an unwillingness to directly refer to her as such. While spoken about as if she a living, breathing person, the text also suggests that she does not have a face, or even a body. She is a ghost and one whose presence alone protects her mother, Djamila's, apartment from intruders. However, the story of the daughter rests a mystery throughout the play, but it is interesting to consider her presence as a symbol of the violated, broken spirit of Djamila as a young girl. Because of repeated violation and rape committed by Bella's family, the "adoptive" family of Djamila, her Self, the essence of her being, became divorced, exiled, from her body, the space of violence. Rape is a traumatic event, as well as a corporeal intrusion—forced entry in a very literal way—that can result in corporeal exile. Traumas, like rape, can cause dissociative disorders in which people become fragmented because they struggle to integrate their memories, sense of identity, or aspects of their consciousness into a unified sense of the Self and the survived traumas. Djamila existing outside of herself in a spectral form could be a visual representation of this corporeal exile due to sexual trauma.

On the other hand, if the daughter of Djamila does represent her offspring and not just a part of her own being, there is the symbol of the lineal passage of violence and memory. Bella insists to Ignace that the daughter is not his, thus insinuating that she is the child of Bella's father who had been the perpetrator of rape and violence, and with whom Djamila continued to have a relationship later in life. The chillingly negative description of the daughter, the fact that she is connected to the man who raped her mother, and the fact that her very presence is haunting are indications that she embodies the violence of Djamila's past even though it has never actually happened to her. Traumatic memories are transmitted from generation to generation; and through this passing of information, NDiaye really explores how the body is open to others, that it is a

threshold – a place of entry and departure, and sometimes for multiple identities. The body may or may not even be a holding space for identity; in the case of Fanon, he was imprisoned by his body that made him a stranger/outsider in the western world. Also, for NDiaye, it can willingly, or unwillingly, become inhabited by an Other, which then becomes part of the Self. This fluid and transitory view of the body in relation to other bodies and to our sense of Selfhood challenges our understanding of our interconnectedness. This radical interrelation is even further complicated by bodies on stage that are represented as constantly transforming or bodies that embody Others to the extent that they are no longer identifiable. Dispossession is not just a singular, solitary event but an evershifting reality that presents a challenge for bodies to live in harmony with their Selves. Here we have seen that even the body fails to be the personal sanctuary that is desired of a "home", thus suggesting a need to find solace and a unified self-concept in constantly shifting spaces.

Chapter 4- Wajdi Mouawad's Exiled Identities: Fragmentation, Disassociation, and Reconciliation

Introduction

Exile is a central theme in Mouawad's plays; he uses key exile concepts—for example, marginality, liminality, and questions of home—in order to bridge a connection between geopolitical exile and his discussions of corporeal exile. In so doing, he also posits the universality of human suffering within the framework of his own exile experience. The loss of the Self, the fragmentation of identity, and the isolation, pain, and fear he experienced as a child during Lebanon's civil war are presented alongside of the continued challenges he faced integrating into French and Quebecois societies. These challenges include all that he forgot or lost from his life in Lebanon, especially his native tongue. However, instead of positioning these trials as a purely immigrant experience, he presents them as a much larger struggle for humanity. In addition to the war, incest, rape, and other forms of violence for which Mouawad is known, themes common in exiles studies, like returning to origin, discovering truth, journeys, and the crossing of borders, are also central to his work. Mouawad also draws a connection between violence and exile- violence destroys homes, tears people from their homes, and causes exile. This linking is also true when considering exiled bodies—rape, incest, trauma and other types of violence affect bodies and identities and also lead to corporeal exile. Through these links, he presents the immigrant experience as very similar to a commonly shared human experience because we are exiled from one another and exiled within or from our own bodies. For instance,

Mouawad's works have characters who appear on stage in various different ways, as actors but also projections on a screen and on the scenic space as spectral characters. The use of technology and images in these ways offer a visual representation of a multiplicity of bodies outside of one body; Mouawad portrays a body exiled from itself or from one unified Self. There are also more figurative and psychological representations of corporeal exile, but his multimedia approach to the mise-en-scène allows the audience to see bodies outside of themselves, or crossing-over and overlapping other bodies. He also has his actors play the role of multiple different characters to also demonstrate how a body can be dispossessed from itself and embody another. These different theatrical strategies employed especially through the use of technology offer a visual representation of Mouawad's ideas of corporeal exile and also focus on physical movement on stage as part of the analogous relationship with exile within the geopolitical sphere. Mouawad also uses common literary tropes in exile narratives to draw a connection between the geopolitical and corporeal exile. He repeatedly highlights the similarities between sufferings, such as identity crises, feelings of isolation and not belonging, stresses to adapt to changing surrounding, and utilizes common themes in exile studies to reveal other anguishes.

Wajdi Mouawad and his family migrated from Lebanon during the civil war and moved first to France then to Canada when he was just a child. The war began when he was seven-years-old and three years later, when his family left Lebanon, he had already witnessed the fighting in the streets and had heard the bombs falling. He can be described by what Susan Suleiman refers to as the *1.5 generation effect*; he experienced trauma prematurely as a child, "before the formation of stable identity that we associate with adulthood, and in some cases

before any conscious sense of self" (Suleiman 277). His unresolved traumas[30], found a place in his theater; his tetralogy *Le sang de promesses* is a redemption journey, a quest for lost truths and origins. The four plays work together to bear witness to the tragedies of Lebanon, of his family and childhood, as well as of more universal pains like broken promises, violence and familial suffering. The first two plays in his more recent project, *Le cycle Domestique*, continue to offer testimony to struggles associated with exile, but they focus more heavily on crises of identity. Lack of stability, fragmentation, hybridity, and isolation reign over the lives of the characters in *Seuls: chemin, texte et peintures* and *Soeurs.* However, he does not limit the purvey of these plays to his family's personal experience; he avoids specific locations, for instance, and draws on emotions and consequences rather than historic details. He uses his own exile experience as a tool to access the possibility of a more universally understood and experienced exile. He demonstrates the parallels of marginality, liminality, lack of "home" or belonging, and isolation when humanity is exiled from or in its own bodies, or when people are exiled from one another.

Like the other authors I study in this dissertation, Mouawad mixes and transforms genres. He uses a "polyphonic writing," which he defines as a combination of words, videos, sounds, music, lighting, theater costume, and silences (*Seuls* 14). He refers to *Seuls: chemin, textes et peintures* as "l'Oiseau polyphonique." *Seuls* is divided in three parts: "Un oiseau polyphonique", an introduction to the way this play was created; "Chemin" that discusses the process of creating the performance; and "Texte," which is the dialogues of the play written after the play was staged. As implied in the subtitle, the book also includes copies of paintings, images of Harwan, of the spectacle, of the plans for the mise-en-scène, and artistic writings. It is itself polyphonic,

[30] For instance, at the age of 7, Mouawad witnessed a bus full of people engulf in flames. The image was burned into his consciousness and reappears frequently in his writing.

created by mixing different media and arts; but because it is thoughtfully crafted as an integrated whole, it is not cacophonous. The staged play is also polyphonic. Though, it does take advantage of cacophonous noises at parts in order to unsettle and jar its audience. Nonetheless, the parts come together to achieve its goal. In calling it his “oiseau polyphonique,” Mouawad emphasizes movement and fluidity, a boundlessness that describes the freedom of his polyphony, which draws upon video projection, images, painting, and extra-diegetic noise, in addition to the use of English, French and Arabic. The result of this polyphony is an integrated whole made of many disparate parts that reveal truths about the human condition. The title *Seuls* also refers back to its polyphonic nature because *Seuls* is in its plural form. There are multiple levels of its significance. One way of interpreting this title is in regards to the division of the Self; the alone person is not singular but multiple in its non-integrated, fragmented pieces. On another level, *Seuls* is referring to a community of lonely, isolated people who are exiled from one another. The isolation is particularly evident because *Seuls* is a solo performance[31], a format that is particularly well-suited for the question of corporeal exile.

Soeurs is also a polyphonic solo performance but one that focuses less on the suffering of one individual and more on the similitude of isolation experienced by the different characters in the play, all performed by the same actress. *Soeurs* is also in its plural form, though in its conception was referring specifically to Mouawad’s sister. Similarily to *Seuls*, this plurality underscores the relational aspects of the Self as well as emphasizing the commonality of their experience. As the projections of the different women overlap on stage, so do their stories of family and identity conflicts. In part, I have chosen to analyze these two plays because of the

[31] The term “solo” refers to a theatrical performance with a single actor. Robert Lepage is perhaps most notably associated with solos, and Wajdi Mouawad acknowledges having been inspired by Lepage for his solo.

ways in which they both stage bodies; they are solos that do not only stage one body. *Seuls* has many different forms and bodies for the same character. Whereas, in *Soeurs*, there is one body who takes on many different characters. Though inverse representations, both plays visually represent bodies that are exiled from the Self. I have also chosen to study these two plays because they both portray individuals who are dispossessed from a sense of the Self and who set forth on a journey of violent destruction and hopeful recreation in what Mouawad names a return to the Self. *Seuls* and *Soeurs* are intended to be two different pieces of the same puzzle: Mouawad's return to the Self and then his sister's, but both as a part of familial reconciliation.

