

Feminist Transversal Politics and Political Solidarity

It seems to me essential to organize new micropolitical and microsocial practices, new solidarities, a new gentleness, together with new aesthetic and new analytic practices regarding the formation of the unconscious. It appears to me that this is the only possible way to get social and political practices back on their feet, working for humanity and not simply for a permanent reequilibration of the capitalist semiotic Universe.¹ –Felix Guattari

Solidarity, according to Chandra Talpade Mohanty, is defined “in terms of mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of common interests as the basis for relationships among diverse communities. Rather than assuming an enforced commonality of oppression, the practice of solidarity foregrounds communities of people who have chosen to work and fight together” against injustice.² The goal of this paper is to bring together two different frameworks for combatting injustice, namely transversal politics and political solidarity. In the first section, I give an account of Nira Yuval-Davis’ notion of feminist transversal politics. In part two, I turn to Félix Guattari’s idea of transversality, which is a resource for Yuval-Davis. Sally J. Scholz’s analysis of political solidarity is discussed in the third section. I conclude by drawing together several themes that were discussed earlier in the paper in hopes of showing how feminist transversal politics can be a productive means of pursuing political solidarity.

¹ Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, translated by Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton (New Brunswick: Athlone Press, 2000), 51.

² Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003), 7.

FEMINIST TRANSVERSAL POLITICS

According to Nira Yuval-Davis, transversal politics offers a way of moving beyond the game of identity politics that emerged out of so-called second wave feminism. Transversal politics strengthens feminist solidarity in productive ways that cross over established borders while, at the same time, resisting the trump card of “sisterhood.” The sisterhood model of solidarity treats all women as sisters; however, this runs into at least two problems. First, it assumes that all women live under the same oppressive conditions and, by doing so, ignores the role that other social identity categories (e.g., race, class, or ability) might affect particular women. This leads into a second problem, namely, that women might also play into the oppressive conditions of other women.

So-called second wave feminism often receives the criticism that it plays into identity politics whereby all constituents of a particular social identity category are seen as homogeneous. Identity politics takes the multifarious experiences of women and condenses them to fit under one rubric: the oppression of all women. The assumption of one common experience falsely synthesizes individual and social identity categories and makes permissible the opportunity for one woman to speak for all women. However, not all women share the same experiences of oppression, discrimination, and exploitation; and moreover, as the notion of intersectionality implies, women are not solely women. We all inherit a socio-historical context that is shared but also differs in its particularity from one person to another, and this context is the material from which we become ourselves. “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,” Simone de Beauvoir famously tells us.³ Furthermore, women are, for instance, also raced and classed. Adrienne Rich illustrates this by giving some of her own biography: “This body. White, female; or female, white. The first obvious, lifelong facts. But I was born in the white section of a

³ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, translated by H.M. Parhsley with an introduction by Deirdre Bair (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 267.

hospital which separated Black and white women in labor and Black and white babies in the nursery, just as it separated Black and white bodies in its morgue. I was defined as white before I was defined as female.”⁴ Her being a white woman generated a different set of expectations, advantages (in relation to people of color) and disadvantages (with regard to men), and experiences than those of her Black counterparts. Some of her advantages may even have been provided at the disadvantage of women of color. If so, then some of her own choices and actions in life were made possible by the systemic injustices that continue to oppress women of color thereby implicating her in an unjust relation of power. This does not mean that one must have any ill intent, only that, what George Yancy has recently labeled as, the transcendental norm of whiteness leads to unjust effects nevertheless.

The goal of political solidarity is not to get rid of power for this, as Foucault has taught us, is impossible. Power is not an object to be possessed or a capacity within institutions or individuals that one chooses to exercise at will; rather it is an active relation that is always at play within the social arrangements between and among individuals and institutions. Relations of power exist in all social locations, within all modes of exchange, and between all individuals. Power relations exist within the family, in the classroom, at work, and even within solidary groups. The goal of political solidarity, then, becomes one of alleviating an unjust distribution and arrangement of power relations, and this ought to occur within feminist activist groups as well as among the larger social formations at which these groups direct their opposition.

