

July 2018

Bodies Under Siege: Intersections of Warfare and HIV/AIDS

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Nevarez Araujo, Daniel, "Bodies Under Siege: Intersections of Warfare and HIV/AIDS" (2018). *Doctoral Dissertations*. 1314.
<https://doi.org/10.7275/11882970.0> https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2/1314

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BODIES UNDER SIEGE:
INTERSECTIONS OF WARFARE AND HIV/AIDS

A Dissertation Presented

By

DANIEL NEVAREZ ARAUJO

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2018

Comparative Literature

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With love and appreciation to Lenai.
“Don’t cry or be afraid. Some things only can be made in the storm.”

With love to Milena Zoé.
Thank you for teaching me how to feel anew.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the members of my dissertation committee, Regina Galasso, Don Eric Levine, and Martin Norden, for your patience and guidance throughout this process. A special thanks to David Lenson, for being there from the start and always offering encouragement and positivity, even when life decided to change the script a bit.

To my dissertation chair, Jim Hicks, thank you for steering this ship. I appreciate all the conversations, the mentorship, the meticulous balance of expectations and inspiration, and all the work you put into getting me across the finish line. Beyond all your academic interventions, I wholeheartedly appreciate your friendship, particularly during my family's time of need. My unending gratitude, always.

Thank you to all my colleagues at UMass Amherst. You made New England winters feel like a walk in the park for this Caribbean kid. Special thanks are in order for Manuela Borzone, Lara Matta, Alex Ponomareff, Una Tanović, and Krzysztof Rowiński. Your feedback, suggestions, and critiques during our dissertation writing meetings kept me on my toes and helped inspire what this dissertation ultimately became. I could not ask for a more inspired and engaged group of friends and colleagues.

Thank you to Rick Swope, Loretta Collins, Dannabang Kuwabong, Michael Sharp, Diane Accaria, Mirerza González, the late Tony Slagle, and all the faculty, peers, and friends I worked and studied with during my early graduate

studies at The University of Puerto Rico - Río Piedras. I cannot emphasize enough how pivotal you have been in getting me here.

Very special thanks are also in order for Scott Salus. Our numerous conversations on the topics of HIV/AIDS and the body inform every inch of this dissertation. Thanks for pushing me and nurturing me along the way.

I will always be indebted to you for your support, your suggestions, your recommendations, and your unconditional friendship.

Finally, thank you, Lenai Camacho. We went through a lot, you more than me, really. And through it all, you always stayed strong, remained positive, and believed in me more than I could have ever believed in myself. I am always in awe when I am in your presence. You are a force of nature. This dissertation, ultimately, is all thanks to you. Gracias. Siempre.

ABSTRACT

BODIES UNDER SIEGE:

INTERSECTIONS OF WARFARE AND HIV/AIDS

May 2018

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Analyzing works by Juan Goytisolo, Rabih Alameddine, and Derek Jarman, this dissertation studies the similarities of war and AIDS as sensorial experiences socially located and complexly embodied. This study looks at the ways bodies engage with, are affected by, and respond to both war and AIDS, specifically within the AIDS/War Narrative; that is, narrative spaces that foreground both experiences simultaneously. Influenced by Mark Paterson's notion of felt phenomenology and positioned at the nexus of Comparative Literature, Disability Studies, and Husserlian phenomenology, this dissertation studies texts that exhibit an awareness of the phenomenal characteristics governing the experiences of AIDS and war, each text proposing that both conditions are characterized by an assault on the body and the psyche through the senses, what we will refer to throughout as the state or *sense* of siege. The

state or *sense* of siege speaks not only of the activation of the senses in these situations of duress – i.e. to *sense* one’s location and embodiment within an experience – but also of a need to make *sense* of the situations and the conditions that facilitate their occurrence, as well as a need to make *sense* of our position as sentient beings in relation to other sentient beings. The texts explored acknowledge language’s descriptive and denotational capacities while they also recognize the malleability of the relationship between signifiers and signifieds, particularly as it pertains to the senses. Recognizing that each individual *apprehends* and *feels* differently, these texts are mainly concerned with acts of feeling and their relaying as information that further connects each subject to a wider intersubjective experience.

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INTRODUCTION:

THE COMPLEX EMBODIMENT OF AIDS AND WAR

Force, to counter opposing force,
equips itself with the inventions of art and science.
Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*

Without the assault on the senses, it would be impossible for
a state to wage war. Waging war in some ways begins with
the assault on the senses; the senses are the first target of war.
Judith Butler, *Frames of War*

Two years into the AIDS epidemic, writer and activist Larry Kramer
appeared on an episode of CNN's *Freeman Report* to talk about the crisis.
During one of his responses to host Sandi Freeman's questions about
contextualizing the epidemic, Kramer made the following observation:

Do you know what it's like to have 18 of your own friends in a year
and a half die? Men who are at the height of their creative
usefulness to society. All men under 50 years old. I don't think the
straight community has any concept of what it's like to be a gay
man in this city. It's like you're living in wartime. You don't know
when the bomb is gonna fall. Who is it gonna hit? What is this
mysterious thing? Do I have it? (Carlomusto, *Larry Kramer: In
Love and Anger*)

Kramer's description achieved many things. First, it placed the burden of the
epidemic¹ on an apathetic public. As Kramer himself noted often – going so far
as to include it as part of the scenery in his groundbreaking play *The Normal
Heart* (1985) – more outrage and press were devoted to the Tylenol poisoning
scare in 1982, which claimed the lives of 7 people, than to the hundreds of AIDS

¹ Kramer would later insist bombastically in public and at Gay Men's Health Crisis and ACTUP meetings that the so-called AIDS epidemic was not an epidemic but a plague, a distinction he believed imperative to push the public into action.

deaths and confirmed infections already accounted for at that point. Second, it highlights the exclusion of People With AIDS (PWAs) from the body politic, particularly, for Kramer, those PWAs belonging to the gay community. This segment of the population, despite serving society in its many institutions, was, in fact, disenfranchised, and that disenfranchisement extended to all things pertaining to health care and medicine, not only in word, but in deed. The right to health, which was said to be inalienable, was not extended to PWAs thanks to a conservative public policy (the Reagan Administration was notorious for its reluctance to fund research and do so in a prompt manner) and the governing narrative surrounding the crisis (politicians, religious figures, and some medical professionals placed the blame on PWAs for the latter's so-called "risky behaviors").

More importantly for the purposes of the present study, Kramer's description orchestrated what must have seemed, at the time, an unusual merger. Observantly, Kramer connects the epidemic, its phenomenal effects on the body and the psyche (individual, collective, and social), to the experiences of war. As far as he understood it, AIDS was a war, and, like any war, it had its own casualties. Kramer's description would catch on, drastically changing the way journalists, scholars, thinkers, caretakers, scientists, and PWAs thought of and wrote about AIDS. Since, the experience of war has been mined for its metaphorical possibilities in illuminating the AIDS crisis; war metaphors represent one dominant set of descriptors that effectively capture the syndrome and the experiences of those living through it. The language of war, one could argue,

brings us closer to *feeling* the phenomenological effects of AIDS (More on what I mean by the word feeling later.) But this usage and the perspectives it fosters are not without their problems.

By helping to visualize AIDS as a battlefield,² a no-man's land,³ a trench,⁴ the Holocaust,⁵ or a war zone,⁶ war metaphors have proven to be influential, pervasive, often detrimental, but also – occasionally, as we will see – useful in AIDS writing, art, activism, and scientific research. War language activates our sensorial awareness of the events it is tasked with narrating, and AIDS is no different. Take for example a 1986 article in *Time Magazine* written by Claudia Wallis. In it, Wallis takes the language of war and constructs a siege scenario in which HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, acts as an invading foreign force:

The invader... enters the bloodstream of its victim after sexual contact. It is an AIDS virus (sic), and its intrusion does not go unnoticed. Scouts of the body's immune system, large cells called macrophages, sense the presence of the diminutive foreigner and promptly alert the immune system. It begins to mobilize an array of cells that, among other things, produce antibodies to deal with the threat. (Wallis)

Wallis lays out for the reader a war narrative in which, like a Trojan Horse, HIV bypasses all the body's defense systems. The virus "penetrates," "takes over part of the cellular machinery," and overcomes the immune system (Wallis). For Wallis

² See Duberman, Martin. *Hold Tight Gently: Michael Callen, Essex Hemphill, and the Battlefield of AIDS*, 2014.

³ In 2008, Concordia University hosted *No Man's Land: HIV/AIDS and Waiting*, a painting exhibition.

⁴ See Vito Russo's famous address during an ACTUP protest at the New York State Capitol in Albany on May 7, 1988. <https://youtu.be/C0Q8p0HCQEs>

⁵ See Kramer, Larry. *Reports From The Holocaust: The Story of an AIDS Activist*, 1994.

⁶ See Drucker, Ernest. "Epidemic in a War Zone: AIDS and Community Survival in New York City," *International Journal of Health Services* Vol. 20, No. 4 (1990)

the entire sequence of contagion and the onset of sickness is a war of attrition with no clear end in sight:

By last week this appalling scenario had been played out to its fatal conclusion in some 15,000 Americans. Another 11,500 were under assault, showing the telltale symptoms of the disease, and from 1 million to 2 million others harbored the virus, vulnerable at any time to a final, all-out attack. (Wallis)

Wallis' article encapsulates the narrative dominants present in early reporting on the syndrome. One article after another written about AIDS in the 1980s included references to attacks, assaults, invasions, disarmaments, explosions, and the compromising of defenses (Wald 213-26). In Priscilla Wald's opinion, the proliferation of war terminology represented a holdover of the way scientists and journalists wrote about cancer, particularly during the Cold War Era. AIDS, like cancer before it, inspired a sense of paranoia and fear similar to the one experienced by many during wartime. Ironically, a year earlier, Lance Morrow, also writing for *Time Magazine*, warned about the dangers of conflating the war narrative with, what he denominated, "plague mentality:" "The plague mentality is something like the siege mentality, only more paranoid. In a siege, the enemy waits outside the walls. In a plague or epidemic, he lives intimately within.... Life slips into science fiction" (Morrow). By the time Wallis' article was published, the public at large was already steeped in plague mentality; publications merely absorbed the climate, reflected it back, and fed into the paranoia.

Depictions like Wallis' gave rise to the public's perception of PWAs as both victims and pariahs, depictions that also billed PWAs as a threat to the body

politic. Public discourse, fueled by vitriol put forth by the church, the government, and the press, particularly in the U.S., consolidated around the idea that the syndrome served as retribution for irresponsible and dishonorable behavior and only affected a small segment of society that deserved what was happening to it. For example, Jerry Falwell once proclaimed that “AIDS is not just God's punishment for homosexuals. It is God's punishment for the society that tolerates homosexuals” (Johnson). As a result of pronouncements like these, the general public entered a state of paranoia and simultaneous denial. As Ann Northrop has characterized it, “this was the Vietnam War all over again. It was about people in power not caring about the lives of people who didn't have power and being willing to accept a system of attrition where people would die” (Hubbard).

In a display of the complex ways in which the body politic negotiates its use of individual bodies, what Michel Foucault called biopower, the victims and pariahs were simultaneously rendered visible and invisible. PWA bodies were displayed as a warning to the body politic of the effects of not following the paths of righteousness (as defined by Christianity and patriotism); and yet, PWA bodies were also erased as a way to avoid the burden of investing in saving the lives of a segment deemed not worth saving. Consequently, the language surrounding early reportage on AIDS became a tool mainly in the service of exclusion; a way of defining an “us” and a “them.” In the U.S. context, AIDS was all the evidence needed to vilify PWAs as unAmerican and immoral.

Nevertheless, war metaphors would also – occasionally – prove useful. It would not take long for PWAs and activists to see the possibilities inherent in

coopting the same rhetoric used against them for their own benefit. PWAs and activists in the United States worked to counter the public's paranoid responses, and, with that, the effects these responses had on PWAs. Highlighting the experiential connections of living with AIDS to those of war through the use of images and words, PWAs and activists tapped into the collective imagination and memory of a nation deeply connected to and defined by its history of armed conflict, a history mostly understood and taught as honorable.

This act of rhetorical reappropriation rallied those affected by the syndrome around a nascent collective imagination and memory. PWAs could now speak, as Kramer did, of being at war against the government, organized religion, education, the media, and other apparent enablers of the AIDS crisis. They could also paint their struggle with the grandeur of the great wars, rejecting the narratives of divine punishment and victimhood and substituting these with narratives of honor and camaraderie. For PWAs and their allies, war language represented an effective tool in the battle for survival and visibility.

The language of war permeated all sides of the conflict. Few saw the proliferation of war language in the construction of AIDS with more clarity than Susan Sontag. Following up her earlier meditation on cancer in *Illness as Metaphor* (1977), Sontag's *AIDS and Its Metaphors* (1988) highlights how "AIDS is a clinical construction, an inference" (108). AIDS borrows its constructed meanings from cancer and syphilis, but takes these meanings to more problematic horizons, particularly in its deployment of "the language of political paranoia, with its characteristic distrust of a pluralistic world" (106). Whereas with

cancer the affliction is seen as originating from inside our bodies, what Sontag calls “a domestic subversion” (105), AIDS is envisioned as an outside threat. Taking on Wallis’ *Time* article, for example, Sontag notes how the discourse surrounding AIDS sees the body as “a fortress” to be defended from a hostile takeover by foreign elements (96). To understand the power of this type of rhetoric, we need only remember that early detective work done by organizations like the WHO and the CDC led to the identifying of Gaëtan Dugas as the supposed first person with HIV/AIDS. Dugas, a Frenchman, would be labeled Patient Zero. The identification of a French origin led the U.S. to institute a ban on foreigners with HIV/AIDS from entering the nation, a ban that remained in place until 2010. This shift in delineating spaces as either domestic or foreign enacts a multitude of “otherings,” according to Sontag, which lead to the stigmatizing of various identities. Shame, guilt, and, ultimately, death stand as the effects of constructing AIDS as an “us” versus “them” narrative, a construction that calls for greater surveillance on those “others” singled out and which charges the narrative landscape with moralistic expectations.

Sontag settles on an apocalyptic tone in her analysis of military language in the construction of AIDS. After all, as she notes, science had promised the eradication of all illnesses, but had not delivered; here we were, near the start of a new millennium, battling yet another epidemic. Needless to say, the apocalyptic tone was similarly pervasive in most AIDS-related critical analysis during the first decade of the epidemic, and rightfully so. That being the case, amidst all the

death, fear, and anger, there also flourished a combative spirit intent on deploying the language of war as a counter to its own effects.

One such expression came during an ACT UP protest at the New York State Capitol in Albany on May 7th, 1988. Vito Russo, an influential member of the group, delivered his now-famous address to the assembled. Russo starts with observations similar to those made by Kramer years earlier:

Living with AIDS is like living through a war which is happening only to people who happen to be in the trenches. Every time a shell explodes you look around only to discover that you've lost more of your friends. But nobody else notices. It isn't happening to them. (*Why We Fight*)

Russo's narrative replicates Kramer's indictment of the apathy of the public regarding AIDS and the forced erasure of PWAs from the body politic.

Nevertheless, towards the end Russo's message takes a hopeful turn which greatly contrasts with Kramer's battle cry. By now activists like Russo began to see how the same language of war could be used to construct a counter-narrative, one that created community and imbued the struggle with a sense of purpose and honor:

AIDS is really a test of us as a people. When future generations ask what we did in this crisis, we're gonna have to tell them that we were out here today. And we have to leave a legacy to those generations of people who come after us. [One day] there will be people alive on this earth... who will hear the story that once there was a terrible disease.... And that a brave group of people stood up and fought, and in some cases gave their lives so that other people might live and be free. I'm glad to be part of this fight. (*Why We Fight*)

In Russo's portrait, PWAs and their allies are no longer pictured as the "others"

Sontag saw succumbing to the effects of war rhetoric. Instead, in a move aligned

with Disability Studies theory, some of its proponents,⁷ and their approach to disabled identities and bodies, PWAs and their allies are cast at the center, the “us” battling the illness and its enablers. Disability Studies thinkers speak of the disabled and the non-disabled, a rhetorical act that disrupts the mainstream power dynamics which place the able-bodied subjects as the normative center and relegate the disabled to a periphery lacking visibility. By reconstituting the lines in the rhetorical sand, PWAs and activists defined their cause as just and aligned their cause to a history of conflict in the name of justice.

The strategy of redeploying the images and words of warfare ultimately has the effect of revealing the perceptible connections between AIDS and war. AIDS, like war, claimed a mind-numbing number of lives, mostly young and in their prime. AIDS, like war, defined a generation, publicly, privately, politically, artistically. AIDS, like war, showcased the humanity of some, while displaying the egregiousness of many. More importantly for this study, AIDS, like war, tinged everything with a sense of inherent danger, a sense of constant assault, a sense of being attacked from all sides. This sense of threat, what I refer to in this dissertation as the state of siege, characterizes the experience of AIDS, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, before the arrival of protease inhibitors⁸ and

⁷ See Goodley, Dan. *Dis/ability Studies: Theorising Disablism and Ableism*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

⁸ Protease inhibitors, such as zidovudine, are a type of medicine that, when ingested, binds with the molecular proteases responsible for HIV, thus blocking HIV from successfully activating and replicating. Protease inhibitors do not cure a person from having HIV. Their effect is a reduction of viral agents within the body, which lessens the burden on the immune system. Consequently, the development of AIDS is averted in most PWAs.

other forms of medication and therapy, as one fraught with violence and the persistent menace of bodily and psychological, collective and personal damage.

Taking as established fact the proliferation of war language in AIDS literature as noted by Sontag, Wald, Paula Treichler, Douglas Crimp, Mary Patton, Catherine Waldby, and many others,⁹ this dissertation moves towards the consideration of distinct instances, in literature and cinema, fiction and nonfiction, when war and AIDS actually occupied the same textual space. Specifically, this study will consider how bodies engage with, are affected by, and respond to both war and AIDS within self-contained narrative spaces. Influenced by Mark Paterson's notion of "felt phenomenology," this dissertation looks at literary and filmic works that simultaneously explore the experiences of war and AIDS and, more importantly, how their convergence affects the body and mind through their assault on the human senses. Paterson's concept proposes the notion that phenomena can be apprehended through either "touching" or "feeling." Though his argument is mostly grounded in haptics,¹⁰ these words signify more than just the apprehension of tactile sensations. In broadening the scope of these words, Paterson, following Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, calls attention to the way our bodies absorb phenomena through the use of our senses while also recognizing the power of language and metaphor in

⁹ Many of these thinkers have also noted other dominants in AIDS literature, such as the proliferation of Science Fiction and Epidemiological poetics.