While *Seuls* and *Soeurs* bring attention to this communal loneliness as well as personal and collective suffering, his works do not leave the characters nor the audience in the despair of their lived traumas. I argue that instead he presents a new notion of catharsis that has as its goal resilience and healing. The Greek adjective *katharos*, from which catharsis is derived, speaks specifically to purgation, clarification, and purification. In both ethical and medical applications of the term, one sought purification through purgation. On a psychological-level, emotions are purged. Pity and fear, having long been emotions equated with Greek Tragedy, logically became the emotions to be purged when discussing catharsis in relation to Aristotle and Greek Tragedy. In relation to Greek tragedies, Jean-Pierre Vernant has emphasized catharsis's function as a social institution developed by the city alongside its political and legal institutions, with ethical and didactic motivations. The audience was encouraged to avoid the "bad" passions that led to the undesirable emotions of pity and fear that were experienced by and through the identification with the heroes: "The end of tragedy is to effect the arousal and then the catharsis of pity and fear. It is explained in the Rhetoric that fear is caused by whatever we see that has great power of destroying us, of harming us in ways that tend to cause us great pain, and that, generally

speaking, anything causes us to feel fear that—when it happens to or threatens others— causes us to feel pity" (Schmitt 6-7).

However, catharsis has evolved in a broader sense with modernity and the Avant-garde theater. It is no longer understood in an ethical sense of "purgation", "purification", "clarification," or as a "due measure"—referring to the act of purifying extreme emotions such as pity and fear as discussed by Aristotle. Rather, catharsis is "the raising and the casting out of an actual emotion on a wave of 'something else'" (Frye 93). For Frye, that "something else" can be "an exhilaration or exuberance: the vision of something liberated from experience, the response kindled in the reader by the transmutation of experience into mimesis, of life into art, of routine into play" (93-94). Frye makes of catharsis an emotional intellectual experience as he focuses on mimesis, but his definition of catharsis preserves the detachment of the spectator from the author and the work. As theater has transformed since the fifties when Frye was writing, so has the cathartic relationship between the spectators and actors, directors, and text, especially in theater of trauma.

Mouawad, like Antonin Artaud seeks to awaken and assault the nerves and the senses of the audience. Mouawad presents catharsis as an emotional and an aesthetic experience that involves the purgation and the staging of extreme emotion and violence. Such violence does not allow for the spectators to detach, nor to have a cathartic experience separate from the actors. Moreover, in contrast to Aristotle's focus on ethics, catharsis for Mouawad centers on healing. Additionally, his violent, purgative process is akin to what Deleuze describes as Artaud's experience with language and the schizophrenic body (un corps sans organe) in *Logique du sens*. Accordingly, Mouawad's language of the stage—polymorphic, including language beside text or without text, the use of lighting, the body, sounds, etc.—functions to better awaken and involve

the spectator. Nonetheless, catharsis in Mouawad's theater does not only concern the spectators, but also those who are on stage. Mouawad's catharsis seeks to redefine the body, the Self, and even reach out along lines of difference to move beyond communities of sameness among the characters, actors, and spectators.

As I discuss catharsis in this chapter, I am referring to it in a broader sense than its theatrical roots; I rely on the notion of healing and include psychological and philosophic aspects. The notion of catharsis continues to evade a single definition and continues to transform as it is embraced and developed in various fields such as philosophy, psychology, and cognitive sciences. In this, Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou's notion of dispossession is highly relevant as it, too, takes form at the intersection of these disciplines. Judith Butler is a philosopher and gender theorist and Athena Athanasiou a social anthropologist. Their book, *Dispossession: the Performative in the Political,* is dialogical in form and engages neoliberal governmentality and discourses on recognition and redistribution by way of their notion of dispossession. Dispossession refers to a lack of ownership not only of property but also of one's own body, identity, and freedom of existence. Dispossession is paradoxical in that it can be both violent and negative and also necessary at the same time. Moreover, Butler and Athansiou also contend that one can only be dispossessed because one is already dispossessed. It suggests limitations to autonomous and impermeable self-sufficiency and instead establishes the Self as relational and interdependent beings, which Butler and Athanasiou describe with the term the relational Self[32]. This notion of dispossession is central to my study of identity crises in this chapter as well as the way in which I conceive of catharsis.

[32] Butler and Athanasiou also use the term trans-self, meaning a Self that goes beyond itself and is moved both not only that which is outside of the self but also that which is outside, or other, but resides inside of us. However, the term also implies the inclusion of questions of gender and the transgender body and

In this chapter, through my analysis of Mouawad's plays *Seuls chemin, texte et peintures* and *Soeurs*, I develop Butler and Athanaious's notion of dispossession[33] and the relational Self and then demonstrate how these ideas advance our understanding of both catharsis and the formation of communities that are not only *open to* but also *based on* alterity. First, I analyze his characters' crises of identity and then their return to the Self, presenting them both as intricately tied to the process of dispossession. I then link this idea of dispossession to my earlier discussions of trans-corporeality and demonstrate how the two work together to further the concept of the relational Self, a Self that is not only in relation to others but who has also integrated hybridity. The process of self-integration and understanding the Self as relational, as well as transcultural[34], can involve a violent purging of the excess and reconfiguration and reconciliation of one's fragmented identity. This process is the foundation of Mouawad's cathartic healing, which occurs in relationship. While much focuses on trauma and violence, scholarship on Mouawad has not yet included catharsis even though it is vital when considering the reconciliatory aspects of his work such as reclaiming loss or familial conflict resolution. Furthermore, my work also proposes that the cathartic relationship in theater is not only limited

Self, which, while important, do not fall within the purvey of my study. Thus, I will use exclusively the term relational Self.

[33] In *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political,* they first consider dispossession in relation to territory in order to describe the condition of people who have lost land, citizenship, and their sense of belonging to the world. They then extend the concept of dispossession beyond territory to include loss of agency, vulnerability, and people who are victim to trauma and violence more generally, for instance rape survivors, organ transplant recipients, war victims, etc.

[34] The term transcultural refers to the concept also discussed by Clément Moisan and Renate Hildebrand in *Ces étrangers du dedans*: "[le transculturel] dépasse la mise en présence ou en conflit des cultures pour dégager des passages entre elles et dessiner leur traversé respective" (Moisan and Hildebrand 207). This "transcultural" is the successor to the "intercultural" that marked Quebecois identity, according to Moisan and Hildebrand, and signifies the shift from cultures side by side to a creolization of cultures where boundaries between the two begin to erase.

to the audience who experiences catharsis because of watching the actors but can also occur among audience members, actors, directors, or writers.

Fragmented Identities and the Relational Self

In *Le cycle domestique,* which currently includes *Seuls* and *Soeurs*—though *Frères*, *Mères*, et *Pères* are to come—Mouawad focuses on his family's story from the perspective of the different members of his family. He moves away from the historical events of the past that are central in *Le Sang de promesses.* Correspondingly, instead of the "return to origins" at the heart of *Le Sang de promesses*, *Le cycle Domestique* boasts a return to the Self, though it is important to note that this Self is a Self in relation to others as proposed by Butler and Athanasiou. The return to the Self is a process of restoring memory, seeking truths, and reconstructing a hybrid Self from the fragmented pieces of character identities. Though *Le cycle Domestique* focuses on Mouawad and his sister's return to the Self, the stories expand beyond their individual circumstances; they expose humanity's shared experiences and offer the potential for a return to the Self for the audience as well. Through the affective theatrical experience and the intimacy created in sharing, the plays can awaken the audience to their own corporeal exile and thus inspire a return to the Self.

Mouawad's hybrid cultural identity is in part what creates fragmentation but it is also what he wishes for his identity to be. Mouawad proudly sees himself as a Franco-Quebeco-Lebanese who lives wherever his work takes him. Like NDiaye who refuses labels of "black writer" or "black woman writer," Mouawad challenges the labels placed upon him. Instead, he embraces his hybridity, and his plays reflect this transnational and transcultural identity. They are even collaboratively created to offer greater commentary and reflection on the environment in which he grew up and on societal and familial struggles that surpass cultural contexts.

Likewise, Mouawad intentionally refrains from mentioning geographic location in many of his plays, which makes his writing of trauma inclusive to many situations while still addressing the trauma he personally faced because of the civil war in Lebanon. Ambiguous, inclusive settings further his aim to highlight the universality of suffering—all violence, pain, and exile are not the same but overlap and open unto one another regardless of specific historical or contextual details. Additionally, plays like *Seuls* and *Soeurs* that do include geographic locations also highlight the relevance of transnationalism in his work: *Seuls*'s Canadian main character Harwan travels to St. Petersburg but winds up in the liminal space of a coma. *Soeurs* reveals the intertwining of characters who are from or travelling to Manitoba, Montreal, Ottawa, Lebanon, Africa, or a technological dystopia.

Another way in which transnationalism and transculturalism manifest in Mouawad's plays is through the delicate tension between a multiplicity of languages as well as a dispossession of language. Both *Seuls* and *Soeurs* focus on language as an important element in redefining the Self. *Seuls: chemin, texte et peinture* takes advantage of polyphonic writing, mixing different media in the book itself, and creates a language of the stage that further includes the use of multimedia such as videos, paintings, and even the internet for a dynamic production but also as metaphor for the creolization of communities and personal identities. However, the main character Harwan's own loss of Arabic is a source of conflict for his self-identity as well as for his familial relationships. Harwan is a Ph.D. student living in Montreal and wrestling to balance societal and familial expectations as well as his own desires and expectations for his life. His father has more traditional views based on his Lebanese heritage. Academia has its own set norms, as does his current community in Montreal. While he generally succeeds in meeting the expectations imposed upon him, aside from arguments with his father regarding his loss of

Arabic language and connections to his origins, Harwan feels disconnected from himself. The play is described by Mouawad as a journey to the Self, rather than a return to origins. What is pivotal for Harwan is reconnecting with his concept of the Self and not to any other point of departure.

