



Interdiction is the state or condition of being prohibited, forbidden from existing. It is a word that Aliza Shvarts uses to define her work as an artist, punctuating questions of legibility, representation, collaboration, and consent as they appear in social and artistic entanglements. Shvarts's project *Non-Consensual Collaborations* (2012 – ongoing) approaches the notion of consent through a queer and feminist framework, pressing at its seams to demonstrate its inability to accommodate nuanced responses and relational frameworks. Drawing on experiences that were not initially conceived as part of an artistic project, Shvarts claims the mantle of performance retroactively — questioning the authorial prerogatives and the presentational mechanisms to which performance is largely beholden. The extended temporality of this work echoes Shvarts's in-progress dissertation

in Performance Studies at New York University, which explores doom as a prophetic and juridical force whose full scope is enacted over extremely long periods.

ALIZA SHVARTS

Shvarts is currently preparing a solo exhibition at Artspace in New Haven, CT, on the tenth anniversary of her senior thesis project at Yale University, which was banned and disavowed by the school's administration. This experience functions as an epistemological undercurrent in Shvarts' work: How does one make work as an artist if one's work is unable to be encountered, its legibility intercepted, its attention to reproduction effectively aborted?

In this interview, Andrew Kachel discusses Shvarts's *Non-Consensual Collaborations* in the context of her dissertation, her past and future work in New Haven, and the contexts of queer theory and performance studies.

AK *I find this sort of self-destructive but also analytical and self-aware trajectory of your Non-Consensual Collaborations project to be really enchanting.*

[laughs]

AS Well thank you, that is what I have to offer.

OOO *But also the conscious... I don't know if I'd say refusal, but the stepping aside from conventional social protocols — this is a very interesting motivating element of the project, especially in relation to its particular strand of feminism and how that registers at this moment. In a way it's a more aggressive feminism. But whether the "state of feminism" is different this year than it was last year, I think this is not the most relevant question for a project like yours. It's more about picking up or recuperating certain kinds of anathema behavior under a feminist guise.*

AS Right. That reminds me of something one of my friends posted online for Women's Day this year, which said, "To all the women who can't or won't talk to each other." I really liked that. It speaks to an important but overlooked element of feminist solidarities, especially in art practice, which is how you make sense of difficult relationships. Conviviality only goes so far. The whole language of queer and feminist kinship sounds really good and feels really good, but what's missing is a language to account for the fall-outs and bad behaviors that are part of a shared world too. The *Non-Consensual Collaborations* project tries to attend to this question of what you do if you like difficult women, or are a difficult woman. [laughs] Or to put it another way, Where is the space for difficulty in solidarity? How do we account for that side of kinship?

OOO *And the models of conviviality put forth by feminist and queer theory often seem to be willfully myopic, or at least don't offer anything more than a kind of vaguely and impractically utopian horizon...*

AS Exactly, and there might be an acknowledgement of negative affect, but usually that's meant to be cured by a "queer world-making practice of every nightlife" or some other narrative of arrival or salvation.

OOO *Right, the negative is not so often theorized in this context. Other than by the likes of people like Lee Edelman, but that's sort of...*

AS It's anti-social. The negative cuts you off from relation. Or it's inflicted by a heteronormative outside. Like in Sara Ahmed's work, she has this idea of the "unhappy queer," and the unhappy queer is unhappy not because of other queers but because of terrible heteronormative scenes around the family dinner table or wherever. And then in Lee Edelman it's more that your position as a queer subject is inherently death-driven.

OOO *Right, pure death drive and negativity for negativity's sake.*

AS But even then he doesn't necessarily seem to think that fun can't happen there. There's something so

frustrating to me about queer academia which is perfectly epitomized when, at every academic conference, the queers will go do some "queer" activity together and it is often karaoke. And OMG that terrible abject space of queer karaoke after the conference...