Keeping this in mind helps avoid the pitfalls of playing the “sisterhood” card or creating an us/them dichotomy. Gloria Anzaldúa is exemplary of precisely this problem when, in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, she writes, “But it is not enough to stand on the opposite river bank,

⁴ Adrienne Rich, “Notes Towards a Politics of Location” in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, edited by Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (New York: Routledge, 2003), 32.

shouting questions, challenging patriarchal, white conventions. A counterstance locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed; locked in a mortal combat, like the cop and the criminal, both are reduced to a common denominator of violence.”⁵ While this dichotomy might serve to rally support in opposition to an unjust system or policy, it relies on a false premise, namely that power is something wielded by one group against another. My brief sketch of power highlights the fact that there are no rigid distinctions of those with all the power on the one hand and those with none on the other. There is no pure oppressor or pure oppressed.

Transversal politics shuns unequal power relations and exclusion and instead relies on democratic forms of activism. It tries to disavow reification by traversing boundaries—fixed lines of communication, authority, and hierarchy. In addition to challenging identity politics, transversal politics also critiques universalistic politics, which Yuval-Davis argues “stumbles on the fact that the boundaries of difference, as well as the boundaries of social rights, are determined by specific hegemonic discourses, perhaps using universalistic terminology, but definitely not universal. And universalist discourses which do not take into account the differential positionings of those they refer to often cover up racist (and one can add sexist, classist, ageist, disablist, etc.) constructions.”⁶ As an alternative to both universalistic politics and the essentialism of identity politics, transversal politics is a means of allowing for more inclusive and democratic practices to flourish within solidary groups. But, since there are always injustices—so insidious, institutional, and embodied—to alleviate, since there is no fixed endpoint in politics, transversal politics is also its own goal. It is a way of doing politics that grants its own need to be critiqued and adjusted.

⁵ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinstet/Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 100.

⁶ Nira Yuval-Davis, “Citizenship, Territoriality and Gendered Construction of Difference” in *Democracy, Citizenship and the Global City*, edited by Engin F. Isin (New York: Routledge, 2000), 180.

On Yuval-Davis' account, transversal politics is based on three foundational claims. First, it privileges difference in mostly, but not limited to, positioning, identity, and value. In other words, transversal politics acknowledges that members of the same social identity group do not necessarily share the values nor do they necessarily have the same position within the group or the wider culture. Values may be held by constituents of various social identity groups and those that might share a similar position can be from the various groups and hold various values.

Second, while recognizing the importance of difference, transversal politics seeks to affirm difference in an egalitarian, rather than hierarchical, manner. Instead of granting equality on the basis of rendering differences mute, transversal politics is, in a manner of speaking, indifferent to difference. By indifferent I mean that differentiation is acknowledged at the same time as differential social, economic, and political powers play no role in the affirmation of equality. This is best accounted for by the third foundational claim.

With human difference come different loci for knowledge claims. Transversal politics assumes a kind of pragmatic theory of meaning. The assumption here is that truth is grasped through dialogue, that the plurivocity of truth claims aids in the better mapping of political claims. To test, challenge, and reform—what Guattari and Deleuze call “deterritorialization”—necessarily involves a multitude of voices if political change is to be productive. For instance, rather than relying on the whispers of the market, politicians, economists, fellow citizens, women, men, intersexed persons, white persons, persons of color, the wealthy, the poor, the homeless, and those directly affected by a particular policy ought to have their voices heard. Spreadsheets of credits and debits offer one particular set of knowledge claims about a particular policy. But, there are many other knowledge claims to be made. While we do not have access to

objective truth—there is none, we can have better knowledge of the truth by taking into account a plethora of different knowledge claims.

In sum, Yuval-Davis sees a productive potential in transversality in so far as it allows for links to be formed between various feminist projects within and across national borders. Transversal politics serves to remind feminist activists that one needs to be mindful not to perpetuate logics of domination, specifically within hierarchical structures that give voice to some while silencing others, and not to fall back into practices that might be racist or patriarchal. It can offer a way of correcting problems of representation within feminist projects. “Feminists and other community activists,” she claims, “cannot (and should not) see themselves as representatives of their constituencies (unless they were democratically elected and are accountable for their actions).”⁷ In place of representatives, she calls for advocates who acknowledge their multifarious positionings within their group constituency and the wider culture and work *with* rather than work *for* the oppressed. But, not all advocates are necessarily members of the constituency being defended. When we turn to Scholz, we will see a marked difference between the oppressed group and the solidary group. One need not belong to the former to be part of the latter. What Yuval-Davis and Scholz capture is the possibility for an advocate who is in solidary with an oppressed group but is herself not a member of that group.⁸