In introducing *Seuls* on his website Mouawad expounds, “Et c’est comme pour tout le monde qui, se réveillant chaque matin et se regardant dans la glace, pense : ‘cela pourrait être n’importe qui’” (Mouawad). Looking in the mirror and saying, “that could have been anyone” could be interpreted in many ways: the person I am looking at could be anyone I choose for it to be; what happened to me could have happened to anyone; or perhaps what I did could have been done by anyone. It is this tension between the personal life crisis and the universality of suffering that makes his plays so compelling. His vulnerability invites his audience to consider their own lives, to see his suffering as their own, to see themselves as exiles, too, and to consider compassion in a new way—compassion as suffering together. The focus on the interconnected nature of people, on shared experience and compassion, is a different and original way to examine exile, which has traditionally focused much more on isolation. When Mouawad looks in the mirror and sees someone that he does not identify as clearly himself, he is not only seeing the ways in which we are similar but also perhaps is identifying a disassociation with himself. One of the potential causes of being exiled from one’s own body is the fragmentation of, and perhaps even restrictions to the natural hybridity of our identity. Societal or familial pressures, and more extreme events like war, can fragment one’s identity to such a degree that they no longer recognize or feel agency over their own life. This experience is what Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou term as dispossession. Dispossession can be intricately tied to the body and to a person’s sense of his or her Self, which is where their concept becomes particularly interesting in

my analysis of Mouawad. He describes the exiled identity within a body as a fragmented, dissolved identity torn apart, like the war-struck country of his childhood. He creates a connection between the body and land, both as territories and spaces of potential dispossession. Wajdi Mouawad also establishes how outside factors penetrate the borders of the Self to affect one's identity, and more specifically, he explores the decomposition of an integrated identity—a concept that I am exploring in relationship to the idea of exile as it occurs within a person and a body. The idea of the integrated Self exists in the fields of philosophy, religion, and psychology, all with slight variations in meaning. However, they all focus on the cohesion of various elements that compose someone's identity. In the context of transculturality, trans-corporeality and corporeal exile, I am borrowing the term to acknowledge the fragmentation of the Self and focus on the importance of integrating different aspects of the Self—whether cultural, lingual, societal or personal expectations, etc.

Yana Meerzon speaks of hetero- or homogeneous identities in relation to Mouawad's theater. She borrows these terms from Rustom Barucha who used them to describe different tribes living side-by-side and creating a heterogeneous identity in what was typically assumed to be homogeneous. Meerzon pushes this idea of side-by-side living to create heterogeneous identities beyond communities and applies it to the Self; it is possible to have side-by-side aspects of the Self that create its own heterogenous identities. She even speaks about the territory of the Self; the idea of the Self as a territory is an important point of departure for me as I consider corporeal exile because it underscores the relation of the body and the Self to space, which we see, for instance in the multiple appearances of Harwan's body on the stage in *Seuls*: via the actor, Mouawad himself, and via the use of multi-media and screens. I also argue that the Self as a territory acknowledges the potential for movement within and beyond the Self, a

multiplicity of identities in the Self, as well as an openness to others occupying the same territory. Meerzon notes the importance of cultural heterogeneity in the artistic works of authors like Mouawad, acknowledging his ability to write, create, and perform in Arabic, French, and English, and his constant search for a home in the elusiveness of territorial belonging. Dominique Fisher focuses on transculturality in Mouawad's theater, rather than intraculturality, and moves beyond cultural heterogeneity to also include the mixing and transformation of genres. The idea of transculturality, with the mixing of cultures and languages, is more similar to Meerzon's use of Barucha's intraculturality when discussing Wajdi Mouawad in regards to his intracultural Self, but slight differences here are important as we discuss the fragmentation of identity that occurs in the exiled Self. Intraculturality speaks to the importance of existing within one space—in this case the body, a corporeal territory. Yet, transculturality calls for the integration of different parts. Certainly, the creolization that occurs in transcultural contexts, and bodies, does not exclude fragmentation of identity nor does it deny the effects of traumatic elements or situations. Yet the violence and anger from the trauma that is trapped within the body seems to create the lack of harmony associated with dispossessed and exiled identities, which is why healing through self-integration is needed.

Using his theater as a prescriptive tool, Mouawad integrates the different aspects of his cultural and linguistic identity into a heterogeneous whole. Rather than feeling "in-between" as is often the case for exiles who describe not feeling like they belong in their new "home" nor in their place of origin, Mouawad, through Harwan, presents the possibility of residing in the tension of multiplicity. Meerzon acknowledges that "The themes of war, death, the quest for home, and the search for identity provide the fundamental bases of his writings. For Mouawad, Lebanon remains the country of childhood, lost in pieces that theatre is called upon to restore by

bringing peace to one's memory" (91). She also goes further as to propose that, "It is rather through the act of mourning that the exilic children experience reconciliation with their own selves: a settlement of different universes and the final arrival to a deserved closure, the sense of belonging and complete self" (94). However, Mouawad's theater reflects the fragmentation of identity and the journey of its re-construction in ways that go beyond cultural or linguistic identity. He broadens the scope of the exile's search for identity beyond memory, trauma, geopolitical borders and identifiers, and also considers hobbies, dreams, passions, family ties, and professions. Such inclusions when considering the creation of the Self offer a greater, more holistic representation of the exile, portraying him as more than his migrant experience. They also bridge the gap between those who have experienced migration and those who may feel dispossessed from their sense of the Self for a myriad of other reasons.

As mentioned briefly earlier, dispossession for Butler and Athanasiou goes far beyond being dispossessed from territory. They establish this concept of dispossession in relation to the Self. There is a dispossession of the Self due to traumas—war, rape, genocide, for instance. In the cases of both Harwan and Mouawad war is a factor in their dispossession; as a character and as a director/writer they experienced violent trauma during the civil war in Lebanon. However, the dispossession of the Self in *Seuls* refers more to a loss of different elements of the Self that can occur simply from living in community or a confusion over the heterogenous fragments that are not yet integrated. Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou discuss dispossession in terms of the normative violence of colonialism and neoliberalism.

> Being dispossessed refers to processes and ideologies by which persons are disowned and abjected by normative and normalizing powers that define cultural intelligibility and that regulate the distribution of vulnerability; loss of land and community, ownership of one's

> living body by another person, as in histories of slavery; subjection to military, imperial, and economic violence; poverty, securitarian regimes, biopolitical subjectivation, liberal possessive individualism, neoliberal governmentality, and precaritization. (Butler and Athanasiou 2)

The Self can be at odds with daily pressures around them. Later they further expound upon society's normative powers as a force of dispossession indicating that we don't even own our own bodies, that our bodies are beyond ourselves. While there is the potential for stress in the uncertainty of living with others and being so open to the influence of others, they do not present it as ultimately a negative. Harwan struggles to make sense of different elements. He struggles with his own dispossession of his native language, his dispossession of the innocence of childhood. He resents having left painting behind. Yet, these are only elements of his cathartic process of healing. His greatest struggle is trying to exist as an integrated Self in relation to others. Opening oneself to others, to alterity, is a dispossession in itself—a dispossession of control and false notions of protection. "I would think that self-poietics, as much as ethics in a certain way, is a possibility whereby the Self is dispossessed of its sovereign position through opening a relation to alterity. If we make, unmake, and remake ourselves, such makings only occur with and through others" (Butler and Athanasiou 68-69). This conception of the Self moves beyond self-contained individuality and towards a relational Self. In their discussion, Butler and Athanasiou pose questions and are in search for but do not develop this idea of an ethic of recognition that is open to alterity. Their dialogue, though, reflects Nancy's "plurality" and "being-with" in regards to community.

Harwan's process of self-discovery not only reveals this connection but also presents it in relation to fragmented parts of his own identity. In their discussion they use the common,

colloquial expression “being beside oneself” to help the reader understand what it may mean to belong to others: “The ‘self’ here does not refer to an auto-logical and self-contained individuality, but rather to responsive dispositions toward becoming-with-one-another, as they are manifested, for example, in the various affects that throw us ‘out of joint’ and ‘beside ourselves,’ such as indignation, despair, desire, outrage, and hope” (Butler 71). Butler and Athanasiou also present political or other rage and passion as other impetuses for being “beside oneself.” There is some push to awake the individual to her relation to the people and world around it. Here I argue that in the case of Harwan, Mouawad adds another dimension, to be awoken to lost pieces of one’s own hybrid identity.

Harwan feels as though he just “goes through the motions”, feeling empty until the coma shakes him and awakens in him a need for change.

> Je veux dire comment on fait pour voir si on est en train de rater sa vie ou pas ? Quand on l’a ratée, on l’a ratée, au moins c’est fait, mais quand on est en train de la rater…Comment on fait pour voir ? Comment on fait pour se crever les yeux et pouvoir enfin voir notre sens, notre rythme, notre vie, notre place ? (152)

This term “rater” can mean to miss or also to mess up or fail. The ambiguity illuminates the tension Harwan feels about a part of himself being gone. However, he also gives the impression that life has escaped him and taken a part of him with it, which lends itself more towards the idea of having missed his life, as if he is a passive spectator in his life rather than taking control of his own destiny. The *themes* of origins, home, and identity quests are central to his transcultural work, but the *form* of his “spectacle de théâtre” (*Seuls* 11), a term that he uses to contrast his work from a “pièce du théâtre” and to emphasize his polyphonic and polymorphic dimension.

This “spectacle de théâtre” equally represents the transculturality in Mouawad’s theater and further reflects the heterogeneity of the Self.