[laughs]

OOO *Of course the queer academics gravitate toward the scene of public humiliation and shame.*

[laughs]

AS But also a total disavowal of the idea that that's what it is. They all are so earnestly loving it! Or *performing* that myopia that's in the theory. And it kind of comes through in the writing. The punchline to every analysis is that despite structural violence and interdiction, world-making practices are possible — at the nightclub, which is always an *other* space, a space of exception or remove. This just doesn't feel accurate to life. Also part of me (and this is maybe the stodgier feminist part of me) doesn't want to let go of "bad feeling" as something that's held in common; that's actually something we do share. I saw Gregg Bordowitz when he came to speak at the Whitney Independent Study Program, and he made reference to queer utopia. I asked him a question about the reference, kind of asking him to go further, and he said "I hear José Muñoz in your question. I knew José. I didn't like José, but I knew José. We knew who each other were." And then he went on to answer my question. In response I said, "Well I was José's student and that's why I was interested..." and I kind of choked up a little bit because this wasn't that long after José's death. Then Gregg read this really beautiful poem about his mother who had just passed away, and then he choked up, and then everyone was in tears in the seminar. [laughs] So it was this really beautiful seminar, lots of tears, but the thing I love the most is that moment where he's like "I knew José. I didn't like José. We didn't like each other, but we knew each other." Which feels to me actually kind of a more important part of queer kinship. We all share a world already, or aspects of something, and it doesn't matter if we don't get along. The capacity and the freedom to not get along, to snub each other, to have these spats, feels like like an important part of what belonging might actually mean.

OOO *It also seems like in constructing a notion of an alternative world — because as you said, so much of queer theory is preoccupied with this idea of "world-making" — an important part would be to move past this touchy-feely, warm, friendly idea, past "bodies meeting" and "openness of thought," etc. To embrace negativity and to somehow fold that into the mix seems more consistent with the world we're potentially building with this theory, and also perhaps more amenable to an appreciation of difference.*

AS Yeah, we don't have to agree, we don't have to get along. I think this is really important. How do we maintain difference, even different affects, within this supposedly shared identity?

OOO *I also think it's latent especially in the writing of someone like José, who would draw on the writing of people who*

were notably anti-queer, people like Ernst Bloch, these "bad objects" as far as queers working in critical theory have been concerned. I remember meeting José when he came up to Bard to lead a seminar. We were reading Cruising Utopia and it was that period when everyone was starting to wrestle with Object-Oriented Ontology and Speculative Realism. We read Graham Harman and Timothy Morton with him, and of course this response that Jane Bennett had written to them. We started kind of grilling him why one should even waste time responding to Graham Harman, or why he decided to write about Ernst Bloch. It was also a moment in my intellectual development where one of the first questions would be "Well, how do you account for that?" You know? And he was like "I don't have to account for that." It was the wrong question. And that was kind of a watershed moment — I can take things from these people who occupied a certain antagonistic position. I don't have to accept the specific form of relationality that is implied by that position.

AS Right, you don't have to be aligned with a position to find something generative in it. José used to say this thing I really loved and which I have since stolen: "The closest thing I do to a sport is to pick over the bones of old dead white men." [laughs] I really liked that about his strategy, and maybe it's something we really had in common as not just mentor and student, but also friends: not needing to find these good objects, being able to work with these bad objects but also to be able to find a space of flourishing in a context that's working against you. I think about this all the time — if a lot of these philosophers were alive to know us they'd hate us, you know? [laughs] Like, Heidegger, you know? There's so many of them, right? But using the grain of someone's own thought beyond the context that *they thought* the thought was for. It feels like a very political and creative act. It's an act of appropriation, but it also insists that queer theory doesn't need to occupy some marginal position that's earnestly accounting for itself. It can actually be an approach to claiming spaces in larger contexts that aren't meant for us. This feels more accurate, at least in my experience of navigating the world.

OOO *Exactly. And I think it also implies that queer theory can so something reparative that is not repairing its own broken object.*

AS Right, and I think that version of queer theory, as you're saying, allows for alterity. Before I knew myself as queer I knew myself as a weirdo and an abjected-feeling person from a larger social body. That's foundational to how I understand myself as a queer subject — through being alone, or not alone necessarily but feeling "othered" in a primary way. And how do you hold that in common? How do you share a feeling of radical alterity with people without erasing that experience? Without it becoming homonormative or just really emo? I think that's been a bigger project for me with

the *Non-Consensual Collaborations*. Actually this reminds me of another thing José once said. He taught this class called "Queer Belongings" which I took my second year studying with him and it gave me no end of difficulty because for me "queerness" and "belonging" were antithetical. I did not understand the concept. So I cornered him in the hallway one day and was just like "José, I don't get this class, what are we doing? I don't understand." And I don't know if he just said this to get rid of me but he was like, "Ok I hear what you're saying, but you have to remember the great theorists of the social and great theorists of collectivity — think of Karl Marx — they were just these radical loner weirdos. It was from the position of being alone in their rooms that they were imagining the collective." [laughs] And I don't know if he meant that, but I do like it. It's certainly stuck with me.