⁷ Nira Yuval-Davis, “Human/Women’s Rights and Feminist Transversal Politics” in *Global Feminism: Transnational Women’s Activism, Organizing, and Human Rights*, edited by Myra Marx Ferree and Aili Mari Tripp (New York: NYU Press, 2006), 282.

⁸ For a more detailed analysis of the problem of representation, see Nira Yuval-Davis, “Identity Politics and Women’s Ethnicity” in *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective*, edited by Valentine M. Moghadam (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994).

TRANSVERSALITY

“Transversal Politics” was first used by Félix Guattari, who, when asked to what extent his notion of transversality had changed since the 1960s, claimed that “this concept completely changed when I proposed the notion of deterritorialization in the 1970s. Transversality then became the transversality of deterritorialized instances. Today it might change again with the concept of chaosmosis, because transversality is chaosmic, it is always linked to a risk of plunging outside of sense, outside of constituted structures.”⁹ Transversality, for Guattari, has also been thought of as a coefficient, unconscious, a bridge, and deterritorialization.

Guattari developed the notion of transversal politics while working at La Borde clinic, while practicing psychiatry in the institutional setting of the ward. For him, transversal politics was a means of reconfiguring the French clinic in ways that alleviated a certain illness within the practices of psychiatry, namely, that of transference. Transference was the all-too-common procedure within the psychoanalytic setting. In *Molecular Revolution*, Guattari writes, “A fixed transference, a rigid mechanism, like the relationship of nurses and patients with the doctor, an obligatory, predetermined, ‘territorialized’ transference onto a particular role or stereotype, is worse than a resistance to analysis: it is a way of interiorizing bourgeois repression by the repetitive, archaic and artificial re-emergence of the phenomena of caste, with all the spellbinding and reactionary group phantasies they bring in their train.”¹⁰ In short, transference is a libidinal tie that occurs when the patient or a staff person report to the psychiatrist what the latter wishes to hear. In the case of the patient undergoing analysis, he is prepared to speak of things that satisfy the expectations of the analyst. For instance, he ought to testify of dreams and

⁹ Félix Guattari, “The Vertigo of Immanence: Interview with John Johnston, June 1992” in *The Guattari Effect*, edited by Eric Alliez and Andrew Goffey (New York: Continuum, 2011), 26.

¹⁰ Félix Guattari, *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics*, translated by Rosemary Sheed and introduced by David Cooper (New York: Penguin, 1984), 17.

thoughts that illustrate the Oedipus complex at work in the unconscious. The psychiatrist checks the appropriate box on her chart and signals to the patient that he is making improvement. In other words, the scripts are already predetermined prior to the particular analysis and produce effects that play into social expectations. It is, as Gary Genosko describes, “the stage upon which everything that is pathological in the patient may be rehearsed.”¹¹

By looking at transversality in relation to transference stages or sites of transference and its relation within the psychiatric ward more generally, we can get a better sense of what transversality first meant for Guattari. He sought to replace transference with a new concept, namely transversality within a group, in this particular case, the mental health institution. “The idea of transversality,” Guattari explains, “is opposed to (a) verticality, as described in the organogramme of a pyramidal structure (leaders, assistants, etc.); (b) horizontality, as it exists in the disturbed wards of a hospital, or, even more, in the senile wards; in other words a state of affairs in which things and people fit in as best they can with the situation in which they find themselves.”¹² La Borde involved a mixture of assemblages in which an amalgam of power relations was at stake. Strict lines were drawn between who had expertise and authority and who did not. Such lines created a sort of architecture of relationality, a set of boundaries that kept individuals in their proper places. The verticality of administration and the horizontality of “coping by fitting in to the best of one’s ability in a given situation” were seen as impasses.¹³ In response to this, Guattari thought of transversality as a strategic tool for breaking through what appeared to be fixed institutional procedures and lines of demarcation. The impasses cannot be

¹¹ Gary Genosko, *Félix Guattari: An Aberrant Introduction* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 69.