The image of the “oiseau polyphonique” equally describes Mouawad himself and his semi-autobiographical character Harwan. The polyphony is also a reflection of the multiplicity of fragmented pieces of his identity: “‘La polyphonie d’écriture’ met en signe l’appartenance (trans)culturelle du sujet écrivant (franco-arabo-libano-québécois) et le rapport que celui-ci entretient avec l’écriture scénique, avec l’écriture autobiographique, et avec le genre solo” (*Détours* 79). Mouawad’s choice of the solo is obviously very important as the genre is an apt vehicle for revealing the character’s challenges with his identity. Harwan is the only character played by an actor onstage; other ancillary characters are implied by a shadow behind a screen, a voice on Harwan’s voicemail, or inferred to be on the other end of a phone call. The focus on stage, and also in the photos included in *Seuls*, is placed heavily on the body of the protagonist, Harwan, and his own explorations and questions of identity. The isolation Harwan feels is more visible in the solo since he alone occupies the stage, but the fragmentation of his identity is also more visible because of the multiple forms that his character takes on. In contrast to Lepage’s characters, Harwan does not play varied characters, but he appears in photos, video, as a spectral projection, an answering machine voice, and ultimately in the Rembrandt painting. Because he is the only character, the appearance of his character in multiple ways on stage is more striking (i.e. the overlapping of photos, projection images, and the actor’s body all at the same time).

His name even signifies the fragmentation of a de-territorialized life. “Harwan est un nom à consonance arabe mais déterritorialisé. Ce nom, nous dit Mouawad, est construit à partir d’une recherche sur Google portant sur ‘les pronoms masculins arabes’ et sur les noms en W d’origines multiples” (Fisher 81). The symbolism of the artificially constructed name is a reflection of his

identity, which is also created from different pieces of cultures, languages, and other external factors. *Seuls,* though, portrays Harwan's extreme dispossession in its use of multi-media and the representation of corporeal *déterritorialisation*.

Such dispossession, loss, and/or fragmentation of parts of one's identity can be due to a desire to assimilate to expectations for one's life. These pressures may come from family or society, from being in relationship with others, or expectations from work or partners. The challenge to not "lose oneself" while wrestling with outside forces is most apparent when Mouawad explains the journey that his protagonist Harwan takes. While in *Le sang de promesses*, Mouawad created Odyssey-like tales with an impossible "return to origin" for his return home, with *Seuls* it is different: "Harwan ne revenait pas vers le père mais vers lui-même, vers la peinture" (119). The father representing a different time and a different place, representing Lebanon and Arabic, these origins are not the home to which Harwan attempts to return. Instead, the home is within himself, thus erasing the spatial distance between one point and another while simultaneously suggesting that one can be outside (or exiled from) oneself. Being exiled from oneself, here in regards to one's identity in the works of Mouawad, is one aspect of the corporeal exile that is the central focus of this project and Mouawad's definition of "return to origin" as a "return to self" revealing how his works move beyond traditional exile narratives to speak to questions of identity across populations.

Mouawad's treatment of exile in *Seuls* is deeply personal and largely auto-biographical, as the genre solo indicates. Mouawad discusses the autobiographical aspect of his work specifically in the *Chemin* and divulges how personal the creation process was for him. As Mouawad writes about his own exile, his loss of the Self, he is transformed in a way that seems to offer healing. The process of creating a self-portrait, which he does as he reflects on his own

being for the creation of his character Harwan, for the plot of *Seuls*, but also through the act of painting which allowed him to symbolically kill and re-create himself, allows him the renaissance needed to leave his isolated place of exile. In *Je suis méchant*, Mouawad expresses his feeling of being lost, "Personnellement, je me sens étrange dans mon rapport avec ma langue maternelle. Je suis un peu perdu" (*Méchant* 76). His accent, his language, his body cause a certain degree of foreignness in his perception of the Self in relation to others, including his family. He explicitly expresses this discomfort in *Seuls* through Harwan's struggle to communicate with his father and feeling guilt around the loss of his language, being picked on for it, shamed for it even. Reconnecting with a more familiar and more complete sense of the Self is a central part of the lives of Mouawad's characters who are exiled from their own identities, souls, and bodies and for himself. In *Seuls*, this process of reconnection occurs through the act of painting as well as the emblematic use of Rembrandt's painting weaved through the production in multiple ways.

A central symbol in *Seuls* is Rembrandt's painting of the Prodigal Son. The prodigal son leaves home, squanders his inheritance, and then realizes a need to return home, to his father. However, Harwan's journey was not a return to the father but a return to himself, which he specifies is a return to painting. A return to the Self via a return to painting implies that in fact a return to himself is recuperating that which he lost. This juxtaposition helps us to understand what his exile is, the loss of the Self. In the painting, the father and his embrace of the son is symbolically significant, drawing attention to Harwan's relationship with his father. The prodigal son returns home, to the father. While Mouawad explains that Harwan's return was to himself and not to his father, Harwan has a complicated relationship with his father and also with what his father represents. Harwan's father still speaks Arabic, is still more closely connected to

Lebanese culture, and tries to hold onto traditions of a different time and place. Harwan's father can be viewed as a connection to his origins and to a home he left. It is significant that even if his origins are a part of what he lost, they are not tied to a place but rather to choices he has made to forget what he left behind. Exile is an internal conflict, an interpersonal conflict, but not a conflict with territory.

Additionally, the father represents complete forgiveness, for in the story of the prodigal son he fully embraces his son without consideration of past choices. In the life of Harwan, because he explains that his return is to himself, it can be understood that it is his own forgiveness that he needs in order to move on. Harwan has so much anger, and this anger needs to be released for him to be able to escape his self-imposed exile. On stage, of course, the violence is prominent as an assault on the senses with bright, harsh lights, loud surprising noises, uncomfortable moans and groans, and lots of red paint representing blood. This anger can also be seen in the text itself, though, with the predominant use of the color red, inclusion of images, stark contrast between white, black, and red colors on pages, and the violence of his use of language and silence, which is even present on the page by his use of space on the page. This technique is employed in addition to violent themes of defenestration, and simulations of the removal of one's own eye and seppuku. Yet, the play does not end in the despair of violence. Harwan breaks through screen where the Rembrandt painting is projected, specifically the part of the painting where the father embraces his son. This literal breakthrough is also symbolic, implying Harwan's own return home and a symbolic rebirth that has allowed him to emerge as an integrated Self in positive relation with others.

Towards Healing

In *Seuls*, the audience is also intertwined in the death and rebirth of Harwan because they cannot escape the violence that he is experiencing. Mouawad's theater demonstrates the purging of anger, violence, and trauma. He uses violence in staging, with screens, projections, and multiplicities of bodies onstage, as well as acts of violence by actors to purge the excess and to reassemble dispossessed parts but for the purpose of refining his body and Self and ultimately to find reconciliation both with the Self and with others. The physicality of purgation can be seen on-stage in multiple productions of Mouawad through such things as simulations of disembowelment, removal of an eye, or the pouring out of blood on stage. The play overstimulates our senses in a way that is jarring and painful even. Suffering through the excruciatingly loud and uncomfortable sounds of moaning or screaming, seeing red paint imitate blood as it is smeared across the stage, or watching him writhe in pain from seppuku, or even the flash of lights in the photo booth – among many other instances - can also serve to push the audience into experiencing the catharsis, a release of feelings based on shared suffering. Such an experience is closely related to kinaesthetic empathy, a concept associated with affect theory in the context of post-dramatic theater.

> Kinaesthetic empathy is linked to the affect rather than to the emotion. This means that kinaesthetic empathy can be considered as embodied intensity which has an impact on the spectator in a kinaesthetic manner. [...] Linking kinaesthetic empathy with affect rather than emotion means that it can be viewed as embodied intensity that impacts the spectator kinaesthetically. (Reynolds 132)

Such empathy paves the way for the possibility of a corporeal reconciliation, healing that occurs because of the trancorporeal experiences of actors and spectators alike in theater. Patrice Pavis expands on this understanding of kinaesthetic empathy, focusing on embodiment of the spectator

and not just the actor's embodiment affecting the spectator. Both the actor and the spectator incorporate the suffering of the other into their own body. That is to say, the spectator does not only receive the signals and affective experiences of the actor but embodies the actor. Mouawad's violent mise-en-scène lends itself to this kinaesthetic empathy, where discomfort, overwhelm, and suffering is an embodied experience for the spectator, as it is for the actor, through an affective filter. This shared experience advances both intimacy and a space for community building.

Jacques Rancière presents theater as an ideal space for community because of the ways in which theater can move people to act, bring awareness of shared experiences, reveal a vulnerability, stir consciousness, etc. because of the interrelation between the audience and the actors. Wajdi Mouawad makes theater a space of encounter and cohabitation and through such interpersonal relations, it is also a space for catharsis. His aim for catharsis is not didactic—what to avoid or to reject in order to avoid the fate of the characters as it was for Aristotle in *Poetics*. Instead, he posits his catharsis as one of healing though the experience of encounter and sharing-sharing stories, sharing tears, and shared healing. Mouawad describes his theater this way- as a place of change, of meeting, and especially the chance to be together in suffering and in healing: "Si aujourd'hui nous constatons combien nous sommes en manque sans pour autant être en mesure de dire réellement de quoi, le théâtre nous offre la bouleversante possibilité que nous puissions l'être ensemble" (*Les tigres* 87). He shows appreciation for the theater and the opportunity for people to connect in a meaningful way: "Le théâtre comme théâtre. Non pas comme un espace mais comme un temps, celui de la métamorphose. Non pas comme un divertissement mais comme un engagement, celui de la rencontre" (*Les tigres* 86). Typically focusing on violence and its perpetuation through word, silence, and image in Mouawad's

theater, scholars do not give adequate attention to the cathartic rudiments of his work and the hope he offers there within.