OOO *It's very sweet but it's also profoundly sad.* [laughs]

AS So sad, yeah. [laughs] It's very Lacan, right: 'love is that thing you don't have but really want to give to someone else who doesn't want it.' But at the same time, I would be distrusting of a position in the world that wasn't a tragic one.

OOO *Would you describe the Non-Consensual Collaborations performance project as one that is particularly tragic?*

AS I mean I don't think it's that dramatic, but I do think in this project as with much of my other work I grapple with this capacity and willingness to play the villain. It lets me explore how queer feminine desires and enactments are disciplined from a patriarchal outside. The position of "being villainous" is a historically produced one — there are literally centuries of gynocide, witch burning, and incarceration that condition the figure of the "bad woman." So I performatively

take up these un-recuperable stances in, for example, the *Non-Consensual Collaborations* project. I believe in consent, but I also believe in the failures of consent. I believe in that moment after you've consented to something when you change your mind or something happens, or consent does not account for the entirety of what transpires. So it's not a tragic project exactly, but it's one wherein you see my willingness to play the villain and inhabit a difficult space that resists recuperation. It's hard to let yourself inhabit that position, but I also find it productive as a performative stance because it stages the complexity of structural and historical violence and allows for a more in-depth critique... It's more interesting than being the hero.

OOO *But the project also seems tempered by an essential antinomy, and it plays with that. Even at first blush it seems like an outright contradiction but of course it's more complicated than that. There's something kind of inherently consensual about collaboration or at least in the way we think*

about it as an agreement. And there's also something contractual, at least implicitly, in collaboration. The "collaborations" in this work exceed contractual mechanisms and are usually outside of what is legible as collaboration.

AS And usually that's such a big part of the collaboration, figuring out what those terms are.

OOO Right, what are the boundaries and parameters of how a collaboration is structured? Also, the structure of these collaborations — the fact that they seem to happen organically, they are drawn from various relationships and entanglements in your life, you knew all but one of the people personally...

AS Yes, all except... [laughs]

OOO The incarcerated Norwegian black metal musician.

AS [laughs] I tried real hard to know him personally.

OOO They're open-ended and you knew most of the "collaborators" personally, so I wonder when the idea of consent comes to figure in these relationships.

AS That part interests me most. On one level, it's just my life, right? Unwritten and un-theorized, it's just shit that happens to me. And weird shit happens in my life as it does in everyone's. But I feel like what the piece turns on is this retroactive insistence that what happened is in the realm of the aesthetic. Rather than each remaining some weird encounter, I retroactively insist that "no no no, this was a collaborative project, this itself was a performance." Even though it was not that before now. My insistence functions performatively and transformatively, or at least points to the personal and aesthetic transformations that are embedded in the everyday. So the temporal aspect is significant. I don't seek to create these situations beforehand. They happen, and then it's through my retroactive discursive framing that they become themselves as performance.

OOO But it seems that during at least one of these relationships you realized that this was a structuring paradigm of the relationship in the midst of it.

AS Oh, which one?

OOO The one with the male artist and the text messaging.