¹² Félix Guattari, *Molecular Revolution*, 17. The extreme form of a horizontal fixture is what we find in Aristotle, namely, that persons are assigned tasks according to *natural* fit.

¹³ Gary Genosko, “The Acceleration of Transversality in the Middle” in *Deleuze and Guattari: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers, Vol. II: Guattari*, edited by Gary Genosko (New York: Routledge, 2001), 852.

overcome through top-down initiatives; rather, a form of transversality that allows for a reconfiguration of the ward coming from all directions is necessary. Guattari called this *la grille*. Genosko suggests that “to transversalize the organization of a given institution [via *la grille*] was a creative revolutionary act, and the subject group was able to internally generate and direct its project, ensuring that organization remained tied closely to it, while simultaneously avoiding the slide into bureaucratic sclerosis.”¹⁴ *La grille* involved the rescheduling and shifting of the day-to-day practices within the institution in order to increase mutuality and reciprocity, avoid boredom and idleness, and so that patients would gain the potential of finding new, improvised and experimental ways of talking about their conditions.¹⁵ This strategy might place the head psychiatrist on janitorial duty, the administrative assistants on kitchen staff, and the patients on rounds speaking with other patients. While performing different tasks, the constituents of the ward are expected to remain in conversation with one another in hopes of moving beyond the impasses of verticality and horizontality. In order to have success with transversality, thoroughgoing communication of different meanings and knowledge claims within and among numerous levels of the institution is necessary.

Guattari first thought of transversality as a coefficient—a quantity illustrated by a kind of bestiary (e.g, porcupines and horses). A classic bestiary metaphor is found in Freud’s *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. In order to illustrate how intimate human relationships require a balancing of affects—for instance, while two lovers might enjoy spending time together, never leaving the other’s side might lead to hostility or some kind of repression—Freud turns to a peculiar passage in Schopenhauer.¹⁶ The latter describes a situation in which several

¹⁴ Genosko, 857.

¹⁵ In psychoanalysis, the only proper cure is that of talking.

¹⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, translated by James Strachey with a biographical introduction by Peter Gary (New York: Norton, 1989), 41.

porcupines crowd close together, attempting to share each other's warmth and avoid freezing to death. Each, having been pricked by another's quills, quickly moves away. As the cold sets in, they once again huddle together only to be pricked a second time. The porcupines repeat this procedure until they find the optimal distance at which they can be warm without being pricked. There is kind of trial-and-error at work here, a kind of practice or *habitus* that lends itself towards the maximum equitable efficiency.

In *Psychanalyse et transversalité*, Guattari's horses are described as wearing blinders or blinkers on the sides of their eyes; these blinkers are the coefficient of transversality.¹⁷ The blinkers might help the horse avoid distraction, but their restrictiveness might produce anxiety. Guattari asks us to imagine a fenced off stretch of land on which horses (wearing the blinkers) are roaming freely. When the blinkers are fully closed, thereby significantly restricting sight, the horses experience traumatic encounters with other horses. Once the blinkers are fully opened, the horses run about the field in harmony with the other horses. And, of course, there are degrees of efficiency between the fully closed and the fully open. Genosko summarizes this quite well: "A concise working definition of transversality is that in a clinical context it is a measure (a so-called coefficient) of how much communication exists between different levels, in different directions, of an organization. The goal is to increase the coefficients of transversality, that is, to reduce the blindness and bureaucratic-mindedness in favour of openness, overcoming the impasses of both vertical and horizontal organizations, by means of creative organizational innovations such as *la grille*."¹⁸ Transversality can be intense or subtle, high or low, open or inhibited, and it can vary from individual to individual, group to group, position to position.

¹⁷ Félix Guattari, *Psychoanalyse et transversalité*(Paris: François Maspero, 1972), 79.

¹⁸ Genosko, *Félix Guattari: An Aberrant Introduction*, 200.