Mouawad is able to achieve a theater that offers healing and hope because he brings his own struggles, and those of others, to light in such a way that it emphasizes commonality and invites people to suffer together through catharsis in order to bring about healing. The fragmentation and division of the Self[35], feelings of isolation, and the pain and fear he experienced in the trauma of the civil war in Lebanon as a child are presented alongside of the continued challenges he faced integrating into French and Quebecois societies. These challenges include all that he forgot or lost from his life in Lebanon, starting with his native tongue. However, he does not consider these struggles unique to exile in a geopolitical sense. His mise-en-scène exploits fragmentation of the Self, of the body, and the projection of spectral bodies in the space of the stage via the use of video in other devices to demonstrate that the body is its own exilic space. He employs such techniques to portray border crossing and liminality in regards to the body. In his theater, the body can even become a habitable space to others or others can seemingly take over his body. For instance, in the beginning of *Seuls*, it is thought to be the father who is in a coma, and only towards the end does the audience understand that in fact the body in a coma behind the screen is actually Harwan's. Unclear corporeal propriety and shared bodily spaces is also a particularly interesting lens through which to explore the cathartic element in Mouawad's theater because from this view of the body, we can extrapolate an analogy between the scenic space and the body. Both are spaces of encounter and co-habitation, which allow for cathartic healing in a world of suffering. When focusing on the physical and corporeal elements of catharsis in Mouawad's work, one can underscore how they lend towards an

[35] In this way, on stage, he comes close to Artaud's schizophrenic experience of a body without organs.

understanding of catharsis as an interpersonal exchange either between characters on stage as a means for modeling daily life, or between actors, spectators, and even directors.

Yet this cathartic experience maintains a division between the audience and the actors and the characters they are portraying. While the audience may feel compassion for the tragic hero, or fear a similar fate, they remain separate and distinct from him. In Greek tragedy, the cathartic experience was inspired by the desire to be different from the characters whose lives are tragic examples and also call for "measure". Yet, catharsis in contemporary theater is a process of healing from lived traumas, whether it be traumas of rape, genocide, war, illness and organ transplant, or crises of identity due to outside pressures or isolation, and as such, it rather calls for a purgation via a theater of cruelty, in Artaud's sense, or what we could call an aesthetics of the excess[36]. Scholars such as Cathy Caruth and Jane Moss have discussed the important role of literature and theater, respectively, in healing from Trauma[37]. Caruth argues for the importance of literature for the transmission, not the understanding of, trauma. The performance of passing on knowledge, of recounting events, transmits the trauma not only so that its memory is preserved but so that it is experienced by its survivor. She addresses the issue of latency in her work, referring to the initial obscurity and incomprehensibility of the events. She relates this inability to process the trauma in the moment to post-traumatic stress disorder in which trauma survivors involuntarily reencounter the experiences and begin to feel the anxiety that was not present before. Caruth argues that literature allows for voluntarily reencountering trauma as a

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[36] For more on Mouawad's post-dramatic interpretation of Artaud's theater of cruelty see Dominique Fisher's article, "*Incendies* de Wajdi Mouawad à Denis Villeneuve, ou comment figurer la cruauté."

[37] See for instance, Caruth, Cathy. "Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History." 2016 or her introduction in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory,* 1995. Also, Moss, Jane. "The drama of survival: Staging post-traumatic memory in plays by Lebanese-Quebecois dramatists" *THEATRE RESEARCH IN CANADA-RECHERCHES THEATRALES AU CANADA,* ISSN 1196-1198, 2001, Volume 22, Issue 2, pp. 173 – 189.

means of both understanding and working through it. What Caruth says about literature works, too, for theater and performance. Theater involves creation, re-creation, and repetition; it can be used as a process of revisiting and working through lived traumas. Theater, like literature, also involves an audience to witness and to in turn also bear witness to the trauma. Moss explores how testimony is used in Quebecois theater about the Lebanese civil war. She argues that Mouawad's theater, while about war and immigration, is neither a historic war nor immigrant narrative. Rather, his plays are contemporary tragedies. Though, "instead of inspiring dread, fear, horror, and pity leading to catharsis, these plays re-enact violence, memorialize the victims, and perform mourning work in order to renew our shattered faith in humanity" (Moss 173). According to Karen Malpede witnessing is the new dramatic action; theater "dramatizes moments of speaking the unspeakable, hearing the unbearable" (300). But, returning to Butler and Athanasiou, theater of witnessing has an ethics of recognition to consider. "It demands that the playwright avoid becoming a documentarian, that the victim reclaim and recount the trauma, that the audience members become a compassionate community" (Moss 174). Mouawad's intentional complication of borders between the Self and other lends towards compassionate, sympathetic identification. If we are not separate from others, we cannot avoid their sufferings. Instead, we must share in the pain and purge it together. Additionally, the witnessing of lived traumas on stage affects the audience, awakening its members to their own anxieties, dispossession, and need for healing.

The collective nature of Mouawad's theater, and catharsis, is even more prominent because of the nature of his theatrical production[38], which is itself a very collaborative process.

[38] Mouawad participates in the tradition of post-dramatic theater, which, as Fisher notes in "*Incendies* de Wajdi Mouawad à Denis Villeneuve, ou comment figurer la cruauté," refers to a theater whose text is written post-performance and in collaboration with the actors.

He works with his actors and theatrical team to create the stories, dialogues, characters, and mise-en-scène. Mouawad does have final direction over the work, but he does it all in partnership with his greater community. Because of this, the plays evolve, even from one tour of the play to another, but also the actors become much more emotionally invested. Pol Pelletier, another Quebecois actress, writer, and director, explains her own experience with this type of community-involved writing and producing of plays, which she calls collective creation. "Collective creation is exhausting…every day, since you couldn't hide behind a script, a director, a role, you had to expose yourself- who you were, what you believed, what you loved, what you wanted. And that meant you related to the others, really, truly brutally sometimes" (Hurley 6). Already, with this collective creation as a method for producing theater, we can see a change in the way we view the actors and can begin to envision another level of cathartic experience experienced by the authors, the actors, and also the spectators. Theater, and especially Mouawad's theater is an ideal space for catharsis because it so intimately involves the audience; even the actors are in a way the audience in his post-dramatic conception of theater. We can begin to construct this paradigmatic shift of catharsis as it may relate to non-self-autonomous beings and a theater that is entirely based on a community of shared thought, practice, and experience. The actors are not only imitating life but experiencing it with each other and also with the audience. He works with his team to portray the violence, pain, and suffering of today's world in a way that rings true universally – across people and also across time-- because his intention is one of reconciliation and redemption. His representation of violence, whether civil war, rape, or familial violence, aims to heal from trauma and violence and even break the cycle.

This interpersonal and transformative view of catharsis that I advance through my analysis of Mouawad's theater expands the cathartic community to include actors and/or

directors. According to James Porter, theater offers an experience in which a person is removed from his "normal state of equilibrium by the (ecstatic) experience of being affected from without" (30) and then he can return to himself. Porter presents theater as a stimulus for greater self-understanding similarly to how Butler and Athanasiou discuss political outrage and passion. Both are an experience that leads to being beside oneself, and in this way could be an example of what they seek, a way to understand the Self as a relational Self. The audience is placed in contact with universal humanity in a way that jars them, awakens them, to a greater connection and openness to alterity. For in *Seuls* Harwan the experience is the coma; he is placed beside himself in a literal way. Harwan's Self exists outside of his body because of the comatose state; he witnesses himself and his own suffering as if an audience to his own life. The audience for the play is watching Harwan and identifies with his suffering and are vulnerable to the violence of noise and sight as well as to the emotional violence of feeling vulnerability. However, this experience implores a re-conception of the Self and offers the opportunity for cathartic healing. Here, "catharsis brings about a universalization of the Self as it expands in two distinct ways: first, through ekstasis by being 'placed outside itself' and then by an identification with 'the whole of humanity'" (Porter 31). These aims of catharsis, being pushed outside oneself, universalization, and identification with humanity, all play a role in Mouawad's work with the body and de-constructing the idea of non-permeable boundaries. Mouawad uses the body, and its permeable nature, as a means to posit the universality of human suffering within the framework of his own experience of exile- a corporeal exile rather than geopolitical. Yet, unlike Porter, Mouawad reveals possibilities of the actors and characters being pushed outside themselves, not just the audience.

The proposition of universality within human suffering is problematic, though. Not addressing cultural or historic contexts or specific details of individual traumas risks erasing those differences and changing the narrative. It could be considered another form of silencing the truths of trauma survivors. However, I do not believe that is Mouawad's intent to further silence the stories of people but rather he seeks to draw connections between the stories, because revealing points of intersection between stories and experiences not only reveals points of intersection between people but also provides an understanding that invites people to become part of each other's stories. The possibility for community is expanded when the focus is on commonality and shared experience, not focusing on difference.

Community:

The two main characters of Mouawad's solo *Soeurs* model community building through shared suffering. *Soeurs* specifically tells the story of two women whose lives intertwine and whose empathy for one another's suffering unites them in a common bond that offers strength to overcome the weight of the expectations they feel. Both characters, though, are played by Annick Bergeron, which further deconstructs divisions between people since two beings (characters) reside in one body (actress). In many ways *Soeurs* is a story of the unravelling of Geneviève Bergeron, whose last name is the same as the actress who plays the role thus further emphasizing her embodiment of the character, and the commiseration, and subsequent transformation, of the second character Layla. *Soeurs* begins with Geneviève on stage alone

singing and crying in her car to the song *Je ne suis qu'une chanson*[39] written by Ginette Reno[40]. At first it appears as if she's performing the song as if it's her own, and not on the radio, signaling her appropriation of the song. It is symbolic of her life which we as an audience soon learn is an unauthentic performance; she desperately tries to be who she thinks she is supposed to be until she finally just breaks down. The majority of the play is about her breakdown when she is pushed to her edge by the limitations of impersonal technology and unreceptive personnel at her hotel. Language becomes an increasingly important aspect of Bergeron's identity and her struggle, as do the limitations of efficiency[41], especially as they relate to the depersonalization of daily experience. She feels disconnected from herself and those around her as even her name becomes detached from her identity when repeatedly mispronounced by the Anglophone hotel receptionists and machines. There are, of course, many other aspects of her exilic identity that are explored in the play such as the inauthentic and performative aspects of her job, strained familial relations, and residual pain from having lost a sister, to name just a few.