¹⁰ Haptics refers to the philosophical and scientific engagement with the senses of touch and how these senses are defined throughout history. For Paterson, haptics becomes a word that speaks of how bodies engage with the world through the senses of touch; but the word simultaneously includes a recognition of the human dimensions of feeling emotions.

influencing the way we understand these phenomena. “Touching” and “feeling,” for Paterson, are not limited to the tactile realm; in addition to touching or feeling “cutaneous sensation[s],” our bodies can touch or feel “interpersonal affect” and “other metaphorical aspects” as they engage with their surroundings (150). Thus, we can speak of a poem that “touches” our souls, or a “felt” connection with a person going through hard times. While at times foregrounding haptics, this dissertation applies the idea of “felt phenomenology” to the other senses as well, particularly sight and sound, proposing that they too serve as avenues towards recognizing and communicating shared experiences, that type of exchange Husserl defined as *intersubjectivity*.

Husserl defines intersubjectivity as the conscious subject’s capacity to forge connections with other conscious subjects as a way to understand the phenomenal world. Throughout his work, particularly in his *Cartesian Meditations* (1931), Husserl developed the notion of intersubjectivity as a way to understand how subjects apprehend and understand phenomena. For Husserl, the conscious subject is capable of understanding the world strictly through engagement with phenomena; all noumena, by definition, remain inaccessible. The senses give us access to most phenomenological input, helping in the development of individual knowledge and experience. Husserl calls this act of phenomenological receptivity *apperception*. The knowledge received through apperception, initially captured by conscious monads, enters into circulation through intersubjective communication. Encountering other monads, we recognize their capacity to sense, apprehend, and comprehend phenomena; in

other words, we recognize *empathy*. Empathy allows monads to exchange their respective experiences with other monads. Empathy, i.e. recognition of sameness, serves as the mode through which we achieve intersubjective communication. Only through the recognition of separate monads as others similar to ourselves are we capable of knowing our world. Therefore, the senses stand as key tools in the understanding of the world and the communicating of that understanding. Consequently, intersubjectivity serves as the basis for Patterson's theory of felt phenomenology, the latter adding considerations of the power of language and metaphor to Husserlian phenomenology.

In addition to phenomenology, Disability Studies, its understanding of language and its powers of influence, greatly informs this dissertation and the way I apply phenomenology and intersubjectivity. The discipline's awareness that language defines ideas, characterizes subjects, and fosters the formation of beliefs around specific conditions provides a starting point from which to look at the responses to AIDS and war as a struggle to establish dominant narratives. In his book *Disability Theory* (2008), Tobin Siebers observes that Disability Studies demands that its practitioners recognize the body as both metaphor and material; the body as metaphor posits the recognition of the body as a collection of symbols which governs identity formation and experience, while body as material understands the body as the locus of sensorial awareness and embodiment. As Siebers reminds us, "Disability is not a pathological condition, only analyzable via individual psychology, but a social location complexly embodied" (14).

In her influential book on the sociocultural and rhetorical construction of AIDS, Paula Treichler defines AIDS as “a nexus where multiple meanings, stories, and discourses intersect and overlap, reinforce and subvert each other” (19). This nexus creates what she calls an “epidemic of signification” (19). In other words, AIDS is not merely an illness, it is a discourse, and that discourse is itself a collection of symbols. Particularly during the paranoia it elicited early on, AIDS serves as a carrier of multiple meanings, each of which conventionally unite, transfer, and expand on the stigmatizing notions and stereotypical perceptions these meanings help to build. For Treichler, narrative binds AIDS together as a discursive entity; it is the way in which the illness and all the cultural baggage attached to it gain meaning. Through narratives, written and oral, formal and casual, these multiple meanings form, take root, and become cemented as adverse features.

According to Steven Kruger, conventional AIDS narratives present two structural tendencies, “one ‘microcosmic’ and the other ‘macrocosmic’” (73).¹¹ The former charts the illness’s trajectory through an individual. This structure looks at origins – the conditions that brought on the onset of the illness. It also looks at the symptoms in detail, with the scrutiny of a microscope. This structure often gives shape to “a certain ‘culpable’ activity” (73), a trope that makes of the individual the sole party at fault; hence, the structure leads the reader to pass moral judgments that bookend the narrative. The macrocosmic form, on the other

¹¹ While Kruger’s work focuses mainly on fictional narrative productions of the US, these structural tendencies can also be found in other narratives including non-fiction, mostly in the West.

hand, is more interested in populations, presenting a narrative that “involves not the individual person living with HIV or AIDS but the historical trajectory of the epidemic” (75). Here, the group is the focus. Nation, state, town, citizenry, fellowship, indeed, any collective may take the brunt of the attack levied at it by the illness.

Kruger has noted how both tendencies work in tandem to victimize not only the PWA but society at large, albeit in ways that employ the notion of victim differently. Victimhood for the individual in the microcosmic structure carries with it mostly a pejorative meaning. Take for example the 1993 film *Philadelphia*. The film, which won major awards including a best actor Oscar for Tom Hanks, presents the story of Andrew Beckett, a young lawyer with a lot of potential for upward mobility in a powerful law firm. However, one day Andrew faints and is taken to the hospital. From that point on, Andrew presents visible lesions on his skin and is constantly suffering from exhaustion and diarrhea. Eventually, tests reveal that Andrew has AIDS, the HIV virus contracted, one is meant to surmise, during anonymous same-sex encounters at bathhouses. This information reaches his employers, who proceed to fire Andrew from the firm. Subsequently, Andrew hires Joe Miller, played by Denzel Washington, to help him build a discrimination suit against the firm. In the end, Andrew and Joe win the case.

However, interspersed with the legal narrative, the film showcases Andrew’s narrative of decline, a narrative that takes us from the discovery of the illness in the body, to the manifestation of symptoms, until eventually the story reaches “inexorable suffering and death” (Kruger 73). After all, the film ends with

Joe Miller not only overcoming his homophobia and AIDS-phobia, but surviving Andrew and celebrating the win in Andrew's absence. Even when the film gives its audience the feel-good narrative of beating the odds to win a discrimination case against a powerful law firm, the audience is meant to see in Andrew's individual story the effects of his choices on his body and life. For the individual, being the "victim" annuls agency, making them a "passive sufferer... the 'victim' of invading forces" (Kruger 77). Such a frame is intent on defining the supposed inaction of the PWA, as if this inaction proves the PWA's agreement with, even willingness in, being sick. Inaction in this type of narrative reveals a character fault; it is the individual's choice, and society at large is not to blame for the individual's inaction.

In contrast, victimhood projected onto society, within the macrocosmic structure, allows for the singling out of rogue elements which affect the collective mainstream. In other words, the group is victimized by a "disease agent, the active 'killer,' the viral force that cannot be resisted" (Kruger 77). This structure is evident in the presentation of Gaëtan Dugas in Randy Shilts' *And The Band Played On* (1987). A journalistic retelling of the origin and development of the AIDS epidemic, Shilts' book sets the scene early on with regards to various scenarios involving the general public and rogue actors. Perhaps the most famous of these narratives is Shilts' treatment of Gaëtan Dugas, a flight attendant who was linked to hundreds of the initial subjects who presented symptoms of AIDS. At the time, Dugas was tacked with the name of Patient Zero, creating the notion that Dugas was the first person with AIDS and that he was somehow

singlehandedly responsible for the spread of the epidemic. Shilts presents Dugas as an amalgam of various characteristics, including his constant mobility as a flight attendant, his licentiousness, and his disregard for others, which, because they were left unchecked, endangered the public at large. In other words, Shilts constructs a monster who is out to infect everyone.

In the individual narrative, the PWA embodies weakness, be it moral or physical, when compared to other individuals. PWAs epitomize what the “normal”¹² individual wants to avoid becoming. In the group narrative, as in the case of *And The Band Plays On*, the PWA conversely becomes an enemy who represents a constant threat, both a foreign element and an internal, albeit compromised, cell in the social body. Neither of these differing positions grants PWAs the prospect of independence, agency, or deliverance, much less the space for voicing their own views; the PWA is trapped behind the walls of a rhetorical asylum, destined to spend their days in isolation. These teleological frames understandably carry a tone that evokes both personal and collective brands of apocalypse. Regardless of the narrative choice, the PWA’s trajectory always already leads to their demise and eventual erasure.

At this point, Disability Studies and its theories become a useful intervention into AIDS narratives. A Disability Studies inflected lens allows one to remain conscientious of these narrative frames and their influence on the construction of meaning surrounding AIDS. Furthermore, a Disability Studies

¹² My use of normal in this context is informed by the work of Michel Foucault, particularly his lectures on the concept of the abnormal. For more, see Foucault, Michel. *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975*. Picador, 2004.

focus keeps the social conditions that allow for the spread of an epidemic and the proliferation of conflict in multiple venues front and center. More to the point, it brings forth an awareness of all aspects metaphorical and material. This dissertation, therefore, looks at AIDS and war as embodied experiences saturated with complex interpretations and staged in varied locations.

The works analyzed in this study foreground the senses and the similarities of war and AIDS as sensorial experiences socially located and complexly embodied. These texts exhibit an awareness of the phenomenal influences governing the experiences of AIDS and war, each proposing that both conditions are characterized by an assault on the body and the psyche through the senses. The *sense* of siege, thus, speaks not only of the activation of the senses in these situations of duress, i.e. to *sense* one's location and embodiment within an experience, but also of a need to make *sense* of the situations and the conditions that facilitate their occurrence, as well as a need to make *sense* of our position as sentient beings in relation to other sentient beings through intersubjectivity. The texts covered similarly acknowledge language's descriptive and denotational capacities while also understanding the malleability of the relationship between signifiers and signifieds, particularly as it pertains to the senses. Recognizing that each individual *apprehends* and *feels* differently, these texts are mainly concerned with acts of feeling and their relaying as information that further connects each subject to a wider intersubjective experience. Thus, while, for example, the word "pain" can signify a multitude of individual experiences in the spectrum of "hurt," the artists' intentions in using this and other

words that carry sensorial implications is to communicate *an* experience of duress, discomfort, or distress. The flexibility of the spectrum, not the specificity of the instance, is key to the communicability of these texts; it is about tapping into each individual's capacity to *sense*. As such, these texts grant us the flexibility necessary for each of us to tap into an archive of senses-made-words by which we can *make sense* of the information relayed to us through language. The intention is not necessarily to know of an experience fully, with certainty, but to be as near as we can to each respective experience.

The artists explored in this dissertation are characterized by an urgent need to transmit the experiences of AIDS and war in sensorial terms. Juan Goytisolo "infects" our bodies with the chaos of the situations he writes about. Rabih Alameddine dismantles the body's capacity to understand time and space. Derek Jarman reaches beyond the page and the screen to touch us. Each artist addresses their respective historical and national contexts and the amalgam of divergent discourses that circulate around AIDS and war. In the process they stake out a time and space from which they counterbalance the dominant discourse. The result is a call to bear witness and attest to the immanence of life experiences contained within images and words; they beckon us to offer up our bodies to the experiences their characters are forced to navigate.

Positioning themselves as antithetical to the microcosmic and macrocosmic narrative tendencies mentioned above, Goytisolo, Alameddine, and Jarman, it must be noted, work out of the iconoclastic tradition of the avant-garde. The narratives considered in this study can be seen as challenges of the

individual and collective narratives of victimhood. But they also seek to disrupt and even dismantle mainstream language usage and rhetoric, as well as formal tendencies. For Goytisolo, nothing revolutionary and lasting can come from canonical tendencies. War and AIDS demand a new language if they are to be understood and transmitted. In the case of Alameddine, the novel offers the chance to experiment with both microcosmic and macrocosmic tendencies in the exploration of a new narrative form. Consequently, a chimerical form is born out of the strange union of both narrative tendencies, itself a reflection of the union of the sensations of siege. And for Jarman, his entire artistic intervention is a militant act against a conservative nation that hates everything he represents. Using his traditional upbringing as a person and as an artist, Jarman pieces together a melange of traditional aesthetics that become avant-garde when they are forced into communion, revealing the lines of distress between different forms, modalities, materials, and experiences. All three of these artists developed forms that challenge the complacency of traditional form as a way to also challenge the complacency of AIDS/War victim narratives, thus taping into new sensations, new ways of narrativizing experience, and new representations of those living within the state of siege.

Each chapter in this dissertation possesses its own internal logic and is meant to mimic or, at the very least, retain the guiding principles of each work and artist covered. Chapter One looks at the poetics of chaos espoused in Juan Goytisolo's work, particularly his novel *Las virtudes del pájaro solitario* (1988). The novel weaves together a multitude of spaces and voices into a narrative of

echoes where conflicts like the Bosnian War and the treatment of PWAs in Cuba share a common sensorial ground. AIDS, embodied as a specter walking among the living and the dead, is never named, but its effects are felt throughout, not just as the epidemic we have come to know, but as an anachronistic equivalent to different types of sieges on historically persecuted identities.

In writing this chapter, I have tried to retain a sense of Goytisolo's poetics of chaos. Building on avant-garde sensibilities, Goytisolo's narrative style denies the expectations of a readerly experience; there is no sense of a beginning, middle, and end, or, even, of an apparent cause and defined effect. Instead, Goytisolo inserts readers into the confusion of the state of siege by laying his own siege on the Spanish language. Writing as an exile in Marrakesh, Morocco, the Spanish writer's work stands as an exploration into fringe identities and experiences, itself mimicked by the unorthodox prose and the lack of clarifying punctuation in his text. For Goytisolo, the war casualty and the PWA are exposed to the same siege experiences. Both conditions have been absorbed into the realm of the spectacle, which commodifies the bodies depicted. The bodies of PWAs, like those of war casualties, are consumed in various mediums like film, literature, and journalism. A great deal of media attention during the coverage of AIDS and war has been devoted to mutilated or lifeless bodies. Because he recognizes this consumerist tendency, Goytisolo enhances the spectacle to caricaturesque levels, revealing our innate morbid desires. The excess cancels out the spectacle and, in turn, the reader is brought to connect, through the confusion of sensorial stimuli, with the suffering of the bodies under siege.

To capture this sense of confusion, Goytisolo disrupts language proper, eliminates punctuation, avoids linearity, and denies the identification of enunciators. The result causes the reader to fuse moments, conditions, and identities into an overall experience, an experience of siege. As a result, Goytisolo, in his own words, “infects” the reader. Having been exposed to the fusing of experiences between the PWA and the casualty of war, the reader’s body becomes fused to the same experiences. Ultimately, Goytisolo’s goal is for his readers to absorb the sense of siege being experienced by both PWAs and casualties of war in his novel.

Chapter Two analyzes Rabih Alameddine’s novel *KoolAIDS: The Art of War* (1998). The novel mainly follows two characters, Mohammed and Samir, who have left war-torn Lebanon during a civil war, only to arrive in San Francisco and Washington, respectively, and find friends and acquaintances dying in great numbers during the AIDS epidemic. Mohammed and Samir are also infected with HIV and the novel traces their move from casualties of war to casualties of AIDS. Alameddine takes on the narrative tendencies of AIDS literature and puts them at the service of an iconoclastic and challenging avant-garde text about the body’s responses to AIDS and war. Using a melange of scientific reportage, memoirs, screenplays, and war narratives, Alameddine constructs a patchwork of diverse temporalities and identities to capture the sense of siege felt during the Lebanese Civil War and the AIDS epidemic. Trauma features prominently in the novel as an effect of these conditions on memory. Because of this, the novel beckons the reader to witness the traumatic events occurring throughout.

To capture the state of siege, Alameddine builds an echo chamber where each experience informs the next. One paragraph about the war seamlessly adjoins another about living with or dying because of AIDS. One way in which these events are brought together is through a recognition of our bodies' locational senses. Alameddine's choices often highlight an individual's sense of embodiment through language that speaks of the self's locational awareness; specifically, the novel deals with the body's capacity for proprioception – the body's sense of wholeness and location, exteroception – the body's ability to sense stimuli originating from outside the body, and interoception – the body's awareness of sensations arising within the body, which includes emotions. By exploiting these diverse capacities of sense, Alameddine makes of the war experience and the AIDS experience palimpsests of each other. Consequently, the effects of the HIV virus and the proliferation of opportunistic infections on the body of the PWA become stand ins or metaphors for the interventions of Syria, Israel, Palestine, and other countries on the Lebanese during the Lebanese Civil War. Thus, *KoolAIDS* stands as an indictment of the global political right's disinterest in and unwillingness to intervene, in the U.S. and most of the world, in the helping and safeguarding of those afflicted by AIDS. The novel is also an indictment of the antagonistic sides that bring suffering to the innocent civilians caught in belligerent conflicts. The ghosts of suffering come back to haunt the body politic.

The second chapter's structure is guided by what I call "quilting," in reference to the NAMES Project quilt. *KoolAIDS*' structure, I argue, is reminiscent

of the NAMES quilt. Like a quilt, the novel contains various segments, each staking out its own space. But these segments are threaded together into one overarching artifact. Therefore, as much as the novel is about these individual segments, it is also about the points of contact that bring each experience together. In presenting these points of contact, the novel calls attention not just to the nearness of experience between AIDS and war, but to a tactile quality whereby each experience touches the others, influencing the perspective one may have of each, helping the reader gain greater access to the overall experience of siege. Alameddine foregrounds the human body as the nexus where all this violence takes place. Like Alameddine's novel, the chapter recognizes the texture of memory by giving equal space to each individual experience considered while also being fully invested in the collective notion of siege.