After his work with Deleuze and in his later work *Chaosmosis*, Guattari described transversality as a bridge or deterritorialization.¹⁹ By “bridge,” Guattari means that it connects two coordinates or possibilities while simultaneously breaking the lines and planes on which the coordinates first appeared. According to Calvin O. Schrag, mathematicians and scientists use the term in similar fashion, that is, as the “transversality of a line as it intersects a system of lines or surfaces.”²⁰ Deterritorialization is another way of describing the reconfiguration of lines, boundaries, and territories. Genosko describes two kinds of territory: subjective territory is “essentially conditioned and imposed by hegemonic power...the latter, ‘transversal territory,’ which gets its energy from a ‘transversal power,’ is the site of pure potentiality and marked by such valorized terms as ‘transgress’-‘deviate’-‘defy’-‘cut across’-‘disorganize’-‘smooth space.’”²¹ To deterritorialize is to rearrange the rules we are given, the roles we are expected to play, and the practices that perpetuate regimes of unjust power relations. This rearrangement allows for new possibilities to emerge. With the idea of deterritorialization, transversality achieves a stronger political bent. To deterritorialize is the take territories (lines, boundaries, and the like) that are unjust and redraw the property lines. But, by doing so, we have no guarantees. “Politics,” Deleuze claims, “is an active experimentation, since we do not know in advance which way a line is going to turn.”²² In *Soft Subversions*, Guattari describes transversality as a

¹⁹ See Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, translated by Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis (Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1995).

²⁰ Calvin O. Schrag, “Transversal Rationality” in *Deleuze and Guattari: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers, Vol. II: Guattari*, edited by Gary Genosko (New York: Routledge, 2001), 866. One significant difference is that, for Guattari, the lines and planes on which the coordinates first appeared were never fixed, that the system of lines or surfaces does not actual exist as a stable system.

²¹ Genosko, *Félix Guattari: An Aberrant Introduction*, 57.

²² Gilles Deleuze, *Dialogues*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia UP, 1987), 137.

kind of undermining.²³ It is an experimental undermining of normative frameworks that unjustly restrict possibilities and perpetuate systemic inequality. Its tools are taken from the current social, material conditions. Its executives are those seeking parity of participation for themselves or others. For Guattari (and Deleuze), deterritorialization is the activity of becoming democratic.²⁴ It is the means by which people, exercising their own power, use already existing tools in order to create something new.

Guattari and Deleuze's notion of deterritorialization is not synonymous with either a politics of the border or the notion of feminist border crossing. Transversal lines circumvent the reproduction of boundaries or, what Guattari and Deleuze describe as, dominant flows and regimes of power by producing networks without centers—planes of mobility that are dispossessed of coordinates. Mutability without borders is nil. Instead, transversal politics, as deterritorialization, highlights the reality of borders as lacking any fixity or stability. The politics of the border is problematic for two reasons. First, it relies on a faulty premise, namely that there are fixed notions of culture, society, location, or system. The kind of crossing that is found in politics of the border assumes reified notions of such things, when, in fact cultures spill over into one another. Any analysis of cultures that places one discrete culture next to another discrete culture is offering an abstraction. Anzaldúa's work in *Borderlands/La Frontera* is representative in this regard. In her account, borders demarcate one group from another—us from them. Seeing herself as crossing over borders which distinguish white, Mexican, and Indian, she writes, “What I want is an accounting with all three cultures—white, Mexican, Indian. I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of

²³ Félix Guattari, *Soft Subversions: Texts and Interviews: 1977-1985*, edited by Sylvère Lotringer, introduction by Charles J. Stivale, translated by Chet Wiener and Emily Wittman (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e): 2009), 240.

²⁴ See, e.g., Paul Patton, "Deleuze and Democracy" in *Contemporary Political Theory* (2000) 4:4.