AS Oh, right. So that one actually was the first one, even though it comes second in the sequence. When that happened, it made me reevaluate the thing that happened with the Norwegian metal dude. So that was a real retroactive moment. This encounter with the performance artist was

sort of the impetus for the whole project because during the exchange I thought we were actually collaborating, I thought we were doing this *art* thing, and he was of a different mind. I'm not really sure what he thought was going to happen; I was hoping hoping for art-ness to happen, and I think he just wanted to have sex. So it was my own kind of misguided desire for an art friend that led to that whole encounter or misunderstanding. The video footage I sent him as part of our text exchange wasn't intentionally provocative in that I was like, "Oh, this will freak him out." But it was intentional in that I was like, "Oh, I think we're having this kind of creative exchange between artists and I want to participate in this with my work." So on some level it was an earnest mistake I guess. But on another level the whole point of the project is that, upon realizing this mistake, I could still insist, "No, no, I don't really want to give up my version of events just because his version of events is different." And the question I had was, well why should his version of events — that this was a sex thing — trump my version of events, that this was an art thing? Why are those incompatible? Who gets to insist that their version of events is the true version? And what would happen if I stuck to mine? Instead of just acquiescing and saying, "Yes, I'm sorry, I misunderstood the nature of this," I wanted to ask, what if my misunderstanding of this was something that I still get to keep?

OOO And it is, in a way.

AS Yeah, instead of having to disavow it and feel embarrassed and feel ashamed, I kind of turned it into an active — or even aggressive — reframing of events that allows me to keep a sense of creative agency.

OOO I was really struck in that interaction in particular, by the fact that this artist had such a strong resistance to this idea of an intersection — let alone a fusion of art and life — being a realistic prospect. Especially for a performance

artist and really for anybody who has even a cursory knowledge of the twentieth century avant-garde... It struck me that that narrative is one that people love to espouse but it is actually really scary to most people who make art.

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OOO And pretty often it is the person who is operating in the domain of the masculine.

AS Even within queer contexts. And it has to do with ideas of expressivity too...

[moment where both lose their trains of thought due to the amorous behavior of Arthur, Andrew's dachshund]

OOO Speaking of expressivity, I think my dog is harboring some amorous feelings for your leg... [laughs] Thank you Arthur, that's enough though. Anyway, even if we do operate on a divide between personal experience and one's artistic output, which at times even from a progressive feminist standpoint can be an important divide to maintain strategically...

AS Right, because also you don't want *all* of your life being art...

OOO Right. And we know that at times an overly biographical reading of an artist's work can be a tool used to marginalize. These things are never cut and dry. They're always wielded with strong motives. So where is the limit of what is permissible to draw on, in terms of mining one's own life for material? Because, offhand I can think of a dozen either biographical or otherwise personal narratives perpetrated by male artists that are seen as either heroic or radical or boundary-pushing or whatever...

AS And vulnerable... That's kind of what drove me nuts about this particular artist. He really wanted to talk about his vulnerability in his performance work.

OOO [groaning] Male vulnerability...

AS Male vulnerability... A lot of José quotes tonight. I presented a paper once on Bas Jan Ader in one of José's classes and he pulled me aside in the break and said something about how there was "nothing more delicious than boy tears." It's true. [laughs] But yeah, who gets to be vulnerable and who gets to draw on vulnerability as a disposition they are allowed to inhabit without any loss of subjectivity — where does that divide come from? I think the thing I've been trying to figure out in my own practice — and this comes out of that senior thesis experience I had at Yale, which has been over-determining in a ton of ways. With the solo show next year [at Artspace, New Haven, CT] I'm trying to work through some of this shit so I can move on. The experience of having my work banned has kind of made me think about what it means to have work that doesn't circulate in a visible sense. There's this joke I used to start artist talks off with, which I think it hilarious but nobody else does, which is: What do you do when your art career is an abortion? [laughs] For the most part, if anyone knows about my work or if anyone has heard of me, it's not because they've seen something, it's because they've heard something. And that thing they've heard about, *Untitled [Senior Thesis]* (2008), actually can't be seen because it was banned — aborted in a sense. How do you make work in this space of non-visible interdiction? Ever since then I've been super invested in the circulation of narrative and gossip, as a performative practice.

OOO So not only non-visible but off the record, whispered...

AS Yeah, illicit. That senior thesis piece, at this point, is literally gossip, rumors, and I know it precedes me. It's something I know precedes me and yet I feel like I don't get to own it for myself. So a lot of my more recent work is about trying to activate that discursive dimension of the

performative. And the *Non-Consensual Collaborations* project which is a hugely... I mean it's such a long project. I keep thinking it's over and then having new chapters to add.

OOO Which is a very fun aspect of it I think... unless you really want to close it.