The third chapter moves away from the study of literary texts into the consideration of the human body proper. Specifically, the chapter approaches the life and work of avant-garde artist Derek Jarman and the influences AIDS and war had on his work, particularly his late artistic output. Diagnosed with AIDS in 1986, Jarman would funnel his anger, fears, and frustrations into films, journals, paintings, gardening, and activism that were fully engaged with combating the conservative regimes that promoted prejudice against PWAs in Britain. The son of a British Air Force pilot, Jarman's life was lived at the intersections between war and AIDS. Born and raised in a Britain under siege during World War II, Jarman would find direct correlation between his family's experience during the

war and his own personal battles against the syndrome. Jarman's meditations recognize the generational effects these disparate events have on individuals, families, and nations.

In his post-1986 films, which include *Last of England* (1988), *War Requiem* (1989), *The Garden* (1990), and *Blue* (1993), Jarman ruminates on the sieges laying waste on his body and the body politic. Conservatism, xenophobia, and homophobia threaten Jarman's generation. The arrival of AIDS on the world stage further magnifies the effects of these threats on Jarman and his peers. Jarman's iconoclastic style uses AIDS as a prism through which he rereads the heroic history of his father's generation. This process reveals some fallacies and dangers contained within narratives of national glory, but it also brings him closer to the experiences of soldiers, civilians, and casualties during The Great War. Jarman captures the sense of siege through a multilayered, multi-sensory plethora of forms: Super 8 film stock that bleed color; industrial electronic soundtracks that drown out voices which are calling for attention; poetic language which carries the haunting presence of the departed. Consequently, AIDS and war assault the senses, leading to an experience of exhaustion and saturation.

In Jarman's body, war and AIDS congeal. That is why this third chapter approaches Jarman himself as a text. His life, as much as his work, becomes the focus of analysis. In order to get closer to Jarman, two frames are simultaneously deployed. First, the image of a garden guides the chapter's structure. Taking inspiration from Jarman's coastal garden and cottage at Dungeness in Kent, England – a garden comprised of found objects usually brought in by the tide –

the chapter arranges each film in isolation as its own artifact, adding details of the artist's life as a way to read each film. Like Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the Body-Without-Organs, each artifact adjoins a greater body, allowing each to work in isolation, but also to work harmoniously when considered together with the rest. The chapter's textual garden eventually takes on the shape of the second guiding frame, the corpus. By using this term as developed by Jean Luc Nancy, I am interested in calling attention to Jarman's artistic body of work and how these separate works, in effect, capture Jarman's working body. Jarman recognized that his prognosis was bleak; therefore, he poured his sensorial experiences into his work, seeking to create appendages through which he could communicate with contemporaries as well as future generations once he departed this world. Jarman's corpus informs the chapter's structure, offering itself up as yet another appendage to his perennial quest.

The texts in this dissertation share in their explorations of the state of siege, its effect on bodies, and the use of our senses to read, analyze, intervene, and potentially halt the effects of the siege. "AIDS," Douglas Crimp reminds us, "does not exist apart from the practices that conceptualize it, represent it, and respond to it. We know AIDS only in and through those practices" (3). Of course, Crimp does not mean to dismiss the actual existence of a virus or to diminish the effect of the illness on those that are exposed to it. What Crimp is highlighting is the way AIDS is structured in public discourse and policy by the way it is defined and put into circulation through language. The dissertation's focus, its emphasis on the sensorial similarities of the AIDS experience with war and its emphasis, in

turn, on the state of siege, represents one unexplored aspect of the practices Crimp is calling attention to. That is why, firstly, this dissertation proposes to conceptualize this peculiar and unexplored phenomenon, the AIDS/War Narrative, seeking to reconfigure the horizons of AIDS and war scholarship by considering, in the following chapters, what these texts have to add to these practices, specifically regarding questions about the senses, bodies, and states of siege. These text demand their own space and analytic methodology; they are not strictly AIDS text or war texts, but, instead, are really about both experiences lived simultaneously. To use anything other than a comparative methodology would be a disservice to the complexity of these texts. A comparative analysis regards this convergence as the defining attribute of the texts explored.

Secondly, much as it considers the thematic convergence of AIDS and war, this dissertation positions itself at the nexus of Disability Studies, phenomenology, and Comparative Literature. Therefore, the dynamic nature of the intersection between AIDS and war informs a similar, equally lively, interaction between a set of disciplines. The interaction of different academic and philosophical areas challenges each to move within spaces conventionally thought of as beyond their respective reaches. In other words, this dissertation inserts the senses into Comparative Literature, demanding a consideration of the senses as material worthy of comparative analysis. Similarly, the methods of Comparative Literature, applied to dis/abilities, broaden the analytical interventions on bodies, the narratives surrounding those bodies, and our understanding of the power of language in constituting the self and its relation to

its body and the bodies of those it interacts with. And finally, as we will see in the subsequent chapters, adjoining phenomenology and dis/abilities, war and AIDS, within a comparative frame respects the polyvalent nature of experience, particularly the experience of siege, setting the stage for a multitude of voices to express the conditions that materialize around them.

CHAPTER I

THE ONE-SYLLABLE FIGURE: CHAOS AND DISORDER IN JUAN

GOYTISOLO'S LAS VIRTUDES DEL PÁJARO SOLITARIO

Pero el sitio continúa y trescientas mil personas siguen atrapadas... sin ninguna posibilidad de huida ni curación a la vista.

(But the siege continues and three hundred thousand souls remain trapped... without the possibilities of an escape or a cure in sight.)
Juan Goytisolo, *El sitio de los sitios*. (my translation)

The basic tool for the manipulation of reality is the manipulation of words. If you can control the meaning of words, you can control the people who must use them.

Philip K. Dick, "How to Build a Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later."

Las virtudes del pájaro solitario (henceforth *Pájaro*) (1988) expands Juan Goytisolo's challenge to the notions of autobiography, journalism, and literature through its disregard of traditional narrative form, language, and reader/writer relationships, all the while showing little interest in a poetics of realism. In their stead the novel offers the reader landscapes, temporalities, and tellings devoid of order. *Pájaro*, which some critics such as Stanley Black and Abigail Lee Six called Goytisolo's most challenging work at the time of its initial publishing, manages to bring together the two otherwise separate realms of war and AIDS into a cohesive textual experience. In disrupting language proper, the Spanish author actually fuses together the material territoriality of conventional warfare with the rhetorical trenches of the war on AIDS and PWAs. My intention in this chapter is to explore this liminal rhetorical space where the experiences of those under siege during modern warfare, caught between the stakes of belligerent

sides, and those under siege by a modern plague characterized as an “epidemic of signification” by Paula Treichler, converge in the form of a shared, repurposed idiomatic territory. The resulting textual space showcases, as we will see, language that is at once phenomenal and sensual. Through the use and abuse of language proper and, more specifically, the language of war, Goytisolo creates a novel that invites our sensorial capabilities into an expanded dialogue about what it means to be under siege.

In her book-long survey of Juan Goytisolo’s *Post-Señas de identidad* experimental work, Abigail Lee Six makes the case for the use of chaos as an analytic approach into the author’s output. She writes,

central to Goytisolo’s mature fiction is a rejection of the principle, ordinarily taken as beyond argument, that order is a fundamentally good thing, irrespective of the quibbles about which types of order may be preferable. And when one stops to ponder over exactly what *order* means, it becomes clear that it has a good deal to do with hierarchies – of values, of people, or whatever.... (9)

In approaching Goytisolo’s literary output, lack of an orderly approach, or chaos as Lee Six defines it in her book, becomes a familiar and even necessary state of inquiry and critique, and, as such, this orientation will influence any reading and its eventual investigative outcome. Given the author’s iconoclastic ethics and intentions, any analysis should avoid attempts at synthesis, instead opting for an approach that is rhizomatic in form and nomadic in movement. Therefore, while attempting a reading of Goytisolo’s novel through the prism of the language of war and how this language speaks both war and HIV/AIDS in(to) representation in his book, this chapter will follow Goytisolo’s ethics of chaos as a structural

choice that informs the malleable and destabilized nature of language as found in the author's work.

An intertextual tour de force, *Pájaro* weaves together various segments that take on topics such as San Juan de la Cruz's persecution on the part of the Calced order of the Carmelites, Cuba's sequestering of PWA's in state-run asylums, and war in various iterations. However, these segments never really add up to a concise, decipherable narrative. The novel, with its multiple threads and rhizomatic structure,¹³ leads the reader astray within a garden of forking paths more daunting than the one found in Borges' famous tale.

Goytisolo has described his literary output as "un campo de maniobras,"¹⁴ (Ruiz Lagos 19),¹⁵ a description that captures the author's militaristic approach to writing, an approach characterized by moves and countermoves. With such a description one can envision the author overlooking his work, moving pieces on a board, plotting out the best strategies to overcome the enemies he is moving against in his literary production. These enemies take on many shapes for Goytisolo: official language, the Spanish literary canon, readerly expectations,

¹³ In an interview with Miguel Riera for the journal *Quimera* (LXXIII 1988, 39), Goytisolo explains that he employs San Juan de la Cruz's *El cántico espiritual* (1619) as well as the poetics of Sufi poetry as the text's structural backbone.

¹⁴ "Campo de maniobras" could be defined in various ways: a training field; a space devoted to military exercises; a military engagement ground. All of these come back to the notion of battle and the preparations needed to engage in some military event. The word "maniobras" itself evokes hands manipulating artifacts, contraptions, matter, or machinery. Therefore, in addition to evoking warfare, "maniobras" linguistically treats war as an art. Therefore, the word captures both the strategic approach and artistry found in Goytisolo's work.

¹⁵ I refer to Helen Lane's English translations of *Las virtudes del pájaro solitario*, *The Virtues of the Solitary Bird* (1991), and *El sitio de los sitios*, *State of Siege* (2008). Translations of all other text throughout the chapter are made by the author.

twentieth century Spanish and world history, and family history represent just a few. Overall, “[h]is writing, always ideologically driven, is infamous for questioning, indeed denigrating, the hegemonic from the margins” (Davis 522-23). With *Pájaro*, Goytisolo adds the status quo and the powerful establishments that reproduce it as additional hegemonic enemies to combat. In *Pájaro*, Goytisolo wages a textual battle in the name of the socially neglected, those subjects on the fringe which in this particular case include PWAs, victims of violence, and subjects caught in between belligerent states.

With *Pájaro*, Goytisolo has constructed a text in flux. Our narrator shifts constantly, from male to female, from one to many, from victim to perpetrator, from body to ghostly entity, from presence to voice. As Lee Six explains, “the narrator’s identity often remains totally impenetrable and susceptible, therefore, to multiple readings” (203). The effect is “a state of ultimate fluidity; gone are the spectacular metamorphoses from one fixed narrator-identity to another and instead we have only total freedom of movement of the narrative voice” (203). The spaces inhabited also remain out of reach in what approximate Marc Augé’s notion of non-places.¹⁶ The novel moves through various locations, including a theater, a hotel lobby, a library, a hospital, and a jail cell; all of these locations represent non-places which subsequently share and retain, though not without problematizations, some of the defining qualities of the spaces that precede and

¹⁶ In *Non-Lieux: Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité* (1992), Augé defines non-lieux, or non-places, as locations that lack the defining qualities of identifiable spaces, such as the possibility for identity, relations, and history. A non-place remains forever out of reach from concrete definitions. Augé offers spaces like the airport and the electric escalator as examples of non-places.

follow each. The text proper is also on the move, lacking the conventions of good prose and composition; gone are writerly traits like capitalization, punctuation, and paragraph breaks on which readers depend for a readerly experience. What the reader is left with are words upon words, stacked in a manner that resembles shrapnel and debris. The reader must work to decipher the evidence. Language as a dependable vessel of sense-making loses its bearings in *Pájaro*; words take on different meanings at various points. All in all, Goytisolo's novel is a text that challenges the Western realist tradition's expectations of understandability and readability.

Looking at the novel's modus operandi, I argue that it responds to a need to challenge what had been, up to that point, the structure and narrative expectations of the AIDS novel as defined in the introduction to the present study. In *Pájaro*, Goytisolo employs stylistics and tendencies one finds in his stories devoted to armed conflict. For Goytisolo, the AIDS crisis, in hindsight, shares similar experiences of siege as those found in war narratives. His characters find themselves under constant threat of violence, outside representation, and effacement. Why does Goytisolo, who had devoted and who would continue to devote so much of his work to bellicose situations – work that includes the lingering effects of the Spanish Civil War in his trilogy comprised of *Señas de identidad* (1966), *Reivindicación del conde don Julián* (1970), and *Juan sin tierra* (1975); the First Gulf War in *La Cuarentena* (1991); and the Bosnian war in *El*

sitio de los sitios (1995) as well as his journalistic work for *El País*¹⁷ – opt for a narrative that takes on the AIDS crisis as a core element of its telling? Part of the reason, I believe, stems from a need to make *sense*. My use of the word *sense* here is twofold. First, I mean to call attention to the need for meaning-making expressed in both the experience of war and in the experience of being a PWA, a faculty which, at least for Goytisolo, language has all but lost. As Randolph D. Pope has noted, in *Pájaro*, “every word points to experiences which language cannot completely grasp: death, love, violence, and transcendence” (139). Second, by foregrounding the word *sense* I wish to draw attention to the sensorial connections which, as I hope to show in this chapter, will ultimately serve as the ideal links for communication of the experience of siege. Thus, for my purposes here, *sense*, i.e. the senses, becomes an alternative manner of expression, a language onto itself. Part of the experience captured is characterized by a sense of entrapment as expressed in the epigraph to this chapter, a sense Goytisolo brings together in his treatment of warfare and infection as analogous sensual experiences.

A lot has been made about the novel’s hermeticism. Critics have written about the impossible task of breaching or even comprehending the novel’s spatiotemporal core. For example, according to Manuel Ruiz Lagos, the text is “nomadic,” i.e. always unstable, always on the move. In other words, there seems to be no narrative thread or unifying pattern that could be teased from the

¹⁷ Goytisolo’s essays for *El País*, which deal with wars in Sarajevo, Algeria, Gaza and Chechnya, were compiled under the title *Cuadernos de Sarajevo* (1993) and later translated into English by Peter Bush for the book *Landscapes of War: From Sarajevo to Chechnya* (2000).

bulk of the text. Voices and characters are constantly redefined (the narrator can go from first person to third person, “he” becomes “she” and vice versa, characters assume different identities or take on traits earlier attributed to other characters). In utilizing war; sexual, religious, and ideological persecution; and AIDS as vectors in his text, Goytisolo seemingly never achieves a cohesiveness in terms of a topical focus; but the truth is, he does not want to. This lack of cohesiveness leads Lee Six to define the novel as possessing an “esquizofrenia colectiva” (“collective schizophrenia”; 197), a definition that, while seeking to define the novel’s polyphony, threatens to reduce it to an “experimental” (read “postmodern”) work intent on destroying or at least denying the conventional modes of communication and nothing more.

Such approaches wave the flag of defeat, acting as if one could only reach the novel’s supposed kernel of truth by gaining access to a missing Rosetta Stone-like key. For my part I propose that if we approach the scenarios through the prism of mental and physical experiences of siege as captured by the text’s language – a language that invokes the senses – we abandon the need for a cohesive meaning and, instead, meet the text at the level of *making sense*, thus giving precedence to a shared experience governed by the senses.

Consequently, the commingling of disparate venues, identities, experiences, and temporalities becomes less a matter of epistemic enquiry and more about phenomenal apprehension. When *making sense* guides the reading of *Pájaro*, political refugees, civilians, San Juan de la Cruz, and PWAs all communicate the sentiments of insecurity and anxiety that come with being subjected to the threat

of a violent takeover. Goytisolo provides somewhat of a clue for such a focus during an interview with Emir Rodríguez Monegal. In it he states,

Si antes podía crear o intentar crear una literatura moral y buscar una armonía dentro de esta creación, a partir de ahora busco una literatura *conflictiva*, de *desgarro*, una literatura que sea realmente problemática, que no busque la armonía, que busque la contradicción. (emphasis added, 52)

If in the past I could create or try to create a moral literature and attempt to find some harmony within the created text, from this point forward I seek a *conflictive* literature, a literature of *disruption*, a literature that is truly problematic, that doesn't seek harmony, but instead looks for contradictions.

After *Señas de identidad*, Goytisolo becomes intent on exploring the conflictive, destructive elements of history, politics, and culture in various locales, but always with a perceptive eye that seeks connections to his personal origins in Franco's Spain and his family's tyrannical connections to Cuba.¹⁸

Stanley Black has noted this shift in concerns in Goytisolo's work:

In the post-*Señas* period he abandons the classic role of the humanist intellectual, characterized, one might say, by a sense of belonging to and forming an integral part of society, while at the same time maintaining a critical eye on its injustices and defects, and espouses a concept of the intellectual as a *marginado*, an individualist, an anarchic rebel and non-conformist, opposed to everything that is represented by established society and championing the cause of all those groups which are denied a place in that society. This intellectual stance becomes translated into an aesthetic posture of total subversion of all that constitutes conventional society. (3)

In his work Goytisolo uses this *marginado*, the marginalized subject, as an emblem of those on the fringes of society mentioned above. Unwanted, seen as

¹⁸ Starting with Goytisolo's great-grandfather in the 19th century, the Goytisolo clan owned plantations in Cuba. Goytisolo, in *Coto vedado* (1985), reveals the connections of his family name and fortune to the exploitation of slaves on the island. This connection haunts him and his siblings still.

a threat, inhabiting non-places while also being labeled a non-person, the *marginado* is the object of society's disdain, a society that attacks and excludes them from being, that is, from even staking a claim to their own embodied and present self and sense of enfranchisement. Physically and rhetorically subject to violence, the *marginado* lives under perpetual threat, under siege, as the body and the mind absorb every form of punishment. In *Pájaro*, moreover, these otherwise alien experiential states of war and AIDS find in a textual venue what Yannick Llored defines as “un ilimitado territorio de la duda y amenaza” (“an unlimited territory of doubt and threat”; 11). Viewed in this context, war, AIDS, and their different experiences can be bridged through the figure of the *marginado*, those persons under attack by their immediate surroundings due to the fact that they serve as scapegoats on which those in power can enact anything from revenge, to determent, to symbolic cleansing, all in an effort to either gain more power or retain whatever power they have already attained. Let us take a closer look at *Pájaro* to get a better sense on how Goytisolo employs the *marginado* within the novel's territories of doubt and threat, starting with a quick explanation of the title and moving on to the characters the title is meant to signal for the reader.