[39] The significance of the choice of song should not go unnoted. "I am only a song" makes reference to the performative nature of her life: she exists only as the song she is singing- she has to put on a smile and pretend to be how she is expected to be. This alludes to an inauthenticity in exilic identities- her identity is what others see, how she portrays it, but she breaks into sobs while singing as she longs for something else.

[40] Not only is the song choice significant, but Mouawad's choice of singer is, too. Ginette Reno's manager changed her name from Raynault, a more francophone name, to Reno, a more anglicized version when he was preparing her for a career in singing. The hegemony of English in Canada, even in francophone parts like Montreal where Reno was born as was the *Soeurs'* character Geneviève Bergeron, or Ottawa where Geneviève travelled and stayed for work- the place of her breakdown- is a central aspect of the conflict of identity in the play *Soeurs*.

[41] Mouawad alludes to a breakdown in community as a result of the push for efficiency: "Je crains que nous devenions des machines. L'essentiel n'est pas dans cette efficacité dont nous sommes capables, mais dans cette envie de rendre visible un invisible auquel nous n'avons pas encore eu accès" (*Soeurs*, 8). The "invisible" of which he speaks here is the connection created between these two women and the realization of their shared conditions.

For Annick, the actress, and Nayla, Mouawad's actual sister after whom the character Layla is portrayed, the spark that would unite them occurred after the production of *Seuls*. Annick was taken by Nayla just from the sound of her voice which was recorded and used for the character of Harwan's sister in *Seuls* and was curious about her story. Mouawad asked Annick and Nayla if they would become friends, if Annick could shadow Nayla and become as familiar as possible with Nayla, her life, and who she was as a person, as a sister, as a child of their father, as a Lebanese immigrant to Canada. It was from this relationship that the play grew, but it quickly became apparent that *Soeurs* would not only be a story about Mouawad's sister as Annick recognized so much of herself in Nayla's story. True to Mouawad's typical collaborative writing style, *Soeurs* became the story of Nayla, of Annick, and of sisters, mothers, daughters, and women everywhere.

Genevieve and Layla share their pain and suffering, opening up to each other with great vulnerability and because of this there is hope for healing. Layla is able to listen to and learn from the Genevieve's breakdown. She identifies with the loneliness, the pressure, the loss of identity, and other struggles of middle-aged womanhood. Genevieve, herself, experiences the strong emotional response and purging of all the pain that has accumulated, suggesting a cathartic moment of her own. However, additionally, Genevieve's brokenness gives Layla occasion to experience her own pain and her own exilic identity as she had to assume the role of caretaker for her father rather than focusing on the essence of her own identity. Layla crawls under the bed with Genevieve. She inhabits her emotional and physical space, rejecting all of society's pressures, finding solace together, and eventually returning with renewed strength.

Mouawad illuminates the possibility of a cathartic experience between the characters of his play- Genevieve's violent and aggressive outburst and her withdrawal from the world around

her as she hid under the bed of her hotel room, when observed by Layla, allows for identification, vicarious experience, and the possibility for change. This story of shared suffering, and shared hope and healing then becomes the experience of the audience, too. The audience is not only invited to the vicarious experience of the heroine, and the possibility of catharsis, but is also invited to imitate the relationship between the women. Mouawad brings to focus how similar our lives really are- this was actually the inspiration for *Soeurs*. As mentioned earlier, something about Nayla's voice and her story moved Annick who then pushed Mouawad to delve deeper and perhaps portray it on stage. As a part of the audience, Annick had a visceral reaction to *Seuls*, specifically to a voice she heard over an answering machine. This experience awoke Annick to her own feelings of corporeal exile because she connected to Nayla. As Annick and Nayla progressed in their relationship and in discussions about the play, their similarities became clearer, but also it became increasingly evident that what was so compelling about the story Nayla told was that it was a universal story, one to which so many women, so many sisters, could relate. They created the play as a call to female solidarity, including many elements that are emphasized in the women's movements today such as emotional labor, challenges of balancing family and work, and impossible societal expectations. Through these inclusions, *Soeurs* became an invitation to share and bear witness to women's pain and also to offer healing together.

Mouawad involves the audience on the cathartic journey of Genevieve and Layla and into the healing community as well. *Soeurs* offers its spectators the occasion to "collide" just as Annick and Nayla did. Spectators can share in the emotional experience of the characters and also become more aware of their own exilic identity. This is achieved in many ways, one of which is breaking the fourth wall, a strategy that took roots in the avant-garde theater. The play

begins with Genevieve speaking and singing directly to the play's audience, engaging us as if we were her audience at a concert, which begins the performance by bridging the gap to create community with the spectators. Rancière presents theater as a "forme communautaire exemplaire" (Rancière 11) because of the ways in which theater can move people to act, bring awareness of shared experiences, reveal a vulnerability, stir consciousness, etc. because of the interrelation between the audience and the actors: "ce que l'homme contemple dans le spectacle est l'activité qui lui a été dérobée, retournée contre lui, organisatrice d'un monde collectif dont la réalité est celle de cette dépossession" (Rancière 13). With Mouawad's *Soeurs* this direct communication with the audience from the beginning suggests that we are invited on the journey of her breakdown and hope for rebuilding. In the production and study guide to the English language version of *Incendies*, *Scorched,* Mouawad offers his idea of theater as a community:

> The theater is a live place, where everyone—actors, audience members—are alive. It's not like the movies, where some are dead, maybe, and where those that you watch no longer look like what you are seeing. In the theater, everyone is there. There are people who are going to die, in front of other people who are going to die, but who are alive at the same time. Moreover, these people are gathered around this very particular thing, which is the word. From the beginning, this word is not trying to sell me something, to convince me to vote for someone or believe an idea. This word exists apart from all desire for profit. It uses the fundamental notion of being together: I listen to someone who speaks to me. Theater brings together people who have come to listen to a cry that will upset them. This freedom seems fundamental to me today. (Scorched 10)

This relationship between the actors and audience brings the function of the play beyond simple witnessing of the exilic condition to the sharing in the suffering of others. We can also be the hand that pulls Genevieve out of her circumstances. Rewriting History, breaking silence, reclaiming parts of one's identity- all of these are present in Mouawad's plays as a means for reconciling the exilic Self with the disconnected fragments of its identity, but they are communal endeavors.

The discussion of the creation of *Soeurs* and the relationship built between Annick and Layla also alludes to the emotional catharsis of theater for the actors when their characters are based off of their own lives and experiences. The emotions of years may be relived in a matter of a couple of hours, or perhaps even recognized and realized for the first time: "Theater is bigger than life precisely because its emotional repertoire is bigger than our quotidian one; although it is not uncommon for two hours' traffic on the stage to take a character from being a contented king to an ashamed exile, those emotional highs and lows are not generally experienced offstage at such close intervals or at such extremes" (Hurley 7). These "larger than life emotions" are not only experienced by the audience, but by actors, too, and Mouawad himself as he writes and works through his own experiences of war, exile, and trauma.

Furthermore, the nature of shared emotion is intricately tied to catharsis. Hurley argues that "emotion occurs at the junction of our inner concerns with the outside world" (Hurley 10), and she continues to explain that "Emotion, then, like affect, moves us out of ourselves by taking subjective experiences and inserting them into a social context of meaning and relation" (Hurley 21). The audience also begins to form a community of its own in the shared experience of the performance, borrowing from each other's experiences and affecting the mood and emotions of the space. This idea of a temporary community comprised of an audience is borrowed from

anthropologist Victor Turner's scholarship in performance studies and his term *communitas*. *Communitas* refers to moments in theater when audience members become particularly attuned to other members of the audience, feel connected and cohesive in almost a spiritual way. Hurley designates theater a uniting force because emotions stimulate our brains in such a way that it allows people to move beyond ontological isolation on connect with what and who is around. By affecting our bodies and brains via emotions, theater offers connection and a sense of belonging to something greater than ourselves, which are arguably among humanity's greatest needs. It is also a direct solution for the isolation that Mouawad presents as one of the most significant sufferings of our age. This connection is not limited to those who watch theater—the audience—but theater practitioners who also receive benefits from their own vicarious experiences, which are very intimate in nature. In this way, theater and catharsis shift from a place of mimicry and instruction to a place of healing through shared experience. Theater becomes a creative and positive space, as well as a refuge where people come together to cry, suffer, purge, and refine in order to find healing.