AS Yeah, I mean I do and I don't. The more experiences I have in the art world, the more viable the format seems. So part of it is how do you make work in the space of the non-visible, or that space of rumor or gossip. How do you craft work out of speech acts? The description of the *Non-Consensual Collaborations* is primarily a speech act: an assertion after an interaction has taken place. The main site of aggression might be the "afterward-ness" of the piece: the assertion that this was a non-consensual collaboration, this was "art" vs. "just the stuff of life." Which might feel like an arbitrary claim to make because you really can say that about a lot of things. So then the labor becomes a justification of this act of distinction, i.e. why this thing vs. other things. I think of the non-consensual collaborations as "performative readymades," and to talk about performative readymades is a much more difficult thing than to talk about object-based readymades or visual readymades, because of course we're all engaging in those types of readymades just in our own interactions. And also it makes everyone around you really suspicious. [laughs] Will they end up in your work, or as your work?

OOO It's a tricky and interesting condition to exist only in the record, not even to have a history or a vestige of a material trace. Maybe all performance shares that condition but there's also the fact that in this case it's missing witness except for these two participants...

AS One of whom certainly disputes it.

OOO One of whom maybe couldn't even be called a witness, as they were "witnessing" under different pretenses or conditions of awareness. So this makes it a performance of one that was realized after the fact?

AS Yeah, it's that after-the-fact-ness that I feel really committed to and that I know is the strangest part, or maybe the weakest part of my argument — my attempt to insist, after everything has already happened and been contextualized as something purely social, that "no no, this is performance work." And that I can insist on that as an authorial act. The "weakness" of my argument points to the implicit gendering of authorial or creative agency. It seems, like performance, work demands... well, performance can be so many things, but usually you have to have an idea of what it is beforehand, or decide that you are performing beforehand. But to decide after the fact that you were performing, when you did not necessarily understand yourself as performing in that moment is the weirdest part. You could think of Vito Acconci's *Following Piece* and things like that — non-witnessable everyday practice has been a part of performance for a really long time, but intention always pre-exists the act. So what is interesting to me is what happens if intention doesn't pre-exist in this score-like way.

OOO And if there's also not an intention to document in this

materially tangible way, in a way that can circulate and exist as art in a properly art context — that removes another legitimating mechanism, so on the one hand it becomes more inaccessible and subject to dismissal.

AS Right, it is pure rumor. I should say there is a video I've been intermittently working on, which I keep thinking is done but is not done. The video does have... kind of what's left of these encounters. Weird footage I took in Oslo that I wasn't taking for any purpose, email screen grabs or things like that. And one thing I did that I think was important was track down that photoshopped image that kind of began the whole thing of the performance artist's hand holding the cell phone. It's just such a weird image, I couldn't make it up. There always are some remnants, some scraps of these otherwise undocumented encounters. They weren't collected intentionally, they just happen to be what's left over. They offer a visual "archive" to mine. But what's compelling is how unconvincing it all is. It would almost make for better evidence if I invented images, emails, etc. now. Which I could certainly do; I could fill it in and create things that corroborate the stories I'm telling. But I kind of like the weakness of the real thing. And I guess that's another theme in a couple of my pieces: this idea of evidence as the weakest narrative. Evidentiary practices often have so little to do with indexical remnants; the narrative of evidence overwhelms whatever material traces are actually there. So there are some visible things, but they are secondary to the narrative/performative/speech act intervention, to the act of declaration. A lot of artists make work from that place. Think of Piero Manzoni's *Artist's Breath*. Not only is it the declarative act of "This is art, the breath itself," but then it gets captured in the balloon. So it's this perfect isolation of the generative act. Or Yves Klein's *Zones of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility*.

OOO *Again, it's very interesting that those sorts of gestures seem to really capitalize on the strong sexy man being sensitive and immaterial.*

AS It's the paternal act of generation, the ability to give a name. Whereas the maternal is "mere matter."