The novel starts backstage in what appears to be a theater. Various “females” move through the dressing areas, either in preparation for or following a performance of a dance or play. Goytisolo uses “nosotras,” the feminine form of the first person plural pronoun, to speak of the individuals present within the scene. The novel's title, *Las virtudes del pájaro solitario*, calls attention to the

main type of identity the narrative intends to represent in its telling. First, the word *pájaro* in the title is a reference to both Christian and Sufi theology. It is believed that San Juan de la Cruz wrote a text entitled *Propiedades del pájaro solitario* (*The Properties of the Solitary Bird*) which was lost (more likely swallowed) during the saint's persecution (Pope 146). Second, the title is also a reference to *The Conference of the Birds*, a thirteen-century mystical poem by Farid Ud-Din Attar that narrates the story of thirty birds who join in search of the king of all birds. They believe in the existence of the Simurg, the great bird, and start a quest to find it only to realize once they reach their destination that they are all the Simurg; this ideal bird was present within each and every one of them all along.

But aside from these intertextual references, the word *pájaro* also represents a word used in Cuba and other Spanish-speaking countries to identify homosexual men. Therein lies the reason why I have placed the word “females” in quotation marks.¹⁹ Therefore, this “she” under siege should be read simultaneously as a female in a male-dominated world and as a homosexual male in a heterosexual, male-dominated world. The flexibility of the word becomes apparent the more the reader engages in the novel, something that becomes evident in passages like the one that follows:

ademanes y frases inanes cuyo objeto era añadir un toque de perfección a la escena emulando en subir el tono de voz, subrayara el circunflejo sombrío de las cejas, curvar el meñique

¹⁹ Throughout this chapter I will call attention to Goytisolo's problematizing use of gendered language with the use of quotation marks. This serves to provide a reading that simultaneously includes both characterizations of those who are identified as female and those that are gay males.

enjoyado con rigor de espolón, desplegar enfáticamente el abanico como majas en mantilla en una barrera, cubrir en fin con el coqueteo de nuestra histeria el zumbido obsesivo de los altavoces que nos *sitiaban*, consignas de evacuación, *toque de queda*, referencias ominosas a la *epidemia*, isótopos radioactivos, yodo 131, saturación tiroideal, rayos gamma (emphasis added, 21)

inane gestures and phrases whose object was to add a touch of perfection to the scene, vying with each other in raising the tone of our voices, accentuating the dark circumflex of our eyebrows, curving our bejeweled little finger with the stiffness of a rooster's spur, emphatically opening our fans like beauties in mantillas in the first row at the bullring, finally drowning out with our coquettish hysteria the obsessive drone of the loudspeakers that besieged us, evacuation orders, curfew, ominous references to the epidemic, radioactive isotopes, iodine 131, thyroid saturation, gamma rays (*Virtues 22*)

The theater sequence starts *in medias res* as a narrating voice talks to a group (presumably including the reader) about the first "incident." The narrator brushes off questions about the exact time and date of the "incident," explaining that such details can only prove misleading:

vaya preguntas después de tanto tiempo, como si quisierais revivir los minutos que precedieron al hongo deslumbrador de Hiroshima o la sepultura de Pompeya o Herculano, no había grabadoras ni vídeos, esas cosas, hijitas, ocurren así por las buenas, como el desvirgue de la sota de bastos! (10)

it's no use asking questions after all this time, as though you'd like to relive the minutes preceding the blinding mushroom of Hiroshima or the burial of Pompeii or Herculaneum, there weren't any tape recorders or video cassettes, things like that, dearies, just happen, the way a brazen hussy loses her cherry! (*Virtues 11-12*)

The "incident"²⁰ in question at this particular moment is the arrival of a ghostly, dark figure, dressed in garb that reads as a mixture of scarecrow and crow traits.

²⁰ The "incident" takes on many forms, some of which include Goytisoló's coming out as a gay man to his family and the family's banishment of his uncle after finding out that the latter was having a relationship with an underage Goytisoló. Personal and fictive events intersperse throughout the novel as in many of the author's other works.

The narrator focuses on the lugubrious details of the apparition: the immense shoes; the thin, long legs; the hollow eyes; the disheveled hair; the long shroud that trails the specter; and a hat that is believed to recall and mimic the flight of crows. The spectacle takes away any inkling of sound from those present, who find themselves unable to utter a single word. “[P]uro silencio, todo suspendido al movimiento plomizo de su calzado” (“silence, sheer silence, everything stopped dead by the leaden movement of its footgear”; 13; Lane 11). What follows this initial irruption is a series of repetitions of these same details and subsequent reactions to the apparition. Everything plays out as a rehearsal of the experience in an effort to understand the details and its totality, which seemingly remain out of reach of the narrator; the senses process the stimuli in an endless loop. The entire experience proves traumatic, as the narrator explains,

estábamos atrapadas, hijitas, no podíamos resollar ni movernos, la tan temida había pasado del ámbito de nuestras pesadillas a encarnar aquella alegoría de la calva sembrando la cizaña, negro sombrero de las alas anchas, faz velada, capa con vuelos de mortaja, extremidades filiformes, zuecos lentos, macizos, de poderosa gravitación. (12)

we were trapped, my dears, we couldn’t breathe or move, the one we had so greatly feared had passed from the ambit of our nightmares to embody that allegory of the bald woman sowing discord, black broad-brimmed hat, veiled face, cape with the loose folds of a shroud, filiform extremities, heavy, bulky clogs, of enormous gravitational force. (*Virtues* 14)

The figure becomes many things, all of which *feel* equally threatening mainly because of its embodied status, its “encarnación” (“incarnation”). “She” is “la Aparecida” (“the Apparition”), “un organismo flácido y descompuesto” (“a flaccid and decomposed organism”), “la intrusa” (“the intruder”), “la

zancuda” (“She, the long-legged one”), “el Horror” (“Horror”)(11-13; *Virtues* 13-15). “Her” actions are described as “las plagas del final del milenio” (“the plagues at the end of the millenium”) and “la sentencia” (“the sentence”)(12-13; *Virtues* 14-15). With just one movement of “her” finger, “she” brings death: “apuntaba a venerables togadas y gladiadores recios, arrojaba sus figurillas humanas al suelo...” (“it pointed at venerable ones clad in togas and strong gladiators, flung its little human figures on the floor”; 13; *Virtues* 15). The place turns into a “mansión condenada” (“condemned mansion”; 12; *Virtues* 14), where everything reminds the narrator of “los filmes de los campos de exterminio” (“the films on the extermination camps”; 13, *Virtues* 16). Within this *mansión condenada*, death takes on the form of repetition, an embodied repetition at that. Goytisolo creates an echo chamber where voices and experiences bounce off the walls within a non-place that reads like a purgatory. As a result, Sodom and Gomorrah, the Holocaust, wars and other *eschatons* become magnifications of each other. Gladiators and the condemned will equally fall in this space, falls that are reminiscent of each other.

In addition to being all the things mentioned above, the ghostly figure is identified by yet another abstract trait. Initially it is mentioned that this specter can be identified by “siglas,” initials or an acronym. This nomenclature, apparently “inventada por los periodistas,” (“invented by newspaper reporters”; 19; *Virtues* 20) causes the sequestering of the inhabitants of the theater in that same space on the part of the government. This “Dama de las dos sílabas” (“the Lady with the one-syllable name”; 22; *Virtues* 24) can only be AIDS, *Sida* in Spanish. The

affliction itself is never named in the novel, as if its utterance were a prohibited act or a summoning of the specter in dark clothing (indirectly there are mentions of a Arabic poet by the name of Ben Sida,²¹ as well as a passing mention of the Vel d’Hiv.²² More on the latter below). The theater becomes, during the first segment, a location under siege by the outside world because of its association with the two syllables. Our narrator explains,

no podíamos salir de aquel espacio acotado, la ficción de un jardín de reposo con sillones, hortensias y vistas marítimas, el sueño compensatorio de un hotel con aires a balneario, forzadas a mantener las apariencias de dignidad y nobleza que nos imponía la desgracia, todo era fachada.... (19-20)

we were not able to leave that precisely bounded space, the fiction of a pleasure-garden with chairs, pots of hydrangeas and sea views, the compensatory dream of a hotel with the air of a beach resort, obliged to maintain the appearances of dignity and nobility forced upon us by misfortune, everything was a façade.... (*Virtues* 20-21)

This particular explanation recalls the official policy of the Cuban government during the early years of the AIDS epidemic on the island country, where anyone with the affliction or even suspected of having it would be forcibly sent to a “sanatorio” (“sanitarium”) where they would live out the rest of their existence.

These sanatorios provided shelter and food at no cost; however, those who entered its walls knew they would never leave its premises.

²¹ For a detailed analysis on the numerous references to AIDS evoked in Goytisolo’s novel, see Ribeiro de Menezes, Alison. *Juan Goytisolo: The Author as Dissident*. Tamesis, 2005.

²² Vel D’Hiv is short for Vélodrome D’Hiver, the name of a velodrome and sporting event facility located in France. In 1942, under the orders of the Nazis, French police rounded up over 13,000 Jews at the Vel D’Hiv. From there, the detainees were packed into trains and sent to the death camps in Auschwitz, Germany where the majority were murdered. The Vel D’Hiv would burn down in a fire in 1959.

The simulacra, the *fachada* or façade, hides a landscape of destruction and rubble, a landscape that captures the turmoil occurring in the body and the psyche of those trapped:

habíamos renunciado con tino a cualquier reclamación, batir palmas o tocar el timbre desconectado, vivíamos en un vacío de campana neumática, pasados los telones, bastidores y muros de cartón piedra se extendía un territorio ignoto infestado de peligros.... (20)

we had sensibly given up making any sort of request, clapping our palms together or ringing the disconnected call bell, we lived amid the vacuum of a bell jar, once past curtains, stage flats and papier-mâché walls there was an unknown territory infested with dangers.... (*Virtues* 21)

The description here echoes the type of details one would find in a war narrative, starting with the uncertainty of what lies beyond the threshold of a shelter or a trench. Moreover, the description mimics similar descriptions found in Goytisolo's novel about the siege in Sarajevo, *El sitio de los sitios*. In that novel, Goytisolo writes,

Atrincherados en sus domicilios, los habitantes del distrito se preguntaban, con angustia y culpabilidad crecientes, las causas de su castigo. Qué crimen habían cometido para ser sometidos a un asedio tan bárbaro? Por qué los trataban como negros indocumentados, integristas, *sidosos* o yonquis? (emphasis added, 69).

Barricaded in their homes, the residents of the district pondered, with growing anxiety and feelings of guilt, the possible causes of the punishment that had befallen them. What crime had they committed to be subjected to such a barbarous siege? Why were they being treated like Africans without papers, Islamists, AIDS sufferers, or junkies? (*State* 51)

In the preceding passage Goytisolo merges the realms of war and AIDS into a sustained space of menace. The stunting of the body in both passages, as

evoked in the aural notion of “puro silencio,” speaks of the arresting quality of the experience as stimuli are apprehended. While *Pájaros* is a veiled story about AIDS,²³ the author’s stylistic choices insist on the bellicose details of the experience. At one point a narrator in the theater segment compares the treatment they are subjected to to that of the Jews under Nazism, noting how it all resembled “los viejos filmes sobre el Vel d’Hiv que tanto nos hicieron llorar años atrás” (“the old films about the Vel d’Hiv that had made us shed so many tears years before;” 29; *Virtues* 28). The reference here is meant not only to recall the historical roundup of Jews at the French stadium by Nazis, but serves as another reference to AIDS by providing the reader with a passing (textual) glance at the virus that causes it, still avoiding direct reference to the process, as if only ghosts remain to haunt history. Passing references like the preceding one remind one of Judith Butler’s notion of framing. In *Frames of War*, Butler explains that, when “versions of reality are excluded or jettisoned to a domain of unreality, [...] specters are produced that haunt the ratified version of reality, animated and de-ratifying traces” (xiii). Whereas in *Sitios* Goytisolo uses specters to remind the reader of the exclusion practiced by society on its enemies, in *Pájaro* the author does the same as it pertains to the so-called *sidosos*, the ones who threaten to

²³ In an often cited interview with Miguel Riera for the journal *Quimera* (Vol. LXXIII (1988), 36), Goytisolo describes the sleight-of-hand manner in which he imbues the novel with the specter of AIDS. Aside from haunting the text with the presence of the “one-syllable figure,” Goytisolo explains that the mention of Ben Sida in the novel functions as a “retorno de lo reprimido,” (the return of the repressed). Goytisolo adds, “El personaje no quiere mencionar la enfermedad que tiene y lo hace indirectamente dando ese nombre a un profesor árabe” (The character [involved in one scene] does not want to mention the illness he has, so he does so by mentioning the name of a writer to his Arab professor; 40). In the same way, references to AIDS are scattered throughout the text, but AIDS itself remains unmentioned.

infect society's salvageable members, by recalling prior histories of persecution perpetrated in the name of enlightened society.

Meanwhile, outside of the theater the population has flooded the streets condemning the people sequestered within. The reader hears about messages delivered through loudspeakers, public service radio and television announcements urging the non-infected to remain non-infected, and “anuncios de medidas draconianas tocante a la higiene” (“announcements of draconian measures concerning hygiene;” 20; *Virtues* 21). The power of the state and its structures of communication are employed, as mentioned above, to separate the unwanted segment of the population from those that “need protecting.”

Juxtaposed against these messages, the reader is presented with a list of the day-to-day proceedings inside the theater. As the narrator says, all of these acts are there to continue the semblance of normalcy. Having established the physical space and activities within the theater, the text turns outward to the state of siege in which the “pájaros” find themselves. Sound, fear, and insecurity threaten the lives of the “pájaros.” They have become patients, carriers, and must remain confined, respect the “toque de queda” while accepting this state of siege as the new normal. Clearly, we are not dealing with an armed force but with a segment of society labeled as other. And yet, Goytisolo opts for the language of any bellicose conflict. Even when the siege enters a lull, the narrator expects the hostilities to restart: “vivíamos otra vez entre corchetes, momentáneamente amnistiadas o era el comienzo de una nueva y difusa agresión como la que nos había mudado en fantasmas” (“were we living between parentheses once again,

granted a temporary amnesty or was it the beginning of a vague new aggression like the one that had turned us into ghosts;” 21; *Virtues 22*)? These “ghostly” others represent that segment outside the Law which Roberto Esposito identifies as *the sacrifice* in his book *Immunitas* (2002).

In his book, Esposito meditates on how the Law as a governing body of ideological controls employs violence as its tool, thus guaranteeing that social conscription goes hand in hand with its chosen collective ideology. Expanding on Walter Benjamin’s notion that “all violence as a means is either lawmaking or law-preserving,” Esposito writes, “Rather than being limited to coming before or after law, violence actually accompanies it, or rather, violence constitutes law through its trajectory, in a pendular movement that swings from force to power and back again from power to force” (29). Finding themselves sequestered outside of their own society, “outside of the law,” these *fantasmas* feel violence; they turn into scapegoats, as I have called them above, punished in the hope of restoring order. As Esposito explains, “What is threatening to the law is not violence, therefore, but its “outside”: the fact that such a thing as “outside the law” exists at all, that the law does not encompass all things, that something evades its grasp” (30). What we confront in Goytisolo’s novels, particularly *Pájaro*, is the moment “When violence is simply moved from outside to inside the law” (30), the moment when violence turns into “a passage inside the law, its black box, so to speak” and when “law is nothing but a passage inside violence, or its rationalization” (31). If as Catherine Waldby has proposed “[d]eclarations of epidemic are declarations of war” (1), then the *fantasmas* inhabit or haunt a

space inside and outside the law simultaneously; a phantom limb that has been amputated from the body politic, at once feeling but simultaneously prevented from feeling. Judith Butler uses the notion of “framing” to define a similar inclusion/exclusion dynamic: “one is framed, which means one is accused, but also judged in advance, without valid evidence and without any obvious means of redress” (11). The State, consequently, justifies its own internal siege, like an immune system seeking to rid itself of unwanted organisms. That is how the *pájaros* can find themselves sequestered inside a space physically while at the same time experience the exclusion reserved for *marginados*.

If for some reason the reader is as of yet unaware of the condition in which the infected find themselves, Goytisolo eliminates any doubt when he writes, “no había escapatoria alguna, estábamos en el interior de la nasa y el volumen creciente de los altavoces corroboraba la inexorabilidad del *asedio...*” (“there was no way out, we were caught in the net and the increasing volume of the loudspeakers confirmed the relentlessness of the siege;” emphasis added, 22; *Virtues* 23). “*Nos sitiaban,*” “*toque de queda,*” “*agresión,*” “*asedio:*” AIDS for Goytisolo represents a perpetual state of siege, where those singled out experience the “‘felt’ phenomenology”²⁴ of war. Physically, war threatens bodies with violence. War reaches out and touches those it wants to destroy, either killing, mutilating or maiming individuals and communities. But war also threatens through language; war threatens through orders, speech acts, interdictions, and

²⁴ Here I am using Mark Paterson’s notion of “felt phenomenology” wherein “touching” or “feeling” become both a physical act as well as a metaphoric act. See Paterson, Mark. *The Senses of Touch: Haptics, Affects and Technologies*. Berg, 2007.

declarations. War reaches out and touches its victims in word, often before it actually reaches out and touches them through bullets, mines, and bombs. Hence, the body and the mind go through a phenomenal experience that touches them through the act and the word; the word captures that act, turning into its avatar as both a weapon and a scar, the evidence of its own damage.