my entrails. And if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture—*una cultura mestiza*—with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture.”²⁵ By positioning herself as exemplar of a solution, Anzaldúa presumes that the three cultures act as if they are discrete despite the reality that there are no pure white, Mexican, or Indian cultures. Their histories are mixed and co-constitutive of one another. She claims that, if she is denied, then she will create her own new culture. For Guattari, this is what transversality has already been doing. In transversal politics, we all are making new cultures; we all are practicing (better or worse) what Foucault calls an aesthetics of existence. Second, by focusing too much on the imagery of crossing, the politics of borders often elides issues of political economy and the relations of power between individuals and groups get sedimented. As stated earlier, this was an unfortunate consequence of the sisterhood model of feminist solidarity. Mohanty summarizes her position, which I take to be exemplary of how to avoid this second problem. In the beginning of *Feminism Without Borders*, she calls for a “feminism without borders [that] is not the same as “border-less” feminism. It acknowledges fault lines, conflicts, differences, fears, and containment that borders represent. It acknowledges that there is no one sense of a border, that the lines between and through nations, races, classes, sexualities, religions, and disabilities, are real—and that a feminism without borders must envision change and social justice work across these lines of demarcation and division.”²⁶

POLITICAL SOLIDARITY

In *Political Solidarity*, Sally J. Scholz describes three characteristics of solidarity. First, solidarity implies a rejection of any hard divide between the community and an individual. It

²⁵ Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 44.

²⁶ Mohanty, 2.

takes on a mediating role between the two and stresses their being co-constitutive. “In solidarity,” Scholz writes, “the individual sees him- or herself as part of a unique grouping (though he or she may not always consciously be aware of this grouping) and the community itself exists because of who the individuals are.”²⁷ While it affirms autonomy, solidarity is opposed to an ideology of individualism. Likewise, it opposes ideologies of communitarianism that neglect the good of the individual in favor of achieving the good of the community. In solidarity, the good of the community and the good of the individual are linked together. Second, solidarity requires some kind of binding agent; it is a kind of unity. Third, positive moral obligations are necessarily involved in solidarity. While each of these three qualities is constitutive of solidarity, they are expressed differently in diverse kinds of solidarity.

Scholz offers a sketch of three kinds of solidarity, the contours of which overlap. While there may (or may not) be overlap between particular instances of social, civic, and political solidarities, Scholz, for analytical purposes, treats them as discrete modes of solidarity. Social solidarity is based on group membership (e.g., the family, student groups on a college campus, racial groups). Civic solidarity refers to the bond between citizens and the state. “Civic solidarity,” Scholz claims, “is the idea that society has an obligation to protect its members through programs that ensure that adequate basic needs are met” and that citizens have an obligation “to protect [one another] against the vulnerabilities that would inhibit their ability to participate in civic life.”²⁸ It is the third kind of solidarity—political solidarity—that is Scholz’s main concern and of importance for our present inquiry. Scholz defines political solidarity as “a moral relation that marks a social movement wherein individuals have committed to positive

²⁷ Sally J. Scholz, *Political Solidarity* (University Park: Penn State UP, 2008), 18.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 29, 33.

duties in response to a perceived injustice.”²⁹ It is a responsive kind of solidarity to which individuals consciously commit—motivated affectively or by rational decision—and in which they unite together to combat oppression or social vulnerability. It is a voluntary association directed toward alleviating structural injustice or particular unjust policies and/or practices.

The associative or collective action of political solidarity differs from social solidarity in so far as the members of a political solidarity group do not have to be members of the oppressed group, although they can be and often are. In order to highlight the difference between social solidarity and political solidarity, we might consider Freud/Schopenhauer’s porcupines or Guattari’s institutional setting at La Borde. In both cases, the members in each group are in direct contact with one another and are all affected by their social conditions. Members of a political solidarity group, however, can be from all over the world; they need not be in the physical proximity. They can work directly with others or indirectly through individual practices that share in the same goal of alleviating injustice. There can be varying commitments among the members of a political solidarity group.

Likewise, not all members of an oppressed group necessarily belong to a political solidarity group. For example, there might be a female politician who advocates for policies that actually destructive for feminist activist groups. However, a political solidarity group is composed of those individuals who identify as persons in solidarity with an oppressed group in the pursuit of social justice. Furthermore, Scholz suggests that “solidarity does not ask formerly privileged [individuals] to experience the victimization or oppression of others; it does ask committed individuals to stand alongside of these others, who similarly commit, to bring about social

²⁹ Ibid., 6.

change.”³⁰ In other words, participation in political solidarity requires commitment but not experience.