OOO *I wonder if that act of nomination from a specifically feminist position, if it somehow dovetails in too strong a way with the idea of the reproductive capacity of women? It becomes just too much, it's ultimately unacceptable to be able to create both materially and conceptually. And for this it becomes outlawed.*

AS There's a really amazing feminist classicist Nancy Tuana, who writes about Aristotle, the part in *Physics* where he talks about the logic of reproduction. There's this line about how men provide the meaning and the content of reproduction and women are the "mere matter." Something like that, I'm butchering the quote, but she talks about this primary masculine anxiety about feminine capacities to generate. So, exactly as you're saying, the idea that you could both materially generate and discursively generate is too much — and the discursive capacity for generation gets displaced onto the patriarchal marker of naming and patriliney and all that. So there's a primary appropriation or expropriation that marks the logic of reproduction. Freud kind

of echoes this too. He has this idea that patriliney is a "surmise based on a premise." The power of patriliney is that paternity is un-corroborable. I mean it is now corroborable, but for a long time it was this claim that could always be potentially undercut, so its only power was sheer assertion. The king adopts you as his heir through sheer assertion, and then you really do inherit the throne. And it also shores up the lines of property as well. So I am really interested in the potential of a feminist practice to re-appropriate the discursive capacity to make things, or to realign the discursive with a material capacity, or to insist on the materiality of the discursive. Because what makes patriliney so effective is that it evacuates any material trace. Just the pure speech act, but of course the speech act is backed up by material means — armies, wealth, all of that makes it possible.

OOO *That makes me wonder if you think about continuing this project or, in the wake of it, shifting toward a more recognizably material practice? The collaborations themselves are pretty much purely relational, and your documentation in writing and video are fairly immaterial as well.*

AS Yeah, they're really imperfect, sparse, immaterial. What I'm trying to attend to now is the materiality in the immaterial. Which is to say I recognize the immateriality of these encounters, but I feel convinced also that that moment of relation is full of material, that it itself has form and substance — which is largely temporal but also physical and historical. So the question is how to frame that in such a way that the immaterial reveals itself to be full of content, full of material substance that is merely given the alibi of being immaterial.

OOO *Since the '90s vogue around Maurizio Lazzarato and others thinking about "immaterial labor" and theorizing the immaterial in relation to contemporary culture, there has also been strong resistance to that binary of material and immaterial. It's difficult even to think of something being strictly material or immaterial, but at the same there's something very instinctive about these terms which is difficult to fully transcend. As you said, there is something very tangible about these moments in the nonconsensual collaborations. Maybe it's simply that "material" and "immaterial" are just not the most precise terms, but somehow they still seem useful as points of recourse...*

AS Well they're both a fiction, right? The immaterial is of course full of material, and the material itself exists by virtue of immaterial force rendering it as such. So it's almost like a quantum problem — wave/particle. This is the difficulty of it: it's not so hard to frame one through the other. A lot of the work of conceptual practices was to point to the materiality of immaterial thought. And then there's a lot of recent work about the materiality of immaterial labor, and equally there's been a lot of attention to providing immaterial frameworks to the material thing itself — you could even say most of art history is about this. The difficulty is analyzing without translating into a binary other. How do you remain within a realm of immaterial practice without drawing it out in these material correlates? Of course, there's also just the desire to make stuff. That more innate, less theorized, sensuousness to the material world, to practice, to physically, tangibly, build and make and do things. That is part of everyday praxis too. So in some of my more recent work I've been trying to attend

more to my desire to make things. The other dimension is that while I've very much been the agent of these non-consensual collaborations, there are also people in my life who are non-consensually collaborating with me — so I'm not just the agent but also sometimes the object. And I haven't found a great way of talking about those experiences. For example, I have an ex who for the past three years — we haven't talked in three years, but every day, for three years, she sends me multiple emails. Sometimes over forty in one day. They all go to spam. I recently started compiling them because I wanted to look at them all together. I think there are over 5,000 at this point. Just an astronomical number. She's an artist too and I'm kind of amazed at her capacity to materially produce in that way. So regarding this question of material production, I feel non-consensually collaborated with insofar as I do not want to receive the emails, I do not respond to the emails, and yet they keep coming and there's nothing I can do.