In Goytisolo's work, "the text [functions] as contagion" (Black 213). Speaking of another of Goytisolo's war narratives, *El sitio de los sitios*, Stanley Black notes how "[s]peaking of *El sitio*, Goytisolo expressed the hope that the book is "una cura, o por lo menos un contagio al lector de la sensación del asedio" ("a cure, or at least a something that contaminates the reader with sensation of siege;" 233).²⁵ Such a contradictory statement reveals a good deal about Goytisolo's methodology, about his poetics of chaos. Language for Goytisolo represents a problematic vessel that needs to be destroyed or, at the very least, subverted. In *Crónicas sarracinas* (1981) the author opined that "la persistencia de determinadas contradicciones a lo largo de la obra de un autor puede ser un índice revelador de su profunda coherencia interna" ("the prevalence of purposeful contradictions throughout the author's work may be a revelatory index of a profound internal coherence;" 31). Black has also noted that Goytisolo espouses the belief that "la negación de un sistema intelectualmente

²⁵ Goytisolo has expressed that his non-fiction did not "infect" the public. It put the writer on the side of the shooters and gunners. He even called himself a sniper during a 1967 interview with Rodríguez Monegal (*Mundo Nuevo* 60). Subsequently in various interviews at the time of publication of *Sitio de sitios* (including one with Emma Rodríguez in *El Mundo* (Nov 18, 1995), he spoke about the problems inherent in this earlier position in his career. Therefore, he saw *Pájaro*, *Sitios*, and his subsequent oeuvre as an opportunity to infect the reader. Fiction, for him, is a way to break with that stasis and infect the reader with the sensation of siege.

opresor comienza necesariamente con la negación de su estructura semántica.’ On another occasion Goytisolo added: ‘no se puede descodificar la realidad sin descodificar el lenguaje’ (“the rejection of an intellectually oppressive system necessarily starts with the rejection of its semantic structure.’ On another occasion Goytisolo added: ‘one cannot decode reality without decoding language;’” Black 8). Therefore, the text and its embedded contradictions are meant to disrupt our conventional modes of understanding, thus demanding that the reader participate in the act of *making sense*. In *Pájaros*, contradictions serve as revelations which grant opportunities to subvert the systems of language, war, and sickness. In other words, contradictions reveal symptoms of the contagion Goytisolo is working towards, a contagion that seeps into the reader’s “readerly” experience of *Pájaros*, bringing them into contact with the *marginado*.

As I have mentioned above, the text remains in flux and this movement takes over those details which would normally serve as narrative and character expectations. The echo chamber created brings with it echoes that demand attention from the reader; Llored defines these echoes as “rupturas, distanciamientos, y diferencias que la interpretación del lector tiene que aprehender para crear significaciones y acercarse a la alteridad del lenguaje del autor” (“ruptures, alienations, and differences which the reader must interpret in order to create meanings and get closer to the author’s language of alterity;” 30). The echoes contained within, I argue, help make the unfamiliar a seemingly familiar experience. Early in the novel, the group of pájaros witnesses the slow death of la Seminarista. Very little explanation accompanies this character; we

never fully know who “she” is or gain access to “her” appearance. Nevertheless, “she” becomes a spectacle to the other confined pájaros. Still located within the theatrical space, locational details start to shift to those of a hotel and a hospital. La Seminarista exhibits buboes and is, according to the narrator, “cociéndose en la hediondez de su propia baba” (“stewing in her own slime;” 34; *Virtues* 33). The pájaros demand that the doctors and nurses keep la Seminarista alive in order to extend their enjoyment of “her” death. The entire scene plays out like a comedy with the pájaros laughing hysterically within, while on the outside the masses are still clamoring for the punishment of the sick inside. The narrator explains in detail how the entire scene takes place on a proscenium, for the viewing pleasure of the audience witnessing the event. And as the cruelty heightens, the body of La Seminarista takes on the traits of a victim in the throes of death, a body that can equally be that of an injured soldier, a civilian casualty, or a PWA:

la visperina recibía el castigo que merecía, la cotidiana figuración de su agonía les hacía olvidar las desgracias, anda, sigue, la jaleaban, multiplica sus bubas, hincha su faz de medusa, redúcela a una masa de gelatina, queremos ver cómo estalla. (35)

the viperess was getting the punishment she deserved, the daily depiction of her death agony made them forget their misfortunes, go ahead, they urge her on, multiply her buboes, swell her medusa-face, reduce it to a mass of gelatine, we want to see how she explodes! (*Virtues* 34)

The body never fully explodes, but the reader is led to understand that la Seminarista eventually dies. However, her death is left without finality in the passage itself, as if the author is calling on us to join in on the spectacle, as part of the audience taking pleasure in the event.

The text *touches* the reader, “lo(/la) contagia.²⁶” In the act of “witnessing,” the reader becomes “contagiado” by the spectacle. Throughout, a pane of glass separates the audience from *la Seminarista*, creating a distancing effect. We experience an echo of an echo. Outside, the State, through the masses, calls for the death of those labeled dangerous, while inside the pájaros themselves partake of a death spectacle with their own sacrifice. The reader is constantly reminded of this separation; we are the masses seeking a cure for our desires but we are simultaneously infected by the textual instability of the spaces and identities contained. In other words, the reader joins the masses clamoring for the punishment of the sick, all the while being part of the sick themselves.

The focus on an exploding body during this episode reveals another echo pertinent to Goytisolo’s goals. For the author, the body itself serves as a stand-in for the landscape of war and vice versa. Mutilated bodies litter the author’s works in the same insistent manner that pocked-marked buildings and roadways do. Such connections seek to bring the reader into direct contact with these experiences by way of recognizable visual markers. Alison Ribeiro de Menezes sheds light on this peculiar trait in the Goytisolian literary universe:

In (Goytisolo’s non-fiction account of the war in Bosnia) *Cuaderno de Sarajevo*, the city is similarly depicted as a wounded body, crumbling and decaying while the so-called civilized world looks on. It is ‘lleno de heridas, mutilaciones, vísceras, llagas aún

²⁶ There is a slight difference between the words “contagiar” and “infectar.” The latter usually speaks of bacterial or viral agents invading a body. The former speaks more of the transmission of a sickness proper, but can also be used idiomatically to speak of other traits being transferred from body to body. For example, laughter is contagious. I have opted for the Spanish verb here given the absence of an equivalent in English. The use of “contagia” also permits the continuation of the notion of communicating phenomenally through the bodily senses.

supurantes, sobrecogedoras cicatrices'. But, anticipating his desire to 'contaminate' the reader of *Sitio* with his own sense of the injustice of the West's reaction to the Bosnian war, Goytisolo goes on, in *Cuaderno*, to suggest that Sarajevo is metaphorically contagious, with its 'carretas plagadas de hoyuelos de viruela' (p. 23, my italics).

The experience of living with its inhabitants for even a few days wounds the traveller to the very quick. 'Nadie puede salir indemne de un descenso al infierno de Sarajevo,' he says. 'La tragedia de la ciudad se convierte al corazón, y tal vez al cuerpo entero de quien la presencia, en una bomba presta a estallar en las zonas de seguridad moral de los directa o indirectamente culpables, allí donde pueda causar mayor daño' (p. 106). The intention is that the *Cuaderno* should 'wound' its readers, exploding like an incendiary device in their hearts and souls and moving them to ethical action. (136-137)

Goytisolo lays the groundwork for a reversal in which the readers start the event as spectators but end in the position of the *marginado*. The text manages to *contagiar* the reader, eventually transferring the experience of the exploding body onto them. It is the reader, not La Seminarista, who in the end "explodes," in heart and mind, as a consequence of exposure to the text.

Throughout the text, the reader is summoned to feel what is felt by the pájaros, that "sensación del asedio" mentioned above. It is this sensation that is reiterated, *ad nauseum*, for the entirety of the novel. A repetition literally "unto sickness" disturbs the reader, who is, in fact, meant to feel sick on contact. The echoes continue to haunt the text, as is the case in the third segment, which mainly takes place in a monastic space. The informed reader is supposed to associate this space with San Juan de la Cruz. "[C]omo en un sueño dentro de un sueño dentro de un sueño," ("as in a dream within a dream within a dream;" 77; *Virtues* 71) the segment serves as a center of sorts in the novel. The man of

faith inhabiting this space starts the segment sequestered in a dungeon inside the monastery, isolation within isolation. The man is placed there by a rival religious order, much as de la Cruz was held against his will by the Calced Carmelites for preaching, the latter determined, against their orthodox teachings and supporting St. Teresa of Ávila in her quest to reform the order in the 16th Century. A flashback, in the voice of a third person narrator who is by all accounts a scholar of San Juan de la Cruz's history (Goytisolo?), narrates the saint's efforts to shred and swallow a composition of his that would bring the ire of representatives of the Calced order, who are in that instant outside of his chamber laying siege on him in an effort to find the evidence. This attack shares the still-echoing sounds of the outside world by way of an anachronistic reference to a soccer game taking place at a nearby stadium.

Sound at this juncture carries great importance, demanding the reader's attention and participation. Sound seeps into the cell, haunting San Juan de la Cruz, the monastic space, the novel, and the reader. The narrator ascribes the sounds coming from outside to an "organismo único, de reacciones simultáneas y concordantes" ("a single organism, with simultaneous and concordant reactions;" 77; *Virtues* 71). I would argue that this detailed description of the source of the sound provides the dimensions that *embody*, i.e. *give body to*, the novel and the identities depicted. It is one thing to see such a description as applicable to the text proper if we consider the novel as a single cohesive tome that gathers a multitude of responses to persecution. But a more telling assessment would be that the sound calls attention to our capacity for

intersubjective appreciation, a notion I borrow from Edmund Husserl. For Husserl, “[t]he Objective world has existence by virtue of a harmonious confirmation of the appreciative constitution..., a confirmation thereof by the continuance of experiencing life with a consistent harmoniousness...” (125-26). The Objective world exists not only in each individual’s sensorial capacity to apprehend the qualities that the world communicates, but in our collective apprehension and eventual communication of the information individually perceived. In other words, the subject belongs to a community that evolves in the way it apprehends phenomena, building and preserving an archive of *sense-making*, an archive from which each individual benefits. Intersubjectivity, as Husserl terms it, represents the capacity on the part of the individual to be one and many. This is achieved in the construction of an ideal *I* that resides in all, a concept in itself reminiscent of the Simurg.

The accentuation of the body and its potential for experiential connectivity invites the recognition of a collective experiential archive. As William Hutson, writing about Husserl, explains,

Empathy is based on the similarity between bodies. This similarity motivates a transfer, through which the other is encountered as having perceptions and experiences analogous to one’s own subjectivity. My body and the other’s body are given in a continuous context of reciprocity. (158)

The description of the sound as an “organismo único de reacciones simultáneas y concordantes” bridges many perceived experiential gaps between the soldier, the civilian, the PWA, and other identities participating in the theater of “war,” providing intersecting coordinates to these diverse experiences. In Goytisolo’s

novel, the resulting body, the “organismo único,” coalesces war and AIDS into one total experience that transcends time, space, and isolation. The importance of the unique organism – its capacity for intersubjective apprehension and the reciprocity of experience – becomes evident as the episode continues. While inside his chamber, our narrator comments on the increasing rumors about a “desastre” that is taking place beyond the walls. The “desastre” echoes in the reader’s mind as a reminder of the “incident” mentioned earlier in the novel. The “desastre” – “[M]il muertes llevaba ya tragadas para salir de la cárcel del cuerpo” (“he had already gone through a thousand deaths so as to leave the prison of the body;” 81; *Virtues* 75), “especulaciones sobre la plaga misteriosa que infectaba algunos barrios de la ciudad” (“speculations as to the mysterious plague that was infecting certain quarters of the city;” 81-82; *Virtues* 75-76) – is directly tied to a contagion. However, the nature of this contagion during this particular episode is not fully defined.

During the episode, the man of faith takes note of the treatment he is receiving on the part of his captors. The one who brings the prisoner food “usaba guantes de enfermero y se cubría el rostro con una mascarilla” (“wore nurse’s gloves and had his face covered with a gauze mask;” 82; *Virtues* 76). Everyone avoids touching the man of faith, just as they avoid touching other prisoners and those who are being taken to the nearby stadium. Those at the stadium are there to be isolated for being ill, assassinated for spreading ideas that go against the ruling power. As Yannick Llored reminds us, during de la Cruz’s time the Catholic Church’s *autos de fe* would amass more than twenty thousand people at a public

square so they could witness the expiation of those declared guilty or ill by the church, hence the inclusion of the stadium “representa para todas las épocas el lugar simbólico del castigo” (“represents for every epoch a symbolic space of punishment;” 28). Anachronistic as it may seem, the stadium serves as a powerful image that gathers all these experiences through time, including the man of faith’s cell and surveillance.

The man of faith himself is treated as an infecting agent despite being inside; yet another instance where Goytisolo problematizes notions of inside and outside. The narrator, then, offers up a revelatory question: speaking of the prisoner, the narrator asks, “su contagiosidad era asimismo física o, como había creído hasta entonces, solamente espiritual” (“was his contagion also physical or, as he had believed up until then, merely spiritual;” 82)? The word “espiritual” used in this passage connects with the spiritual notions associated with San Juan de la Cruz and the Sufis. However, the word “espiritual” goes beyond that usage to contain the possibility of something beyond materiality, much as the word “psyche” simultaneously speaks of the mind and the soul. Hence, we are confronted with a recognition of the simultaneous contagiousness of bodily and ideological “material,” all of which originate from the subject. Viral material, ideological material, and religious material represent equally contagious concepts in the form of the prisoner.

The imagery of gloves, masks, and quarantining practices recalls the paranoid treatment of the bodies of PWAs during the height of epidemic in the 1980s. Goytisolo brings to mind the general public’s widespread desire for a

penitentiary-like institute of care during that period. During the 1980s and most of the 1990s, AIDS was wrongly associated with homosexuality; this occasioned the belief that the illness was a marker of deviance, evidence of moral punishment, and beyond the reach of those who followed accepted beliefs and practices. As such, AIDS came to represent viral, ideological, and subversive material.

Through the creation of the textual space Goytisolo assembles a collection of carceral spaces for the reader. These spaces are atrocious, claustrophobic spaces meant to recreate the sequestering of PWAs. Some of these spaces include the theater and the monastery, which I have mentioned.²⁷ They also include one interesting spacial melange presented during the second segment of the novel.

During the second segment segment, Goytisolo assembles a location which simultaneously reads like a hospice, a vacation home, and a health resort. The narrator at that point awakens from a fall to find himself on a bed under the care of doctors. The window to the outside allows him to take in the sight of hundreds of bodies, sunbathing, unmoving. The sun outside gives off the feeling that it is fake, a sight which, along with the trees that accompany it, belong to a painting and not an actual space. As is the case throughout the novel, the space does have other spacial details disrupting its semblance of continuity; still, we are meant to read the traits as, in fact, belonging to all of these spaces at once, as if

²⁷ Yannick Llored identifies five chronotopes guiding the novel: the Hammam, a public bath emblematic of sexual pleasures; a residence for writers in Crimea; a cell in a monastery during the Renaissance; a library; and a terraced family home. This last one, according to Llored, gathers the theatrical space I have opted to separate in this essay. I believe there is enough evidence in the text to warrant the consideration of not only the theater but a hospice/hospital space as additional chronotopes. (31)

their discontinuity is not at all anomalous. During this segment, we read that our narrator finds himself,

con la vista perdida en los playeros y sus absurdos preparativos bélicos, obnubilado también por el disco bermejo del sol, delusoria quietud del jardín, bosque de embelesada artificiosidad, conjura de signos acechantes de la amenaza imprecisa que se cierne, plaga, irradiación, virus, premonición de muerte, augurada irrupción de la desgalichada de las dos sílabas con las piernas zancudas e inverosímil silueta de espatapájaros[.] (70)

absorbed in watching the beatniks and their absurd preparations for war, confused as well by the red disk of the sun, the deceptive quest of the garden, the grove of trees of captivating artificiality, a conspiracy of forbidding signs of the imprecise threat that is lurking, plague, radiation, virus, premonition of death, sudden predicted intrusion of the unkempt one-syllable apparition with her long skinny legs and fantastic scarecrow silhouette. (*Virtues* 63)

The static nature of this image serves as a sabotage of an otherwise blissful “moment.” The sunbathers are always already and will remain, beyond the end of the novel, forever in their places. There is no possibility of movement. The sun will char them, regardless of the “preparativos bélicos” which are limited to the application of sunblock lotion. The tableau is meant as a palimpsest of bodies lacking the agency to escape, unable to break the stasis in which they find themselves. Quarantining and its artifacts represent the limits imposed on these bodies. The tableau is also later echoed by a gathering of professionals, during an academic conference, who, sometimes inside a library, other times inside a conference room, are trapped without the possibility of escape. All of these sequestered bodies represent contagious bodies that have been placed in these spaces as a way to control their movement, preventing any contact with the untouched. The sunbathers’ segment heightens the bodily dimensions of this

threat and consequent quarantine, while the professionals' segment does the same for the ideological dimensions. Each group must be isolated for the threat of contagiousness each represents.

By intersecting the man of faith's persecution with the persecution of the infected, Goytisolo highlights the nexus of the bodily and the ideological. Here we have ideas, beliefs, and ideological material that need to be destroyed in the same way that contagious bodies need to be destroyed. The individual subject, the marginado, represents the vessel that carries these contagious materials, at once biological and ideological. The intersubjective nature of this individual, as written by Goytisolo, much as it represents the limitless possibilities of *sense-making* and the open channels of the sensual archival communication, opens the collective up to both the reception of "material" that can disrupt the status quo as well as to the consequent policing of their bodies and minds. Therefore, in the figure of the man of faith, Goytisolo *embodies*, i.e. *gives a body to*, the experience of the persecuted for the perceived threat they pose as carriers of bodily and ideological material dangerous to the general public, a reality understood by PWAs in the 1980s and beyond.

Randolph Pope sheds light on the importance of this convergence of the bodily and the ideological material and the use of isolating spaces as it pertains to a peculiar episode in Goytisolo's life. During the 1960s, the author participated in a writing residence in Yalta, a residence I argue influenced Goytisolo's use of bodies, ideologies, and spaces in the novel. Speaking of the sequestering

spaces in *Pájaro*, particularly the images of the resort and the conference, which variously intermix with the other spaces, Pope notes that these represent,

an elaboration of the Writers' Union summer residence in Yalta in the former Soviet Union, which Goytisoló and Monique Lange visited in 1965.... [Describing the visit, Goytisoló] strongly denounced the insipid and regimented life of a state which treated many of its most creative citizens as though they were carriers of a dreaded virus. [*Virtues* expands this experience] into a general condition that appears repeatedly in history. (142)

Pope argues that the sound coming from the nearby stadium is a “clear reference to the National Soccer Stadium in Santiago, Chile,” where thousands were arrested and kept after Arturo Pinochet’s rise to power. In addition, Pope argues that the convergence of PWAs and intellectual dissidents in Goytisoló’s novel, despite their “apparent diversity,” is,

sustained by the same backbone, in this case the skeletons of the same dead, the dissidents, the sick, the different, both in thought and in sexual practice. The same strategy of control used by communism and anticommunism is one more perverse manifestation of the struggle between free circulation and containment. What circulates freely here is an effective technique for violently controlling a society and suffocating any deviant behavior, of the body or the mind. What is contained is freedom itself. (142-143)

Here we find the passage of violence from outside to inside the Law as alluded to earlier. Once more the reader is brought into the echo chamber, into “a general condition that appears repeatedly in history.” This condition, the siege on the marginados, should by now be recognizable; still, our level of disconnect – to humanity, to history, to the self – is such that we need reminders. The unfamiliar becomes familiar through Goytisoló’s palimpsestic method. The text demands

our consideration of these events, these general conditions, through active confrontation. Removing the scaffolding, Goytisolo reveals the backbone.