Pushing one step further, Mouawad draws the analogy between the body and the theater and presents them both as places of co-habitation and encounter such that one can also deduce that the therapeutic possibilities also extend into shared corporeal spaces. Mouawad's work serves to re-evaluate the permeability of the Self, and thus also the interconnected nature of people. Extending from the idea just discussed that the therapeutic goals of reconciliation for the exiled Self occur in the spaces of co-habitation and encounter, both in and outside of the theater, one must then consider, too, the question of community in relation to the permeable, relational Self. Such communities must be centered on vulnerability and openness. According to Butler and Athanasiou, interdependency, intersubjectivity, and relationality are all parts of the dispossession

they claim happens to the individual and which results in a deconstruction of his or her sense of identity or the Self. The idea of ownership of one's living body by another person is not related to the political past of slavery, but, as discussed previously, Mouawad explores other ways in which our bodies are "owned", "possessed", "assumed" or "shared" with a sometimes indistinguishable other. These notions of dispossession, precarity, and community enlighten my understanding of Mouawad. However, Butler and Athanasiou do not develop these ideas but rather just discuss their search for the possibility of new communities formed based on the conception of a relational Self. This ethics and politics of post-identity subjectivities is a call to something new and different that Mouawad presents in the most vivid way in *Seuls* and *Soeurs* through his focus on shared responsibility and vulnerability.

While outside factors lead to the fragmented, exilic Self, Mouawad does not suggest isolating oneself from the community, which would only lead to a life of self-induced exile from the "other". Through the lives of his characters he urges exiled identities to find harmony, reconstructing the pieces of the fragmented identity, but alongside others. This play is a beautiful revelation of our common lot as humans, and in this play, specifically as women. *Soeurs* is an angering, disheartening, and empowering display of how easy it is to lose oneself in the expectations that can consume our identities and leave us exiled remnants of our essential selves. This shared story of a shared fate, women walking hand in hand through life, is an example of Jean-Luc Nancy's idea of "être-avec", which is itself an attempt to break down the exclusive nature of communities that are composed and self-defined based on common nationalities, cultures, or even language, rather than the community of shared experience as "being-with" implies. Nancy sees in theater "le lieu de l'appropriation symbolico-imaginaire de l'existence collective" (*Être singulier pluriel* 94), a space that transcends other commonalities or

differences. Nancy's concept of "être-avec" and beliefs that one cannot be a "Self" outside of relation with others are similar to that which Butler and Athanasiou seek. Nancy identifies the need to move away from the units often thought of as communities, i.e. along cultural or lingual division, and to focus on what he considers the "natural" state, which he defines as only being able to be a "Self" in relation to others: "Being cannot *be* anything but being-with-one-another, circulating in the *with* and as the *with* of this singularity plural coexistence" (*Being Singular* 3). Emphasizing the interconnected nature of humanity is an essential aspect in defining community, and one to which Mouawad could easily be said to ascribe. His use of technology to show characters overlapping with each other and images of characters intersecting with themselves, for example, or the fact that in *Soeurs*, one actress plays all of the roles to emphasize the overlying similarities demonstrates his beliefs of the interconnectedness of people. In this way neither Nancy nor Mouawad associate "community" with particular groups, but rather they propose that in "being Self" one is automatically in relation to others and that this interconnectedness is the basis for "community". The Self is open to and in constant relation with other selves. Mouawad demonstrates the challenges with this permeability in terms of the dispossession of one's identity, but also embraces the openness to others and to the world, further trying to erase divisions between the Self and the distant Other. Their literary works offer examples of what Butler and Athanasiou only hope for—recuperating collective responsibility. Mouawad, like NDiaye, Denis, and Nancy, presents identity crises and self-fragmentation, as well as journeys of self-discovery and a return to the Self, yet not in a narcissistic way. Instead they present community through openness and vulnerability as a response to the dispossession of identity and Self, both key aspects of the corporeal exile experience. This ethics and politics of post-identity subjectivities—the notion of a hybrid integrated Self but going even further to see the boundaries

between people blurring as well- is a call to something new and different in much the same way we see Mouawad focus on shared responsibility and honest self-exposure.

Whether dispossession of aspects of one's identity leads to a fragmentation or loss of identity or to a disassociation from the Self or reality, Mouawad aims to offer healing and a reconstruction and integration of identity that comes from relationships. This further accentuates humanity's interconnectedness. It also offers a shift in how we conceive of the purging and healing associated with catharsis. Rather than instructive in nature—learning from the mimetic experience—Mouawad proposes healing from one's exilic condition through shared experience. Telling stories, sharing tears, singing out against life's injustice all are ways to come together to handle the disassociating pains and pressures of both daily life and tragic circumstances. Theater is a refuge where this sharing and healing can occur. It would be easy, then, to consider theater as the home to the exile, but we would be remiss. The refuge for the exile is not in finding a new place to call home but in being at home in his own body and Self. This assertion is profoundly apparent in his plays, too, as characters struggle not with their geographical location but with feeling overwhelmed, conflicted, and emotionally and psychologically lost. Yana Meerzon echoes this, in reference to the work of Mouawad, exile is the "process of performing and re-constructing self" (*Performing Exile* 4). While Meerzon is still referring to exile in a geopolitical sense, there is still relevance in her assertion that exile changes one's perception of the Self and that "theatricality serves an exile both as a protective shield and as a means of reconnecting with his/her sense of self" (*Performing Exile* 14). However, as we see in this chapter, theater extends beyond this purpose of reuniting a person with his/her sense of the Self. Theater can awaken the need for a return to the Self, as well as open the consciousness of the Self to its interdependence and relationality. Furthermore, it invites all participants (spectators, actors, directors alike) to

come together in their suffering, and through a cathartic process of purging excess and embracing hybridity and alterity, find healing and reconciliation with the Self and with a greater community.

Chapter 5: Conclusion—Radical, Embodied Hospitality

My dissertation exposes how Denis, Mouawad, Nancy, and NDiaye problematize the concepts of the Self and Other by blurring the boundaries between the two, boundaries that are at the very core of a person—the body. Instead of a private sanctuary for the Self, they expose the human body as a potential space of encounter, open to both the Self and to the other and where both can exist simultaneously. They also portray the body and the beings that inhabit them as morphable, transformable. While some of the literary examples are fantastic and extraordinary, they propose a way of living in community that is different from the way it is currently often conceived. Communities seem to, by definition, create in and out groups because they are often formed by likeness, whether it be shared religion, shared origins, shared languages or even shared interests. However, in this dissertation I have demonstrated how the bodies in the works studied can be seen as manifestations of hybrid communities that are not formed in this way. In their words, the representation of bodies in the characters and actors not only denote the hybridity of current transglobal, transcultural communities but are themselves bodies imbued with the other. They are multiple. They are open and constantly changing in relation to others and the world around them. They are thresholds where a diversity of experiences and people can be welcomed. This passing through, and perhaps landing in the body for a period of time, describes the movement associated with trans-corporeality and also introduces temporality into the conceptions of community.

Communities can transpire from shared experiences, joys and sufferings, and along lines of difference. Communities can be formed among people who share social locations, rather than geopolitical ones. Braidotti defines social locations as lived experiences:

> Being nomadic, homeless, a migrant, an exile, a refugee, a tourist, a rape-in-war victim, an itinerant migrant, an illegal immigrant, an expatriate, a mail-order bride, a foreign caretaker of the young or the elderly of the economically developed world, a global venture financial expert, a humanitarian relief worker in the UN global system, a citizen of a country that no longer exists (Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union) – these are no metaphors, but social locations. (14)

Here trauma and suffering are the basis of the social locations, but they need not be. Because we live in constant transformation and hybridization, the social locations and resulting feelings are also shifting. The reason for suffering can vary between subjects but still be the basis for communities and connection. Such relationships also do not remain static; it is not simply a misery loves company message that Denis, Mouawad, Nancy, and NDiaye propose. Instead they offer transformative possibilities of healing in these relationships. Whether it be the grafted heart's restorative function in Nancy's body or NDiaye's character *Le Fils'* communal, harmonious life upon claiming a space for his adoptive parents in his chest, finding comfort and a feeling of home in the everchanging, non-sovereign states of their existence requires vulnerability and openness to the other. Like the constantly shifting identities of characters in the texts analyzed here, constantly shifting communities can produce anxiety: "Unless one likes complexity, one cannot feel at home in the twenty-first century. Transformations, metamorphoses, mutations, processes of change amidst dissonant power relations have become familiar patterns in the lives of the most contemporary subjects" (Braidotti 11). Braidotti returns

to the idea of "feeling at home", suggesting it is near impossible in the constant flux unless one can be comfortable in the tension of hybridity and movement. She thus suggests a certain amount of stability associated with the comfort of a "home" but does also imply an alternative: vulnerability to complexity and to hybridity. A community, a body, or a subject that is constantly open and fluid can be at risk, but my study proposes that the alternative poses a greater risk: alienation, isolation, and continued suffering.

The narrative of exile has until now largely focused on individuals and groups moving from one geopolitical space to another often resulting in alienation and isolation. Here, through the study of movement across corporeal borders in literature, I shift the story; we are largely alienated and isolated from each other because of the focus on and fear of difference. These authors, and especially Mouawad, offer literary examples where people instead come together and radically embody one another's sufferings in order to heal together. There are also examples of where literary approaches to such hospitality overlap with real-life dispossession and processes of healing. For instance, there is an element of healing that can be ascribed to the "*Rwanda: Devoir de mémoire*" project in which prominent writers such as Boubacar Boris Diop, Tierno Monénembo, Véronique Tajdo, and Abdourahman A. Waberi were commissioned to travel to Rwanda in order to bare witness and offer inspired responses to the genocide or Regina José Galindo, a Guatemalan performance artist who has created extraordinary pieces in which she pushes the limits of the human body and her audience's ability to witness suffering. While exerting a violence on the audience who are subjected to more than they are willing to see, her aim is actually to oppose the violent force found in government, racism, exploitation, and violence against women. Her art demonstrates how the forms of oppression are exerted on the body and causes dispossession. Not only does Galindo use her art to awaken her audience of the

dispossessive elements in her society, her performing bodies also memorialize the suffering such that the collective can reclaim propriety of the body. I will conclude with one last example from Luvungi, Congo as reported by journalist Laura Heaton to an NPR's Rough Translation podcast entitled, *The Congo We Listen To*. In this case, dispossession is again due to violence enacted against women, particularly the trauma of rape. In 2010 a renegade militia from Rwanda occupied this small Congolese village of Luvungi, home of roughly two thousand inhabitants. The militia exerted horrific brutalization of the community, including raping women and girls. The number of rapes is unknown, with reports varying from the initial number of six to the official U.N. report of 387 rape survivors, the largest number of cases of rape reported in the Eastern Congo. An NGO researcher and reporter, Laura Heaton, had seen the initial headlines of the events in Luvungi, wondered what had happened to these women, and lamented at the lack of media follow-up. Heaton and her Congolese colleague Christian Kilundo travelled to Luvungi to inquire, and what they discovered was shocking. Women told stories of being raped despite the fact that they had not actually had the experience, and the number of rapes reported was not representative of the number of women who had actually been raped. However, Heaton was clear to distinguish between this inaccuracy in actual numbers of women raped and whether the reporting was representative of these women's truths. Rape became more than the penetration of one woman's body and instead became part of a collective suffering that numbers struggled to represent.