OOO *It's interesting that you bring this up because I talked about your project with a friend a few days ago, and she said the really interesting horizon would be if you somehow put yourself in a position in which you were the non-consenting collaborator. And that seems to be what is happening in this situation. I guess the motive of the other person becomes a tricky thing to measure and to document, but maybe that's something for you to speculate, to fabricate even. I wouldn't want to confuse the pathological with the creative... but that's a complicated distinction to broach.*

AS Right, that's always the difficulty when talking about things that have in other moments been contextualized as "the practices of hysterical women." To insist that a behavior that could be called pathology is something else — if it's your behavior then it's an exercise of great agency; if it's the behavior of someone else then there's potentially an erasure that feels sort of ableist. I don't know... the longer I think of these terms "consent" and "non-consent" it's all the more clear to me that I've always been participating in non-consensual relationships. I think we all do, to some extent. While it's now occurring to me that I am the object of a specific non-consensual collaboration that's been going on for some time, I've probably been the object of many. There's this promise in liberal feminist discourse around consent of absolute choice and agency. You can choose, you have agency, you can say *yes or no*. Which is to say that you always know your own desire in the moment. I feel at odds with that temporal schema, and I imagine many other people do too. I don't know my own desire completely in the moment, I don't feel a full sense of agency that can be flexed and realized. A lot of things happen for which consent just feels like an inadequate framework. Violation to some extent manifests in both power and disempowerment. So part of this project also involves theorizing a continuum or gradation of force, rather than reproducing the binaries of violation vs. non-violation or violence vs. non-violence.

OOO *Looping back to what we discussed earlier, the embrace of non-consent seems so brilliantly and glaringly at odds with much contemporary feminist thought that it seems to offer a way around, for example, this perilous binary of pathology and creativity which I just sort of stepped into — whereas probably we should not hold these two ideas at odds. The problem of consent seems like a useful wedge, something with which to prod many different ideas.*

AS I should say, it's something I got from Fred Moten. He gave this talk at NYU on Édouard Glissant and Alan Turing. There was this beautiful part where he was analyzing how Glissant looks at the transatlantic slave trade and his thinking about this state of non-subjecthood — all the people in the holds of slave ships who are denied access to legal, political, and social subjecthood. And he has this moment where he asks "could we imagine a capacity to consent to non-consent?" This idea of action without the full subject-based dimensions of agency, and how that becomes a necessary position when you are juridically excluded from the state of subjecthood. It highlights the impasse of agency: agency depends on a state of subjecthood, but not all of us fit that mold of the subject very well. The subject is historically raced and gendered and sexed — that is to say, white, male, land-owning and able-bodied. So either one resembles the subject and tries to make one's self resemble that subject more in order to exercise its privileges, or you're just at odds with the frame. I think that's an ambition of this project too — how do you attend to that space of failing subjecthood, or not fitting, or understanding its historical distinction from you? What can you do in that space and how do you describe your action? Someday the project has to end. But I keep thinking it's over and then I have another thing to add, so I'm not sure. I think I will add this other dimension of the ex, but I'm not sure how yet. It never feels great to complain about one's ex-girlfriends.

OOO *In the piece, you talk about this "condition" which you describe as a certain tendency or a propensity for certain kinds of entanglements. It opens up an accessibility in the project that might allow the reader, participant, or witness to superimpose this artistic framework on any sort of external interaction that could fall within this category. You talk about yourself as having a proclivity toward these sorts of interactions. So how do you end it? To me it seems like you won't ever end it, really... but maybe you will just stop documenting it?*

AS Yeah, or maybe the documentation will just take different forms. I like the idea of a project with an ending that I can't predict. I like this idea that I always have to catch up to it — like my life proceeds at a pace such that the project is always slightly lagging. I like that I don't necessarily know where it's going. There is some aspect of chance

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operations... I mean, who knows when the next fucking weird encounter will happen. ^[laughs] “The Condition” is a part that I really do want to go back to and spend more time on at some point, because I do believe in this thing that has gone by many different names at different points in time — “witchcraft,” “hysteria,” “gossip,” “activism,” etc. And I feel like there’s a great potential for solidarity in whatever that thing is. A solidarity that doesn’t depend on conviviality, or doesn’t depend on conviviality as only a “feel-good” space... on the terrible academic karaoke where they all think they’re having a great time, but, you know, they’re not. Or they are and that’s worse.