The sounds outside the monastery encapsulate the echoes of history in all their polyphonous, ever-morphing-yet-ever-repetitive glory. The mob sounds originating outside of the spaces depicted in the novel eventually enact a cunning alteration which, I believe, moves the reader from the position of a consumer of spectacle to that of the object of the spectacle. Noticing the insistence of the sounds that lay siege to the senses, the narrator comments,

desde hace tiempo, el rugido de millares de gargantas ha subido de tono pero el clamor con el que los espectadores han acogido el presunto gol de victoria o laudo arbitral favorable a la alineación autóctona se prolonga más allá de lo razonable y plausible, deviene francamente irreal e inverosímil al cabo de algunas horas[.] (85)

for some time now, the roar of thousands of throats has kept rising in tone but the din with which the spectators hailed the presumed winning goal or some decision of the referee in favor of the local team is being prolonged beyond what is reasonable and plausible, becoming after a few hours frankly unreal and beyond belief[.]
(*Virtues* 80)

The notion of time at this point carries no meaning aside from the insistence of the human psyche on imposing temporal parameters on phenomena. However, the psyche here fails in or is ill-equipped for the task. What we are left with is the atemporal sensation that comes from experiencing a siege.

But far more important to the pertinence of this episode is the recognition of a life lived in ignorance of certain truths, sometimes willingly. In that sense, Goytisolo's novel captures the ease with which many can look past tragic events and their effects, as is the case with war and AIDS. That being the case, the

novel would seem to argue that there comes a point where denial becomes unsustainable.²⁸ It is no surprise, then, that the prisoner, isolated and without access to the events occurring outside, also serves as an avatar to the modern subject at large. We are meant to recognize him as a threat; hence, the reason why he is locked up. But the recognition turns on the reader once we are invited to see him as an extension of our own access and approach to the phenomenal world. It is in this sleight of hand on the part of the author that we come to *embody*, i.e. *enjoin our bodies*, to the experience of isolation and persecution. Our bodies enjoin the exploding body. We are no longer in a position to deny La Seminarista's destruction; we are no longer in a position to deny conflicts like the Bosnian War; we are no longer in a position to deny the materiality of those under siege without our bodies feeling these effects. The prisoner encapsulates the moment when these marginal bodies, along with ours, are lead to the slaughter:

pero si las ilusorias justas deportivas encubrían realmente ejecuciones y matanzas, quiénes eran los condenados expuestos a la picota, inmolados a la vindicta de un público siempre ansioso de verter fluxus seminis a la vista de fluxus sanguinis, relajados al brazo secular, sujetos a piras de leña viciosamente verde, asfixiados primero por el humo y achicharrados después por las llamas? alumbrados, poetas, dexados, místicos, hechiceros, judaizantes, nefandos? les conducían descalzos con sambenito, coraza, mordaza, una soga al cuello y cirio glauco en la mano al capítulo de santos varones que había dictado la sentencia y les exhortaría piadosamente al arrepentimiento final antes de prender la fogata? o se trataba de enfermas e irradiadas, portadoras de gérmenes[.] (86)

²⁸ The insupportable public ignorance or denial of the Bosnian War and similar conflicts is what leads Goytisolo to cover the theater of war in his journalistic work.

but if the illusory sports competition were really a coverup for executions and killings, who were those condemned men in the pillory, sacrificed to the vindictiveness of a public ever eager to pour out a fluxus seminis at the sight of a fluxus sanguinis, handed over to the secular arm, subjected to being burned to death with viciously green wood, asphyxiated first by the smoke and then charred to a crisp by the flames? illuminati, poets, unbelievers, mystics, sorcerers, Judaizers, those guilty of the abominable sin?, did they lead them barefoot, dressed in the robe of a confessed heretic and wearing a cone-shaped hat, a gag, a rope around their neck and carrying a pale green candle in one hand, to the chapter of saintly men who had handed down the verdict and would piously exhort them one last time to repent before lighting the fire?, or where they sick women, victims of radiation, bearers of germs? (*Virtues* 80-81)

Once more, various marginal identities *enjoin* the textual body that inhabits this textual space. The prisoner remains incapable to determine which identity is the persecuted, mainly because they all are. There is no preference for one over the other. Persecution turns experience into an “ejido común a experiencias distintas” (“an area common to different and apparently contrary experiences;” 87; *Virtues* 82), with all these similarly persecuted identities morphing into “vivencias convergentes” (“Experiences converging;” 88; *Virtues* 83).

The calls coming from outside for the heads of those inside epitomize the dangers that stem from the solidification of mob mentality; here, I recall Esposito’s notion of the sacrifice mentioned earlier. The collective needs to identify the sacrifice in order to understand itself; it needs the sacrifice to justify its use of violence inside the Law; and it needs to inflict violence on the sacrifice in order to guarantee its continuance, even its apparent survival. But, as is always the case, the sacrifice comes from the collective. The sacrifice is part of the collective at the same time that they are chosen to be violently removed from

the collective. Like smoke originating from a fire, the sounds of persecution stand as harbingers of violence and death.

Writing about a scene in Goytisolo's *El sitios de los sitios* where a civilian and a sniper converge in Bosnia's sniper alley, Ribeiro de Menezes writes "[v]iolence and death unite the two figures, 'como si ambos formaran un solo cuerpo'. ('as if both formed a single body;'" 134) In *Pájaros*, Goytisolo connects illness to this equation. The author seeks to highlight the convergence of bodies in shared experiences, laying violence, death, and illness over the siege like a palimpsest. The convergence of bodies in *Pájaro* includes the reader as another body on which to transfer the sense-making. In this transference, a moment of anagnorisis occurs for the reader. Now the reader is summoned; the reader must give in to the experience in a fusion of their sense-making capabilities with the sense-making of the marginal bodies. In that fusion, the reader recognizes themselves and the experiences narrated. The reader can no longer remain ignorant once they become part of the "carretada de enfermas conducida a la hoguera" ("cartloads of sick taken to the pyre;" 97; *Virtues* 91).

As mentioned above, the unfamiliar becomes familiar. But before the reader is lead to the slaughter, Goytisolo must fuse the former's identity to that of his fringe characters. To complete this fusion, Goytisolo plays with narratorial registers as he works to finally fuse the reader to the text. The apogee of this fusion occurs in the fourth segment. During the segment, voices speak of a library space where various characters are systematically removing and replacing pages in all the texts contained in the archive, a sequence reminiscent

of Orwell's *1984*. The voices speaking during this segment prevent any grounded pinpointing of their origins. The emphasis settles on the quality of texts as carriers of "ideas potencialmente contaminadoras" ("potentially contaminating ideas;" 106; *Virtues* 100). One voice comments on having gained access to the library thanks to their connection to an "agrupación hermana" ("sister group;" 105; *Virtues* 99). This same voice describes a history of,

maniobras, estratagemas, argucias dilatorias de quienes en connivencia con el enemigo a lo largo de unos años de intensa y despiadada lucha ideológica, habían tratado de zapar las bases unitarias de la agrupación madre.... (105)

maneuvers, stratagems, delaying tactics of those who in connivance with the enemy through years of intense and pitiless ideological struggle had endeavored to sap the unitary foundations of the mother group.... (*Virtues* 99)

The voice (perhaps the same one) also clarifies that those bodies sequestered in the library come from "zonas contaminadas" and that given these bodies' "contacto asiduo con los libros y materiales nocivos nos obliga a adoptar, claro está, un conjunto de medidas profilácticas para prevenir el posible contagio" ("your having come from contaminated zones and your constant contact with harmful books and materials obliges us to adopt, naturally, a series of prophylactic measures in order to forestall possible contagion;" 107; *Virtues* 101), the voice going so far as to use the word "cuarentena," i.e. quarantine, as a description of the present status of life inside the library.

What the reader confronts here is a collage of all other identities and spaces in the novel. San Juan de la Cruz, PWA's, participants in the theater of war, scholars, intellectuals, and pájaros move in a space with all the defining

qualities of the theater, the hospital, the prison, etc. It is as if all the temporalities, spaces, and identities have fully collapsed onto one another. But as Llored notes “[l]as máscaras y estigmas de los que la sociedad considera como péstiferos se transfieren y deslizan de unos rostros a otros haciendo que en el texto sea el ‘cuerpo del lenguaje’ el que realice la unicidad de las voces destruídas” (“the masks and stigmas of those society considers carriers of plague transfer and move from one face to another causing the body of language in the text to serve as the place where the destroyed voices converge;” 61). Therefore, to this ongoing polyphonic, multispatial experience, Goytisolo adds the dimensions of language as a body itself; once problematized, the sensual dimensions of language can be employed to shed light on these identities and help them speak their experiences. In other words, our bodies serve as languages.

During one particular moment, a voice tellingly interjects commentary that fuses two registers: “se ha mirado y te has reconocido sin posible duda” (“he has had a look at himself and without a shadow of a doubt you have recognized yourself;” 106; *Virtues* 100). One of two options are possible here. The first can be read as a change from a formal to an informal address, “se” to “te”, as if the speaker goes from not knowing and respecting some level of distance and decorum between her/himself and the person whom she/he is speaking about, to knowing and feeling comfortable with the person. The second and more interesting option, and the one I propose as occurring here, could see the use of “se” and “te” as a change in the object being apprehended. “Se” and “te,” third person and second person reflexive pronouns respectively, infuse the moment

with the odd apprehension of an object which is at once something else and “my self.” The voice speaks of an other but immediately transitions to make the one initially being addressed regarding someone else the self. This reading receives additional support throughout the segment when, upon witnessing the presence of some subjects anachronistically inhabiting the library – particularly one known as the Señor Mayor – a voice poses the innocent question “eres él, como te inclinabas a veces a creer o se trata de un mero desdoblamiento” (109)?

Goytisolo has explained in interviews that this Señor Mayor is informed by his uncle, a person with whom the author engaged in sexual relations when he was a minor, hence, making the question a personal one from the author directed at himself. However, at a textual level the question can seem to appellate the reader into assuming the identity of this “él.” Thus, in writing “eres él” Goytisolo breaks the reader out of any possible readerly lull by directly addressing the reader. The readerly experience becomes a phenomenal one as the words that inhabit a fictional text breach a forth wall and proceed to touch, to speak to, to summon the reader. The reader “se ha mirado,” i.e. has looked at her/himself, and finds her/his self contained in the text; “te has reconocido” in the bodies and experiences depicted. The reader is now fused to the multitude of identities in the text, in body and mind.

The text, once problematized at the level of language, functions as a memorial. Upon destroying the governing structure and rules of language, the text is now “capaz de traducir, sin traicionarla, su inexpressable experiencia” (“able to translate, without betraying it, his ineffable experience;”

121; *Virtues* 113). If language as it stands responds to an oppressive system, then only by disrupting meaning in the service of alternate forms of sense-making can a text achieve experiences full of ambiguity capable of “infinitas posibilidades significativas” (“infinite possible meanings;” 122; *Virtues* 114). Text and bodies are rife with labyrinthine, nomadic, rhizomatic possibilities. No moment in the novel reveals the convergence of experiences at a textual level better than the end of the fourth segment. Still inside the library, many identities walk along its space, now littered with discarded texts that have been ripped from the books to which they initially belonged to. Again, Goytisolo plays with registers: “avanzas, avanzo” (you walk on, I walk on” 129; *Virtues* 120), words chosen for their movement as well as their fluctuation between an address and a statement, the reader and the identity inhabiting the text, a palimpsest of us, them, it. Suddenly, all identities inhabit, i.e. haunt, the page. We walk inside the library “poseído[s] de una sutil impresión de ingravidez, de flotar suavemente como pececillos en el acuario de helechos y algas” (“overcome by a subtle feeling of weightlessness, of floating gently like the little fish in the aquarium of ferns and algae;” 129; *Virtues* 120). As we walk, we hear what Goytisolo hears, echoes of a memory of his aunt’s final days as she sequestered herself in her room, playing piano, away from the recriminating words and looks of their family after the discovery of the author’s relation with her husband. We hear a religious choir and see dervishes turn in front of de la Cruz. We feel the pain of the patient, confined to a bed, as he asks the doctor for some medicine. We acknowledge the sense of anxiety that comes with experiencing a dream, which in effect becomes a nightmare, of being

in a “falso hospital con todas las trazas y elementos de cárcel siquiátrica” (“fake hospital with all the hallmarks of a psychiatric prison;” 131; *Virtues* 122), hence, finding that our care, initially defined as a cure, is in effect an act of systematic control. We recognize the bodies, of PWAs, of war casualties, littering all spaces. Finally, we accept that it is not a dream or a nightmare but a phenomenal reality. What was initially described as “un sueño dentro de un sueño dentro de un sueño pero enteramente despierto” (“as in a dream within a dream within a dream but wholly awake;” 77; *Virtues* 71) turns into “el recuerdo de un recuerdo de un recuerdo,” (“the memory of a memory of a memory;” 139; *Virtues* 129) which captures “la violencia de tu propio espanto, lo ves, lo ves ya, el adefesio de las dos sílabas” (“the violence of your own panic, you see it, you now see it, the grotesque figure... of the one-syllable name;” 131; *Virtues* 123). All identities collapse in this moment of siege as the “adefesio... extiende durante interminables segundos su índice brujo y direge hacia mí secamente el cerco, las aguas, caballería de Aminadab” (“the gross figure... holds out for endless seconds her witch’s index finger and brusquely unleashes upon me the siege, the water, the cavalry of Aminadab;” 132; *Virtues* 123). As Ribeiro de Menezes has noted, “Goytisolo uses the confusion of sensory stimuli to stress a state of fear and persecution” (145). We hear, feel, see all that these fringe identities have experienced under the state of siege as the violence is directed at “mí.” For Goytisolo bodies as texts represent landscapes on which war has been waged and on which the battles must be waged if we are to regain any semblance of power associated with self-defined signification. Bodies as texts represents one

way in which those on the fringe can communicate experience. Fear, pain, anxiety, but also hope have little need for translation once the body comes into contact with these experiences. In the act of sense-making, these experiences and their identities move past the limits of an oppressive system of meaning and reach spaces where the body can be impelled to feel, again.

CHAPTER II

HANGING ON BY A THREAD:

THE HAUNTED SENSES IN RABIH ALAMEDDINE'S *KOOLAIDS*

Girl, you can't even call this shit a war....

Wars end.

Detective Ellis Carver, The Wire, Season 1, Episode 1

The introduction of this dissertation made reference to Steven F. Kruger's analysis of the narrative tendencies found in mainstream AIDS narratives. AIDS narratives, according to Kruger, fit into either a microcosmic or a macrocosmic frame. The microcosmic narrative would present stories of individuals who, more often than not, were to blame for their illness. These individuals were culpable for their behavior and, as such, were presented as warnings to the body politic of the behavior that lead to their infected status. The macrocosmic narrative took on the nation or the collective, presenting these as victims of a rogue element. Both narratives victimized but in different ways. The microcosmic victimized the PWA as an identity one should avoid aligning with. The macrocosmic victimized the group, fostering paranoia within the innocent public who, in light of seeing a revelation, were encouraged to engage in a preventive attacks on its potential public health enemies.

Responding to the narrative dominants surrounding AIDS and its depiction, U.S. Queer movements in the arts, including literature and cinema, have tended towards iconoclasm when depicting HIV/AIDS. Queer art variously broke with these narrative and structural restrictions as a way to challenge the imposed views of the mainstream regarding PWAs. B. Ruby Rich has gone so far

as to define the New Queer Cinema – cinema created by Queer filmmakers and around Queer topics in the 1990s – as AIDS Cinema, due to the representative films’ overall focus on AIDS.²⁹ This focus can also be seen in other forms of cultural production including journalism and literature. For example, Queer collectives went so far as to produce their own journalistic work, purposefully breaking away from the “talking heads” style of reportage characteristic of the mainstream media during the AIDS crisis. Journalistic programs like those produced by DIVA TV and the ACTUP collectives bypassed linearity and journalistic decorum for a more playful, committed, and involved work of reportage.³⁰ To a similar extent, Queer literary output of the late 1980s and 1990s greatly focuses on AIDS as a pressing concern. Queer literature, mainly in the US, variously enjoyed breaking with narrative expectations, thereby creating works that could not be easily categorized.

Published late in 1990s, Rabih Alameddine’s *KoolAIDS* (1998) represents an anomaly within this landscape. The novel returns to the two problematic mainstream narrative choices mentioned earlier by fusing both the individualist and the collective narrative modes. However, it does so, I will argue, in a subversive manner. If the outcome of these forms is already predetermined, asks Alameddine, what is it that makes it “predetermined” in the first place?

Alameddine, through his novelistic experiment, proposes that narrative itself is

²⁹ Rich mentions the work of Todd Haynes, Gregg Araki, and even Gus Van Sant as emblematic of the movement.