NGOs came to offer aid during the conflict and gave women who had been raped large amounts of food for their families; rape has historically and continues to receive much attention and sympathy from foreign aid groups and donors. The women of Luvungi capitalized on western interest and reported that they had been raped in order to receive humanitarian aid.

Professor Hillhorst, a professor of humanitarian aid at Erasmus University in Rotterdam participating in the NPR interview, explains that this behavior is actually very common and is termed *fonds de commerce*. "Well, it's a business about how people adapt to the fact that the international community only wants to hear stories about sexual violence" (qtd. in Warner). The women spoke to one another and were even encouraged by the elders of the community to participate in this charade, telling the stories that the western world wanted to hear. As a community, they decided it was in their best interest to tell stories of rape survival to the NGO workers and then divvied up the food that they received among the village, giving more food to women who had actually been raped. The stories were not necessarily representative of their personal experiences but were representative of the women's collective experience and of the larger suffering that they experienced without reasonable access to food, medicine, or education. Because, though, each woman had not lived the actual rape she recounted, the rapes stories became mechanical and detached, but also possessed a performative quality to appease the aid workers. The women played the roles of women who had been raped, giving detailed accounts of their corporeal experiences, experiences that they had only heard about but now embodied when playing the role of survivor. Not only did the recounting of these stories serve to garner more goods and services from non-profit organizations, but the performative re-telling of the stories, whether or not the stories were their own, created a space for the transmission of trauma. Stories that had been heard in villages became the basis for fictional re-creations that bared elements of truth and will, overtime, create a post-memory[42]. "La post-mémoire consiste donc d'abord en une prise en charge énonciative permettant d'exprimer ce qui a été transmis et reçu, au plus près du corps, en tant que pure émotion. […] La post-mémoire doit permettre de replacer l'événement en

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[42] The term post-memory was introduced by Marianne Hirsch in relation to descendents of holocaust survivors.

question, tout comme son éprouvé, dans un réseau narratif qui tisse des liens entre histoire individuelle et histoire collective" (Estay-Stange par 17, 20). Estay-Stange draws attention to the corporeal transmission of emotion as part of memory creation and highlights the overlapping areas of individual and collective stories. It is possible already to see traces of this transmission given that years after the departure of the humanitarian groups for whom these stories had first been created, Heaton and Kilundu also heard the re-tellings. When visiting the village of Luvungi, they requested to speak to the elders to inquire about what had happened since the reported rapes in the village. They had not asked to speak with rape victims but were told by the elders that the women were already prepared. Heaton and Kilundi were pushed to listen; the show had already been planned. Both Heaton and Kilundi were uncomfortable with what they heard from the women—not necessarily what they heard, but how it was told. When Heaton asked the inn-keeper about the stories, Father Pascal, who also was the Priest of the church, confirmed that the stories of rape in Luvungi had been massively exaggerated. "He started talking about the theater right from the beginning. It's, like, what you do when you're in theater, and you need to convince someone of your character. And you put on an act because the white people wanted to meet the raped women" (qtd. in Warner). The women who spoke to Heaton and Kilundo in 2017, 10 years after the attack and rapes, continued to perform the roles of rape survivor for visitors and those who wanted to hear. They embodied the experiences of others in their community to stage the suffering they all shared. The community embodiment of individual stories in Luvungi does not wait for a new generation, however. The temporal aspect of the post-memory is rendered less important has concept of filiation are altered by the notion of trans-corporeality. Experiences, traumas, and memories are not only passed in a vertical line between generations but also horizontally as bodies and Selves are also interrelated.

The creation of a collective story and overlapping bodily experiences and human sufferings among the women in Luvungi continues beyond that which was created for and shared with the outside, western (white) world. Because stories of rape survival had become a currency, they also often lost their value among locals. Hilhorst noted that among Congolese locals, “there's this widespread feeling that the act of hearing a rape story told publicly must mean it's not true” (qtd. in Warner). Yet, instead of renouncing the shared narrative, a group of women again used it to their advantage. Clinical psychologist Justin Chikuru works with rape survivors at Panzi Hospital, a top research hospital in eastern Congo. At first Chikuru explained that talking about rape was particularly tricky for these women who were not sure of the expectations: “Am I supposed to trust you? Am I supposed to lie? Am I supposed to tell the truth? Why do you need my story? What am I going to get?” they would ask him. It took time for them to understand that this story-telling was for them to have time to share and heal together. Justin gives the women disclaimers; he tells them, no one who tells a story here today will get any money. No one will get food. And then Justin gives them instructions: while the musician Jojo plays a beat, “they should think of the words coming into their heart. It's basically music therapy, except with a twist because over the next five weeks, the women will work with Jojo, to weave these stories into a song that they'll sing and record on a CD and send out to Congolese radio stations” (Warner). They weave together their voices, their experiences, their raped bodies, and their identities as strong women survivors.

> One by one they are telling their stories.
>
> UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN #5: Until today, whenever I see a man in camouflage uniform, I tremble with fear, and my heart beats fast.
>
> UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN #6: (Through interpreter) I see myself of no love because I have been tainted.

> UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN #7: (Through interpreter) Will I ever get someone else to love me?
>
> WARNER: What's really surprising looking around this room is what's not here. There's no names. There's no rewards. There's no elders or antennas saying how this story should be told. There's no aid agency that's putting people on a list. And there's no fonds de commerce, no incentive system. It's just women getting together, saying what's on their mind, trying to get those stories heard on Congolese radio. You remember Nvinto Ngikima? She's the client who told me that before, when women would reach the hard part of the story, they'd start to cry and stop talking?
>
> NGIKIMA: (Foreign language spoken).
>
> WARNER: Now, she says, it's easier.
>
> NGIKIMA: (Through interpreter) We have different stories, but now it becomes one story. So, it gives us power. (qtd. in Warner)

As Ngikima states, these women find power and healing in uniting their stories and experiences; each individual experience of rape is interwoven with other experiences, such that they become embodied in the collective voice. The very act of sharing stories is part of the healing process, done as therapy, but it is done as a group, such that it is not only in the act of telling the story but sharing the weight of carrying those experiences. It is an example of radical, embodied hospitality when the women invite in other women to together carry the burdens of trauma.

Rape is a traumatic event that can cause the type of corporeal exile that was delineated in the preceding chapters. Rape as a weapon of war is so powerful because it is degrading; it strips women of their personal identities and reduces them to objects symbolizing the power and dominion of men. Cecile Dauphin’s compilation *De la violence et des femmes* speaks to the use of rape in war in order to adulterate blood. For instance, in the Bosnian war from 1992-1995, she explains that rape was a systematic tool of domination and ethnic purification because filiation was determined by paternal blood. In this example, as in many examples of ethnic wars as well

as more generally as an instance of male domination, rape is not only a moral and physical aggression, but also intended to erase the identity of the female victim. Women in Luvungi did not seek to rebuild or reassert their individual identities, and in so doing, create division and further isolate them. Instead, they rebuilt their identities as part of a collective. Vulnerability and openness to others with similar experiences gave them the strength to heal and move forward. Through the act of rape, the Luvungi women were violently, forcibly dispossessed from their bodies. They experienced aggressive, brutal intrusion and as a result felt less at home in their own bodies. Yet, they were able to reassert agency and reclaim their bodies as a place in which they belonged, not through closing it off but instead by willingly, hospitably, opening up to others. While seemingly paradoxical, their experiences highlight the tension of risk in hospitality, the risk discussed by Rosello, by Nancy, and explored by Denis, Mouawad, and NDiaye. These experiences also confirm the value of my proposed radical, embodied hospitality as a basis for achieving a personal feeling of home, of belonging, as well as the creation of transformative communities. Rancière presents interrelation and vulnerability as qualities of exemplary communities; and, while he presents the theater as a potential impetus for achieving those interpersonal relations, I conclude that my study of Nancy, Denis, Mouawad, and NDiaye reveals the possibility of the human body itself as potential space for hospitable welcome, for not only sharing but even embodying the joys and sufferings of others. Acknowledging the realities of trans-corporeality, I can posit that the human body, like theater, is a space of encounter. While interrelations are unavoidable, it requires vulnerability and courage to accept that identity and subjectivity are constantly morphing, hybrid creations of the Self and the Other—of our own and other's experiences. Accepting such is what allows Harwan, Nancy, Leila, and other characters

to find a sense of belonging and a feeling of being at home in their own bodies and lives rather than in the conflictual state of internal, corporeal exile.

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