^[laughs]

OOO *In Kate Zambreno’s Heroines, she talks about this idea of finding a certain historical solidarity of/with women who have breakdowns, women who do compulsive things, women who existed in tall shadows. And the book is very much a book of scholarship about these would-be compatriots of “The Condition,” or whatever she might call it, as well as a documentation of her relationships with her subjects — who are quite historical in a sense, removed by decades. It was my beach reading last summer.* ^[laughs]

AS Such good beach reading! ^[laughs]

OOO *It really is. Very gossipy at some points and then very drippy, then really ideological...*

AS Heartbreaking at some points I’m sure, too. I really love that idea of generationality. I think about this question of being the only child of two very different kinds of immigrants who produced a one-off and then went their separate ways. This question of lineage — where do I come from? I’ve always thought deeply about that and been confused. The idea of the creative lineage, the lineage you make for yourself and insist on, has always been really appealing to me. So this concept of generational connections between non-related women — this political germ held in common — highlights the possibility of kinships that are non-reproductive in a biological sense but maybe reproductive in all the other senses. And it echoes that question we began with: What does it mean to create solidarities outside of the framework of identity, or outside of identity positions that have to be stable and subject to discipline? I’ve always been interested in that unnamed lineage of people who would have been burned at the stake. That’s an overarching thing in common — difficult women, or people prone to certain habits. Broadly speaking, it’s a feminine position, but one that’s able to be inhabited with difference by different bodies — and is.

OOO *There’s something that endures in — I don’t know if I’d say the trauma or the subjugation, perhaps simply the experience of being the vilified or the attacked or the persecuted. There is something about that particular relation to a dominant demographic or culture. This particular form of endurance is so inspiring, such a force. It feels like it has its own internal perpetuation, and we’re just kind of helping it along.*

AS I really agree, it’s like a collectivity that emerges more over deep time rather than in the present. And I guess I believe in it more because it emerges over time. Like a curse.

OOO *We don’t actually start it but we chip in some how.*

AS That temporal configuration feels like a more accurate representation. Whatever that shared thing in common is, it is best described in these peripheral ways — as a surround, background, or the ground from which figures emerge. I really like that way of thinking about it. It also just seems more comforting to think about the *longue durée* of lineage. Maybe it opens up something unexpected about performance, which is this idea that it can unfold over incredibly long periods of time. Or that performance can be used to represent a phenomenon that takes a very very long period of time to happen. This is kind of what my dissertation work is about: doom. Doom the feeling comes from the Old English word for judgement — *dom*, which refers not so much to the act of judgement but to the very long time in which judgement unfolds. The attempt to think about force over extremely long periods of time becomes much more materially resonant when you start investigating these narratives of doom. One of the big Western canonical punishments is the judgment of Adam and Eve after they transgress in the garden of Eden. Adam is doomed to labor in the fields, Eve is doomed to labor in childbirth. One of the more contemporary sites I’ve been writing about is Chris Burden’s piece *Doomed*, which is the famous one where he nearly died, again... He didn’t tell anyone what the performance was, he just laid down under a tilted sheet of glass in the gallery, and he continued to lie there until someone interfered in some way. He stayed there for an incredibly long period of time, like forty-something hours, and the performance ended only when a guard came and put a jug of water next to him. But had he not done that, the performance never would have ended and supposedly Burden would have stayed there until he died. So I think that’s an important example (although I don’t know how I feel about it being Chris Burden’s example) of using performance to point to something that is the real stuff of time. Doom is nothing but time itself, enacting its force.

OOO *It sounds really scary, which I like.* ^[laughs]

AS When I had an advisor who wrote about queer utopia, writing about feminist doom made way more sense. Now it’s just a downer! ^[laughs]

OOO *It’s not scary thematically but it’s scary temporally, which is very interesting.*

AS Yeah, how do we conceive of duration? A lot of the narratives we have for reproduction allow us to circumvent encountering its durational aspect — because it’s terrifying. I think that’s what’s useful about doom as a political and aesthetic feeling. Also, it seems way more possible to write about under a Trump administration. Before I was just being a downer but now everyone’s down so it’s ok. ^[laughs]

OOO *You maybe have one of the few dissertation topics in the humanities at large that seems more amenable to this awful moment...*

AS Well certainly no one wants to talk about nightlife right now.

OOO *Well done!* ^[laughs] ○