Among its commitments, political solidarity entails criticism. Scholz described social criticism as twofold. On the one hand, critique “awakens some individuals to the injustice or oppression in their midst.”³¹ It renders a prosecution against those who perpetrate injustice as well as those of us who benefit from unjust systems, policies, or practices but remain silent about our advantage. On the other hand, critique happens within solidary groups as well. Members should routinely reflect on the ends and means of the group, the values upon which the group builds its movement, and the extent to which its successes and failures generate unforeseen injustices.

There is an affinity between Scholz and Guattari’s contemporary, Foucault. For Foucault, critique is an activity that questions the relation between truth and power. “It is an instrument,” Foucault writes, “a means for a future or a truth that will not know nor happen to be.”³² In short, critique is an activity with no finality. There is always more work to be done. In a way, critique is akin to virtue (minus the Aristotelian essentialism). It is a performance or an excellence that is necessary for life-affirming practices. In his rejoinder to Kant’s *Was ist Aufklärung?*, Foucault suggests the following: “The critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered not, certainly as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an

³⁰ Ibid., 226. For a sustained discussion of the relation between an oppressed group and a solidary group, see Scholz, 124-138.

³¹ Ibid., 97.

³² Michel Foucault, “What is Critique?” in *The Politics of Truth*, edited by Sylvère Lotringer, introduction by John Rajchman, translated by Lysa Hochroth and Catherine Porter (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e): 2007), 42.

experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.”³³ Critique, as Foucault describes it, is an attitude, a *habitus*, an aesthetics of existence that combines theory and practice. Our ideas must be put to the test in daily, concrete practices. Critique must, as Scholz defends, “remain active throughout the course of the movement in order to accommodate changing needs and interests.”³⁴

FEMINIST TRANSVERSAL POLITICAL SOLIDARITY

In this concluding section, I give a more synthetic account of Yuval-Davis’ feminist transversal politics, Guattari’s transversality, and Scholz’s political solidarity. I suggest that transversal politics/transversality is a particularly productive means of performing political solidarity. Alison M. Jaggar proposes, “The institutionalization of formal democracy has not resulted in increased political voice for women, especially for poor women and especially at the levels of designing global structures and policies. In the world of neoliberal globalization, democracy has a white man’s face.”³⁵ We might consider, as a corrective, implementing democratic practices all the way down, so to speak.

If the personal is political, as many feminists have claimed, then might we ask *who speaks?* “Dare I speak,” bell hooks asks, “to oppressed and oppressor in the same voice? Dare I speak to you in a language that will move beyond the boundaries of domination—a language that will not bind you, fence you in, or hold you?”³⁶ What is the voice of the *demos*? Transversal politics provides a framework for hearing the voices of all constituents, particularly those who

³³ Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?” in *The Politics of Truth*, edited by Sylvère Lotringer, introduction by John Rajchman, translated by Lysa Hochroth and Catherine Porter (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e): 2007), 118.

³⁴ Scholz, 13.

³⁵ Alison M. Jaggar, “Challenging Women’s Global Inequalities: Some Priorities for Western Philosophers” in *Philosophical Topics* Vol. 30, No.2 (Fall 2002): 229-252, 241.

³⁶ bell hooks, “Choosing the Margin as Space of Radical Openness,” *Framework* 36 (1989),16.

Spivak, following Gramsci, calls the *subaltern*, those whose social mobility is unjustly restricted. A transversal public sphere is necessary for voicing concerns and challenging political institutions. Political solidarity bids us to speak, and speak anew. “The resignification of speech,” Judith Butler claims, “requires opening new contexts, speaking in ways that have never yet been legitimated, and hence producing legitimation in new and future forms.”³⁷ “The question is not what it is I will be able to say, but what will constitute the domain of the sayable within which I begin to speak at all.”³⁸ To speak more broadly, to hope—a valuable feeling in political solidarity—requires that we speak, to make our hope articulated in a way that thinks and makes the world otherwise. To be democratic means that we listen to the scripts of others, even when those scripts break with normality as Guattari attempted at La Borde. To be democratic means that we speak transversally, that we transgress the framing of current political discourse in order to open what we might imagine as our political horizon. Within and beyond political solidarity groups, there ought to be channels of communication through which members can bring in their own narrative scripts without counterfactual idealizations protecting the status quo, that is, injustices.