³⁰ Greg Bordowitz and Jean Carlomusto, for example, blended diverse forms such as interviews, music videos, sketch comedy, and on-location reportage in their journalistic videos for DIVA TV.

the reason. Mainstream AIDS narratives (i.e., narratives produced for mass consumption that use AIDS as a plot device) often mimic the conventions found in various established genres. Mainstream AIDS narratives can evoke the gothic or horror by portraying the illness and those afflicted by it as sources of fear and menace. They can imitate romance or melodramatic conventions, offering tales intent on making the readers “feel” emotions, usually towards women, children, or those widely considered at the time “innocent victims.” The ultimate goal of this form is to extract tears from the audience. They can even take on the form of a bildungsroman, narratives where the PWA finds out she/he is infected, atones for contracting the affliction, and creates a space for family members to learn of their loved one’s ailment, find a release, or, at the very least, let go of the person they once knew. The solution can be achieved either by denial or erasure, options clearly beneficial to the family, not the PWA. One thing is clear with each of these narrative choices: rarely is anything positive within reach for the PWA. When employed as the shell for a narrative about AIDS, these options exploit the experience, offering little aside from spectacle. The body of the PWA is to be consumed and enjoyed like that of a circus sideshow. Once the spectacle is over, we are to move on with our lives.

With *KoolAIDS*, Alameddine challenges the spectacle surrounding the body of the PWA and the complacency of a consuming audience. To achieve this, the author engages in a two-front attack. First, he constructs a novel characterized by an amalgam of conventions. Alameddine brings together a wide array of styles, from diaries and journals to screenplays, from journalistic

reportage and encyclopedia entries to love stories, from war stories to horror stories, from tragicomedy to fantasy. All these styles create a readerly experience which, along with opening the possibilities for narrative questioning through self-reflexivity, serves to assemble a space of multiple identities and experiential registers. Second, Alameddine joins the bodies of PWAs with the bodies of war casualties. Placing the Lebanese Civil War in juxtaposition to the AIDS crisis, Alameddine sheds light on the voyeuristic and fetishistic dilemmas that plague both experiences. Moreover, at the hands of Alameddine the spectacle is transformed, as I will show, into an act of witnessing. The audience is there to see the bodies of the PWA and the war casualty fuse, highlighting moral and ethical dimensions contained in the act of witnessing. The novel's excess of conventions mirrors the amalgam of bodies, experiences, and venues. Highlighting the ghostly hauntings that pervade the experiences of AIDS and war, Alameddine constructs a narrative where victims mourn, speak, and testify against the siege conditions that were imposed on them by outside parties. These bodies eventually turn the siege experience outward, be it through compulsory isolation, systematic rejection, or cultural stigmatization, by haunting the societies that fostered the conditions which led to their suffering, thus reversing the siege's repercussions onto those who initiated the attack. Victimhood as defined by convention is transformed in this process into a revelation of society's vilest mechanisms, forcing us to come face to face with our roles as abettors of this condition.

Before I go any further, I wish to foreground my analysis around a notion I will call quilting. Alameddine's text inhabits a space between Linda Hutcheon's notion of parody and Fredric Jameson's concept of pastiche. For Hutcheon, postmodernity is dominated by a sense of parody whereby the texts not only explore their topical concerns but question the notion of textual space and production, giving rise to highly self-referential work that serves as a critique of an era characterized by pervasive simulacra and a lack of political engagement. Jameson has countered this view by stating that the parody Hutcheon sees in postmodernity is in effect really pastiche, i.e. parody devoid of political engagement. For Jameson, postmodernity lacks intentionality and purpose, in their place offering up what he calls "blank parody." For Jameson, postmodernity is all shell with no content.

For my part, I argue that *KoolAIDS* moves around in a third space. The novel's excess of styles, voices, and signification speaks of a hyperawareness on the author's part of the limits of these elements. By adjoining the experiences of PWAs in California and Washington, D.C. during the 1980s and 1990s, and the experiences of those under threat during the siege of Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s to a plurality of narrative styles, Alameddine exploits the limitations of the separate elements to materialize an expanded narrative space made free and fluid by the interactions and intersections between individual and collective narratives. At the nexus of signification surrounding these topics, we are confronted with the need for something more effective than the engagement of parody and the playfulness of pastiche. War stories and epidemiological stories

must be allowed to move beyond the shells of generic form; this is where a third space becomes a necessity.

War and AIDS represent two experiences beyond the reach of human comprehension, not only for those who vicariously engage with it through media, but for those who actually go through the trauma that these experiences represent. As Sontag explains apropos war in *Regarding The Pain of Others* (2003),

We don't get it. We truly can't imagine what it was like. We can't imagine how dreadful, how terrifying war is; and how normal it becomes. Can't understand, can't imagine. That's what every soldier, and every journalist and aid worker and independent observer who has put in time under fire, and had the luck to elude the death that struck down others nearby, stubbornly feels. And they are right. (125-26)

Alameddine recognizes the traumatic implications of these incomprehensible experiences and, as a result, constructs a text that heightens the phenomenal experiences of both war and AIDS to the level of excess. The reader must work their way through the excess found so as to bring to light the extraneous ways in which the experiences depicted relate to us, bringing the reader to the point of self-reflexive recognition. Once the shadows of excess (pastiche) and simulacra (parody) recede, what is revealed is an attuned awareness on the part of the author regarding the similarities of these two experiences.

I call this third space *quilting*, a reference to the well-known AIDS quilt that was developed by the NAMES Project, an AIDS memorializing effort that began in 1987 and which continues to grow today. An ongoing patchwork spearheaded by Cleve Jones that gathers the names of those who have died of AIDS, the

AIDS quilt is constructed by survivors in an effort to memorialize those lost to the illness. Quilting is playful like pastiche in its malleability, as it adjusts its shape to the needs of the author and his story. It is also engaged in the way Hutcheon describes parody to be, able to see the situation from both near and far in a critical manner. As an alternative postmodern dominant different from pastiche and parody, quilting adds a memorializing component, characterized by a somber tone that respects the afflicted. Quilting provides the space for expression and mourning while demanding that audience members fill the role of witnesses. Much as was the case with Goytisolo, the text inflicts, or better yet, transfers a wound onto the reader. All this excess is utilized as a way to overwhelm the reader with an experiential engagement that will cause a sense of having felt what is being depicted at some point in their past, even when in fact they have never felt it. This notion will be further developed below.

Alameddine's approach to writing finds him building a similar patchwork at a textual level. Like panels in a quilt, each story in *KoolAIDS* gives voice to a distinct experience of war and AIDS. These patches touch each other at the edges, interacting and intersecting, forming a more complete narrative of human trauma. Each patch retains its individual experiential identity – recognizing the distinctiveness of the experiences that occur to casualties of war and PWAs – while serving to build on an overall understanding of the epochal experience of siege. In the state of siege, war casualties and PWAs inhabit a perpetual condition wherein their sociocultural and political surroundings threaten their being. However, the word surroundings does not fully capture the extent of the

features and context that influence the experiences lived by war casualties and PWAs. That is why, in place of surroundings, I will instead use the word “entorno” and its plural “entornos” to refer to these conditions and spaces of influence. The word *entorno* serves as a signifier of physical surroundings and their effects on the subjects that inhabit them. But *entorno* can also function as a reference to the cultural dominants that originate from certain locations. The word captures the points of contact between a focal center and its surroundings, between diverging viewpoints or outlooks, both centralized and widespread. Thus, “entorno” is at once physical and abstract, real and imagined, personal and cultural.

In *KoolAIDS* every character goes through their own siege on the mind and body. The novel’s amalgam of experiential evidence reveals the persistent physical and rhetorical assault on the senses taking place for PWAs and subjects of war. The novel presents the stories of Mohammad, a Lebanese painter living in San Francisco in the 1990s, and Samir, a Lebanese historian living in Washington, D.C. in the 1990s, both of whom have left Lebanon to escape the civil war ravaging their homeland. The novel weaves their present moment with memories of their respective lives in Lebanon before and during the initial years of the Lebanese Civil War. The narrative largely focuses on the effects these experiences have on their psyches and subsequent lives. As it works to establish the characters’ connections to their Lebanese *entorno*, the novel overlays the story of both Mohammad and Samir as they become aware of developing AIDS, simultaneously revealing how many of their acquaintances are dying of the same affliction around them. This palimpsestic form builds layer upon layer, patching a

multitude of stories which include Mohammad's friends Scott and Kurt, Samir's mother, various family members and acquaintances, along with many digressions that come from news items from the historical periods covered in the novel. All these voices haunt the text, battling for space and a chance to speak for themselves. This haunting imbues each generic choice with a sense of foreboding or *jamais vu* mixed with *deja vu*. One gets the sense that something is about to happen, but also that whatever is bound to happen has already been lived. This two-way haunting toys with notions of past, present, and future, rending the reader from the complacency found in the act of spectating and connecting them phenomenally with the narrative through many references to the senses.

For Alameddine, war and AIDS find common ground in a phenomenological sensation – the experience of “feeling” under attack. Both war and AIDS destroy lives, piling bodies upon bodies, casualties upon casualties. Moreover, the particular events covered in the novel represent new modalities of war and disease due to the protracted states that characterize each. The Lebanese Civil War was a proxy war that lasted from 1975 to 1990. Its length made many Lebanese during the conflict question whether there was any possibility for it to end. This sense is expressed effectively throughout Jean Said Makdisi's memoir *Beirut Fragments* (1990), a text that greatly influenced *KoolAIDS*. At one point in her memoir Makdisi writes, “I had a sense of timelessness, as though the siege had always been and would always be; as though I had known no other reality” (172). Feelings like the one described above

prompted many Lebanese, Makdisi included, to abandon the country, often permanently. The AIDS epidemic brought with it similar doubts, mostly with regards to finding a cure. *KoolAIDS* was published three years after the emergence of protease inhibitors to treat AIDS. It would take an additional two years after the debut of saquinavir and ritonavir for the real effects of the new medicines to be fully perceived.³¹ Therefore, the perception of AIDS as a mortal illness permeates the novel. Before moving forward, we must add that while some progress has been achieved in preventing, treating, and reducing the disease's speed of dispersal, AIDS remains a reality; in fact, we are still far from being able to guarantee its end. The siege continues.

The protraction and insistence of the siege state provides the focal basis to *KoolAIDS*' quilting work, so much so that Alameddine's writerly choices grasp for a readerly experience that brings the audience into contact with this sensual experience. To begin, many individual voices are utilized in narrating the novel. And while the reader can sometimes ascertain whose voice is doing the utterance during a particular episode, during many other episodes the voice leading us through an experience often lacks a source to ground it in a particular identity. Voices and identities attach randomly, cycling through different combinations. Consequently, when the reader thinks they have successfully solved the mystery of who is speaking, a subsequent sequence purposefully unmoors the security of that earlier assessment. The result is an assemblage of

³¹ See Torian, Lucia, PhD, and Mi Chen, MS. "HIV Surveillance — United States, 1981-2008." *MMRW*. June 3, 2011, 60 (21), 689-693. www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6021a2.htm

various senses of siege that build on an overall phenomenal experience at the textual level.

As I have already mentioned, these experiences presented are those of individuals living through the Lebanese Civil War and the AIDS epidemic. Throughout, the reader is confronted with language that focuses on fear, anxiety, and trauma without particularly grounding the sensation depicted during that episode on a particular identity. During one episode, for example, we get a story of a day-to-day occurrence at a Phalangist checkpoint in Lebanon, told by an unknown narrator. Someone by the name of Neyla – a cousin of the segment's unidentified narrator; and not a recurring character in the novel – awaits inside her car for her turn at a checkpoint that controls her movement between East Beirut where she works and West Beirut where she lives. The scene is all about foregrounding her fear, which filters every thought and feeling throughout:

The fear you face when you are about to face a violent death is indescribable. You shake, uncontrollably. You sweat, profusely. You lose control of motor coordination. Your bowels fail you. You either are unable to speak or blabber continuously. (233)

The body as the experiential center demands precedence throughout this vignette. Despite being used by this character during the checkpoint event, the choice of descriptors informs all the traumatic experiences contained within the novel. The bodies of a person under threat of war and that of a PWA, as Alameddine makes clear, behave in similar fashions. The cold sweat, tremors, incontinence, and dementia that take over a PWA during terminal stage are evoked here in tandem with Neyla's direct war experience. Liminal language helps in fusing liminal sensual states.

Cathy Caruth believes “[t]rauma can be experienced in at least two ways: as a memory that one cannot integrate into one’s own experience, and as a catastrophic knowledge that one cannot communicate to others” (256). Therefore, trauma represents a break in the sequence of phenomenal apprehension. Experiences are usually absorbed, made into narratives, and communicated. But when an event breaks with our sensual capacity for apprehension, our internal mechanisms for narrative fail at building the frame around that event. The event remains for all intents and purposes unspoken, and the body, as described above, loses control. *KoolAIDS* captures an amalgam of such traumatic events floating in a sea of language. These events are allowed their respective spaces, but Alameddine’s novel employs liminal language as a way to thread together these phenomenally traumatic experiences. Quilting in *KoolAIDS* allows us to apprehend the plurality of experiences, build on them, and urgently disseminate them to additional audiences for much needed apprehension. Where quilting moves past pastiche and parody is in its recognition of trauma as an ongoing event. Thus, quilting allows for the continued apprehension and speaking of the traumatic kernel, i.e. witnessing and working through the trauma.

Trauma in *KoolAIDS* is apocalyptic in nature. Senses of an ending permeate the narrative much as they do the experiences of war and AIDS. Contained throughout are references to apocalyptic tropes which originate in Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions as well as dystopian fiction. If we consider that the Apocalypse represents both an end and a revelation, we can understand

why it serves as the prototypical traumatic frame of choice for Alameddine. The senses of an ending that permeate such narratives prove symptomatic of their characters' sense of being under siege. Apocalyptic narratives carry the specter of being under attack and capture the desperation and trauma of imminent finality. In the case of *KoolAIDS*, Muhammed and Samir, along with many of their generation, seem caught in the ongoing trauma of repetitive endings. Their trajectories lead them from one disaster to the next. Alameddine enlists both characters as a way to open up the linkages between the trauma of the Lebanese Civil War and the trauma of AIDS. An early intervention by one of these characters offers the following moment of self-analytic convergence:

A time unknown. A life unborn.
My life has become nothing but regret. When the nurse told me I was HIV positive, I wanted to scream. Hold on a minute. Hold on. I haven't even begun to live my life. I thought I had more time.
After a childhood of complete and utter confusion, I started grasping who I was when I turned fourteen. It was not a single event which precipitated a change. It was gradual. My fourteenth year, 1974, was the happiest year of my life. I had finally adjusted to living in Lebanon. The war started in 1975. When I was told I was to be sent out of the country, I wanted to scream. Hold on a minute. Hold on. I haven't even begun to live my life. I thought I had more time. (7-8)

The elements that comprise this segment stack memory upon experience, layer upon layer, in an effort to shed light and heighten the content of each individual piece. Our narrator speaks of the singular moment when he found out about his positive status. His reaction is grounded in the body through the allusion to a scream. Lacking words to define a moment and its attached memory, the subject resorts to a physical act, an venting of energy to mark an event that is prelinguistic, and otherwise inexpressible. Thus the narrator bridges, through

time, the moment of revelation with the retelling of that event in the form of a bodily reference. Here, the narrative captures and echoes an instance of muscle memory. The scream reverberates throughout the character's life.

To further define the importance of this traumatic moment, the narrator adds a separate memory, the story of the time when his family sent him out of Lebanon to escape the civil war. Each traumatic moment touches the other; when words fail, trauma helps define trauma. The character's confusion, a personal experience, is captured in a reference to grasping. Both metaphorical and literal, to "hold on" speaks of wrestling with elements that demand deciphering but also with the tangibility of the moment. The body needs to arrive at and remain in the moment. To "hold on" similarly calls attention to the need to stop the moment and the need to clasp, to gather, the moment onto the body. The reverberation takes over the body as it relives the instant and continues to come to grips with the single moment. Once more our narrator wants to scream. The body's foregrounding of phenomenal apprehension manifests in both of these defining moments, creating a multitude of single moments, patches in the greater quilt of experience. Thus, the announcement of being HIV positive becomes recoded as an extension of the memory of being forced out of Lebanon by way of the bodily senses both single moments elicit in the narrator. The act of grasping seeks evidence of past sensations to *make sense* of new sensations.

The confusion experienced reverberates through time for the narrator, mainly because he could not "hold on" to the instant. The instant is, in fact, never graspable. It must remain out of reach. We can think of the instant much in the

same way Sontag thinks of photography: “After the event has ended, the picture will still exist, conferring on the event a kind of immortality” (11), but this immortality is comprised of “ghostly traces” dispersed through time (9).³² Like a photo, the hauntings of our traumatic moments confront us from a distance. Not being able to grasp the moment, the haunting reproduces the traumatic event, eliciting in the subject a necessity to continue reaching out to the instant, even when we know it is not possible to apprehend. In *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger postulates that our being, our sense of humanness and belonging in this world, goes hand in hand with our limitations as temporal beings. We *are* because of how we are always already related to our past, present, and future. Time defines humanity. The expression “A time unknown. A life unborn” in the above passage could be interpreted as a recognition of the characters’ temporal limitations. In addition to defining the human condition, beingness and temporality define the traumatic. Trauma is part of the beingness of those who live through and survive it. “A time unknown. A life unborn” captures the sense of perpetual trauma experienced by these characters. There is a desire in this expression to return to a time prior to trauma, but there is also an awareness that that prior time is nothing but a state of utopia, or worse yet, a state of ignorance. In a sense, these traumatic moments have brought the subject into existence, as if born into a new sensation, made her/him aware of her/his being. Trauma seems as much a part of being and awareness as of life itself; trauma defines our

³² “Photographs state the innocence, the vulnerability of lives heading toward their own destruction, and this link between photography and death haunts all photographs of people” (70). I would argue that the same is true of traumatic memories, instants that return to us as hauntings, always returning but also always out of reach.

humanity, it is a move from humanity as potential to manifest. The sensation of siege – the attacks from our “entornos,” – filters and resignifies all other sensations, those prior and subsequent to it. For Avery Gordon, “[h]aunting is not reason: it is being carried away and into the forces that are more powerful than you... at the moment” (98). Arguably, trauma can be seen as a form of haunting in such a definition. And so, “A time unknown. A life unborn” recognizes the single moment as being carried away by the revelations of being HIV positive and of becoming an exile, revelations which will continue to haunt the narrator’s life.