In solidarity groups, there must be listening. One must forgo control of limits of the conversation. Narrative scripts can often appear to be innocuous little things, but they can also shatter our expectations; they can disorient us. In *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed claims that “moments of disorientation are vital.”³⁹ It might be productive to have our expectations shattered, to take a step back, to reflect, to tarry. In my opinion, one reason they are vital is so that we can rethink the political imaginary. Sometimes this requires a script that breaks into the

³⁷ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 41.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

³⁹ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke UP, 2006), 157.

normativity of acceptable discourse. Butler suggests that “a subject who speaks at the border of the speakable takes the risk of redrawing the distinction between what is and is not speakable, the risk of being cast out into the unspeakable.”⁴⁰ But, for just systems, institutions, policies, and practices to exist, we should rethink what *is* speakable and be attune to hear it. “Committing to solidarity,” Scholz writes, “is committing to listen to the needs of others, to ask what those needs are and how you might be able to help address them, to articulate one’s own needs, and to help others find the tools needed to communicate and meet their own needs.”⁴¹

There is no one pre-established formula for achieving liberation, no blueprint by which we can tailor our battles against injustice. A democratic or transversal frame cannot provide an established formula. “There is only this guideline,” Leslie Feinberg claims, “What would you want a sympathetic stranger to do if you were in a similar situation?”⁴² On the one hand, this might appear as another take on the naïve golden rule. On the other hand, it could be considered something more fundamental to the fabric of political solidarity, something akin to, what Spivak calls, “learning to learn from below.”⁴³ This presupposes the kind of equality mentioned earlier—equality that affirms difference.⁴⁴

Genosko suggests that despite its psychoanalytic origin, “the concept [of transversality] is radically opened to hitherto unimagined mutations and complexifications across all sorts of domains. In other words, transversality still signifies militant, social, responsive creativity.”⁴⁵ It is militant in that it perseveres. In transversal political solidarity, members are called to be

⁴⁰ Butler, 139.

⁴¹ Scholz, 88.

⁴² Leslie Feinberg, “Walking Our Talk,” in *Theorizing Feminisms: A Reader*, edited by Elizabeth Hackett and Sally Haslanger (New York: Oxford UP, 2006), 522.

⁴³ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Righting Wrongs” in *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103:2/3 (Spring/Summer 2004): 523-581; 548,551.

⁴⁴ See Scholz, 157.

⁴⁵ Genosko, *Félix Guattari: An Aberrant Introduction*, 104.

inventive. While political solidarity seeks to correct injustice, it also transforms individuals in so far as we are produced through our actions. Guattari's notion of transversality implies that our identities are not permanent but constantly becoming. As Scholz notes, sometimes identities are constructed as a result of oppressive regimes but also by resisting and challenges such regimes. In short, identity is formed out of "a choice that is continually lived."⁴⁶ Even if particular acts of political solidarity fail to correct injustice, the acts that individuals perform remains productive for subject formation. In other words, "one becomes transformed by the commitment and activity of solidarity."⁴⁷

Feminist transversal political solidarity refuses, to borrow from Guattari, "to tolerate the persistence of the traditional dichotomy between large social bodies and the problems people face as individuals, in their families, schools, jobs, and so on."⁴⁸ Oppressed groups of women encounter logics of domination in the home, at work, in religious institutions, and sometimes in front of their alleged advocates. Transversality is a kind of militant practice that permeates throughout the social world. It has the potential to affect a multitude of encounters. By way of conclusion, I quote Gerda R. Wekerle:

Within the same city, different groups of women may be simultaneously engaged in making multiple claims in different arenas and spaces. For poor and marginalized women, survival issues may be paramount; while other women may focus on democratic participation or equity. Women's urban movements are examples of an 'insurgent citizenship': resistance and mobilization from below that provide us with alternative models of urban citizenship rooted in women's multiple identities of class, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Scholz, 76.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 78.

⁴⁸ Guattari, *Molecular Revolution*, 219.

⁴⁹ Gerda R. Wekerle, "Women's Right to the City: Gendered Spaces of a Pluralistic Citizenship" in *Democracy, Citizenship and the Global City*, edited by Engin F. Isin (New York: Routledge, 2000), 203.