One way in which the specter of trauma manifests throughout *KoolAIDS* is in the form of repetitive language. In “The Uncanny,” Freud expressed how “involuntary repetitions” (237) may reveal repressed experiences of dread, fear, and trauma, becoming manifest in the “compulsion to repeat” (238) and other obsessional behaviors. Gordon provides her own definition of Freud’s uncanny, describing it as “being haunted in the world of common reality” (54). She writes, “The uncanny is the return, in psychoanalytic terms, of what the concept of the unconscious represses: the reality of being haunted by worldly contacts” (55). The return of repressed content always takes the form of repetition, and in the hands of Alameddine, repetitions of words and phrases represent an invocation of the traumatic.

As explained regarding the “A time unknown” passage above, experiences collapse onto one another. Recurring words and phrases carry echoes that cause the reader to retrace moments when the particular choice expressions have been utilized before. And while in the above passage the repetition occurs within the

same passage, the repetitions often take place at vast distances within the novel, demanding that the reader recall events and cues that have been scattered onto the body of the entire text. Perhaps the most pervasive instance of these repetitions has to do with a recurring scene that involves a nameless character on his deathbed. As detailed earlier, this type of scene is usually exploited in the individualist narrative tradition. However, Alameddine's scene is hardly a mimicry of the exploitation of the PWA's body or the war casualty as a source of spectacle for the mainstream audience. Instead, the focus is on the felt phenomenology of the moment, a choice that erases the comfortable distance conventionally afforded to audiences by mainstream narratives. Here, Alameddine beckons us into contact, a "worldly contact," with the dying body.

As the novel opens, the first of these instances plays out without any setup. Our narrator explains the tableau taking place in front of his senses:

Death comes in many shapes and sizes, but it always comes. No one escapes the little tag on the big toe.

The four horsemen approach.

The rider on the red horse says, "This good and faithful servant is ready. He knoweth war."

The rider on the black horse says, "This good and faithful servant is ready. He knoweth plague."

The rider on the pale horse says, "This good and faithful servant is ready. He knoweth death."

The rider on the white horse says, "Fuck this good and faithful servant. He is a non-Christian homosexual, for God's sake. You brought me all the way out here for a fucking fag, a heathen. I didn't die for this dingbat's sins."

The irascible rider on the white horse leads the other three lemmings away.

The hospital bed hurts my back. (1)

The rider on the white horse's reaction signals that a PWA is the subject on the bed. Such vitriol replicates the pervading sentiment of many during the 1980s

and 1990s. Alameddine's use of apocalyptic references in this passage sets the tone for the multiple endings and revelations within the novel. By placing an ending at the beginning, Alameddine foregrounds the haunted quality of his text; the specters of war, plague, and death join in the same space to represent what is most threatening to the characters inhabiting this narrative. As will be seen, these same specters will continue their assault throughout the novel, laying siege to our characters. In the act of showcasing this particular ending, the end of a PWA, the novel demands that the reader feel what the PWA is feeling in order to bear witness to the experience; the fear of death and the pain of a body attached to a hospital bed. Alameddine knowingly constructs a textual space that foregrounds the felt phenomenology of these events for our apprehension.

The novel will return to this deathbed scene five times, each time changing the body to represent a different type of casualty. In choosing to repeat this particular moment, Alameddine places great emphasis on the nexus between war, plague, and death as well as the nexus between body, mind, and the phenomenal. In this initial passage, the patient's hallucination can be read as signaling what is known as AIDS Dementia Complex (ADC), the progressive loss of mental faculties brought on by HIV.³³ However, Alameddine chooses to bring the patient out of his hallucination by reasserting the location of the latter's body in a hospital bed. There is nuance in the way Alameddine treats each of the repetitions of the deathbed scene. We can look at each refrain as showcasing a

³³ While the morbidity associated with AIDS mainly comes from opportunistic infections that take root in the immunocompromised body, AIDS Dementia Complex is a condition caused by the human immunodeficiency virus itself.

different focus on locational body awareness. Charles Scott Sherrington defined the concepts of exteroception, interoception, and proprioception as ways in which the body senses its place in the world.³⁴ Exteroception represents the body's capacity to sense stimuli originating outside of the body. Heat, itching, and pain are said to belong to the realm of exteroception, where the skin acts as the main receptor. Interoception covers those sensations that originate within the body. Interoception refers to feelings such as hunger and thirst, among others. More recently, AD Craig has expanded this notion to include emotions, given their importance as part of the survival mechanism (2013). Finally, proprioception considers the sense of the body's wholeness and its location. It is believed that proprioception responds to the polar magnetic fields in orienting the body's sense of position.

Throughout the deathbed scenes, Alameddine effectively heightens these bodily sensations as a way to communicate the discomfort experienced by the characters. In this first scene, the hallucination ends at the moment physical pain becomes too much to ignore. The PWA becomes aware of the bed on which he is lying. He feels pain which he blames on the bed as it makes contact and offers resistance to his body. After having been transported to a space lacking identifiable traits, perhaps due to ADC, his phenomenal apprehension returns him to the hospital room. He regains awareness of his location through the pain and general sense of malaise. All of these sensations are interpreted through a body that is engaged in an act of decoding stimuli to *make sense* of the moment.

³⁴ See Sherrington, Charles Scott. *The Integrative Action of the Nervous System*. 1906. Routledge, 2000.

The body feels pain (exteroception) which triggers a return to the self's location in the world (proprioception), sensations which in turn inform and are informed by a sense of dread.

Repetition of this scene calls attention to the novel's concern with sentience. By highlighting sentience the writer hopes to bring forth, rather than force, empathy from the reader – the type of empathy Husserl sees as the key component of intersubjectivity. Repetition grants Alameddine a shorthand way to communicate the siege experience to the reader; here is a character under simultaneous assault by his ailment, society, and the senses, and his body can offer little resistance to these invaders. The first repetition follows the same pattern. However, the vitriol in this episode, which comes from the rider on the white horse, gives way to antipathy as he says “This good and faithful servant killed his best friend. Let him suffer” (53). Again, this particular patch remains unmoored, with no particular trait that can allow the reader to attach it to a particular identity within the novel.

Given the context of the novel, this particular revelation can be read as the representation of a character that has gone through an instance of friendly fire in war. As in the first scene, the body removes the subject from his hallucination, which in this case can be seen as an instance of PTSD. But memory also represents a factor here; within the hallucination the bedridden subject is haunted by the death of a friend. As the horsemen ride off, the subject expresses an awareness of bodily pain: “My eyes hurt. They hurt from the inside. A constant throbbing” (53). Emphasis on sight, by reference to the eyes, expands the

haunting argument. This person has seen the death of his friend, which causes him to feel guilt, that “constant throbbing” that will not let up. The hurt originating from the inside could represent actual pain; after all, he is on his deathbed. But it could also speak of feelings which this person is incapable of working through. Memory and the bodily feelings that arise from it – eye pain (exteroception) and the awareness of being in the hospital bed (proprioception) – saturate the sense receptors, interoceptively haunting the body at this particular moment. Much as Alameddine reveals the intricacy of a person trying to “hold on” to a moment, the author explores the dimensions of traumatic memories and pain, the “constant throbbing” that our inability to apprehend may bring.

One particular repetition of the tableau dramatically breaks the pattern.

During the fourth intervention of the horsemen, the narrator of this episode paints a different picture:

The rider on the pale horse says, “Hey, Diego, do you think this one is worthy?”

Velázquez, on the black horse, says, “This good and faithful servant deserted our country.”

“Whoa,” I interrupted heatedly. “You guys are diverging from the script.”

Mondrian, on the red horse, says, “No. You diverged from the script. You used green in your paintings.” (167)

Suddenly an identity is attached to this particular deathbed scene. By now the reader knows that Mohammad is a famous painter in San Francisco and that he got to the city after fleeing his country of Lebanon. Therefore, Alameddine provides enough detail to lead the reader into identifying this particular subject as Mohammad. War and plague have already been established as bedfellows in the previous episodes and now the two find common ground in Mohammad’s body.

To this we must add the reality of exile as another experience that assaults the minds and bodies of PWAs and war casualties like Mohammad. In her memoir, Makdisi talks about the way the Lebanese found pride in staying in Lebanon during the civil war. Makdisi explains,

From the beginning, there has been a peculiar keeping of accounts of who was here for what and who went away when and why and for how long. This account-keeping becomes particularly feverish – bitter, almost or perhaps I should say, triumphant – after the most intense episodes of violence. (209)

Those who left would be openly vilified for doing so and would lose their status as “authentic” Lebanese. As Makdisi makes clear, “We paid a heavy price for this community. Let those who would comment lightly on us beware: We are unforgiving judges of those who have not shared our experiences,” eventually adding that “we have our own language; we recognize signs that no one else does” (211).³⁵

Despite having gone through war in the early days of the civil war in Lebanon, Mohammad’s move redefines him as an outsider. This awareness weighs so heavily that at a different point in the novel, Mohammad observes, “In America, I fit, but I do not belong. In Lebanon, I belong, but I do not fit” (40). Mohammad’s comment reveals his awareness of estrangement as an impending condition: he is stigmatized for being an exile. Therí A. Pickens sees Mohammad

³⁵ Mai Ghoussoub, in her book *Leaving Beirut* (2007), provides further commentary on this divisiveness by noting that “there is a postwar Lebanese vocabulary that divides those who left from those who stayed; I imagine it must be similar in all cities that have known disasters and big waves of emigration” (33).

and other Alameddine characters as experiencing what Edward Said called “contrapuntal consciousness” (66). Pickens explains,

Contrapuntal consciousness assumes the same tension and reciprocity as [W.E.B. Du Bois’] double consciousness in that both states require that the person exist in a state of consistent longing and disorientation. To avoid collapsing the two concepts neatly upon each other and effacing the difference, it is important to point out that double consciousness assumes a homeland is within reach and contrapuntal consciousness assumes one that is forever out of reach. (66)

Pickens’ argument can be extended to the experiences of homosexuals and PWAs. Much has been written about the notion of a gay diaspora,³⁶ particularly in San Francisco and New York, where many in the LGBTQ community relocated during the latter half of the 20th century in an attempt to find a welcoming space and develop the family system that they otherwise lacked. Thus, there is a sense of exile shared by those in the LGBTQ community. With the arrival of HIV/AIDS later, PWAs would also share in this sense of exile.

Consequently, Mohammad’s experience alone offers a plethora of the patchwork that serves to unify the divergent experiences Alameddine seeks to present. As an exiled Lebanese, Mohammad is no longer Lebanese in the eyes of those who stayed behind. As a homosexual male, he must remain exiled from mainstream society in both Lebanon and the US. And as a PWA, he must remain in isolation from the general population, either through surveillance measures or hospitalization. As a “deserter,” both physically and socio-culturally, Mohammad is denied membership in any social arrangement. Any space Mohammad inhabits

³⁶ For more on this, read Charles Kaiser’s *The Gay Metropolis: The Landmark History of Gay Life in America* (2007) and Lina Meruane’s *Viajes virales: La crisis del contagio global en la escritura del sida* (2012).

represents a battlefield in his perpetual war for self-definition and recognition. His bedridden status captures his bodily exclusion from all things social. Since he does not fit or belong in America or Lebanon, the bed stands as his new homeland.

Margaret Pelling reminds us that, as far as society is concerned,

Ideas of contagion are inseparable from notions of individual morality, social responsibility, and collective action. This is shown most strikingly in respect of measures of isolation and quarantine, and the public health movements subsequent to industrialisation.
(17)

Mohammad's outsider status makes him an archetypal subject of perpetual warfare, physically, mentally, rhetorically; a prototype of sorts. For Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, "War has become a *regime of biopower*, that is, a form of rule aimed not only at controlling the population but producing and reproducing all aspects of social life" (13). If as Priscilla Wald explains "Stigmatizing is a form of isolating and containing a problem, such as a devastating epidemic," (226) then, with Mohammad, Alameddine creates a subject that captures the effects of society's scapegoating mechanism.

Returning to the fourth intervention, when the rider on the white horse – none other than Jesus in this particular episode – declares "I curse you, Peter Rugg. For all of eternity" (167), the final nail is hammered into Mohammad's coffin. Like Peter Rugg, the famous character in William Austin's story about a man who is cursed to ride his carriage to Boston without ever reaching the city, Mohammad is cursed not only to remain in exile, a ghost that is not recognized

by those around him as a living, breathing being, but to suffer in it, paying for his inability to comply with the rules and demands of his "entorno" with his own life.

Ghostliness overtakes Mohammad, who is unable to engage the world beyond his bodily status as a PWA and a traumatized casualty of war; these conditions bind him to a spectral status in front of the material world's phenomenal apprehension. But not only is his status invisible to others; Mohammad is seemingly invisible to himself, as his body is incapable of apprehending the world through the senses. After the horsemen leave, he notes, "I still have no feeling in my fingers. I can't touch home" (166). The pain in the previous passages turns into a lack of sensation, a lack of being. The failure in Mohammad's exteroceptive mechanism prevents him from making sense of his situation, in turn unmooring his senses of interoception and proprioception. After attacking his being, war and illness, as regimes of biopower, have paralyzed him, or scarier yet, desensitized him. Exile means not only lack of access to his origins and sense of belonging, but a lack of access to his sense of self as a being in the world. Jim Hicks explains that "[t]o be uneasy about your own place in the world of the living is a proprioceptive form of haunting" (21). Without empathetic interactions with other beings, Mohammad cannot develop a sensorial engagement with his "entorno." Thus, I would extend uneasiness about one's place in the world to also interoceptive and exteroceptive forms of haunting. His status as a PWA and a casualty of war exiles him from even his own body. His body, much as his homeland, is no longer his.

As was the case when he found out he was leaving the homeland and when he discovered his PWA status, Mohammad cannot “hold on” to the moment, cannot *make sense* of the world, cannot reach out and connect to it. Worse yet, he cannot *make sense* of himself, since without “feeling” his circumstances turn him into a non-being. It is no wonder that the next hallucination finds him expressing this longing for meaning, a sense behind his experience as both a Lebanese casualty and a PWA. Still in bed, he grapples with his sensual incapacity, his isolation from meaning. Mohammad pines,

for a feeling, an impression of myself as content, fulfilled. At times, I feel it as a yearning for a lover, someone to share my life with, someone to laugh with. I loved, lost, and loved again. The longing never abated. It was only distracted for a little while. I searched for the elusive grail. (185)

It is not a stretch to see in his longing a desire for an emotional and sensual connection with another human being, an intersubjective connection. What may not be as evident is the possibility that this yearning for a sense of belonging includes his homeland as a metaphorical lover, part of that “someone” to share his life with which was denied to him once he became uprooted by war. Mohammad’s experience of having “loved, lost, and loved again” speaks strongly to the protracted nature of his state of siege. Whenever he thinks he is about to overcome a particular event, the pieces fall apart and prove him wrong. Mohammad waits “for a peace beyond all understanding” (186). He lies “on [his] deathbed waiting” (186). Waiting characterizes the state of siege. The war casualty waits for her/his shelter to collapse under the weight of shelling or other forms of violence. The PWA waits for the body to fully collapse under the weight

of opportunistic infections. The exile waits for the opportunity to return home. Protraction provides the temporality necessary for haunting to develop. Woven together, the situations presented in the novel quilt a common ground in the fact that the subjects experiencing these situations await with anticipation for the repressed to manifest. They do not know how the repressed will manifest, or even what exactly is being repressed, but they all “yearn for a moment [they] know nothing of” (186). That moment, though, remains on the horizon.

In *Frames of War*, Judith Butler posits that “To be a body is to be exposed to social crafting and form, and that is what makes the ontology of the body a social ontology” (3). The body in *KoolAIDS* functions as the location of the nexus of war and AIDS, but it also carries meaning as a language unto itself. The body speaks war and AIDS, communicating and comparing these experiences as they are felt. Therefore, hauntings and repetitions are not limited to Mohammad but extend to every character in *KoolAIDS*. Yet it is at the textual level, at the level of the novel as a discursive object or platform, that these repetitions truly achieve the height of ghostly hauntings and felt phenomenology.

The novel conspicuously develops the notion of “amalgam,” a word that itself is planted within the text with no explicit explanation. The novel’s quilt-work builds an amalgam of the experience of PWAs and war casualties. As such, the form of the novel heightens the amalgamation of these sensorial experiences by presenting intersections between both, at times with clear intent (i.e. including references to both in sequential episodes) at others with subtlety (by blending both in the same passage), but always with an eye on expanding hauntings and

their felt manifestations. One such amalgamation works to connect the Military Industrial Complex with what could be labeled a Pharmaceutical Industrial Complex. In another passage, once again not assigned to one particular identity, a narrator jokingly opines,

I always thought AIDS should be a trademark of Burroughs Wellcome. You know, AIDS™ is a registered trademark of Burroughs Wellcome, use of this trademark without paying royalties to its rightful owner is a crime punishable by a slow, torturous, torturous death. (167)

After questioning “How much money has this company made on our suffering?” (167), the voice seamlessly switches to similar monetary considerations of the Lebanese Civil War:

Has anybody ever tried to figure what the average daily profit was? They did in Beirut. A local newspaper, *Al Diyar*, ran a cost estimate. A 240 mm shell cost \$9500. The 160 mm shell costs \$1,500, the 155 mm \$700, the 122 mm \$300, and so on down to a single Kalashnikov bullet, which costs about thirty cents. (167)

After adding estimates of nightly bombardments and their cost, compounding the costs into years, the voice returns to its earlier refrain by not-so-jokingly stating, “The Lebanese Civil War™ is a trademark of Martin Marietta” (167) – a manufacturer of ballistic missiles that has since merged with Lockheed Martin.

An amalgamation such as the one presented here calls attention to previous repetitions as really the convergence of parallel realities. Both the Military Industrial Complex and the Pharmaceutical Industrial Complex cash in on the suffering of the casualties as they trudge towards profit. The “slow, torturous, torturous death” implied in this sequence applies equally to both conditions; the callousness of protraction is captured exceptionally well by the phrase. Moreover,

the detailed listing of cost could be seen as a cruel parallel of the naming of those who have died of war and AIDS. Here Alameddine frames both war and AIDS through the invocation of statistics as the ultimate grounding of reality or truth in a world governed by quantifiable evidence. As the profit margin goes up, the body count is invoked through elision. But embedded in this desire for stats and evidence is the selective elimination of the stats and evidence that do not fall in line with the narrative a nation or a people want to enshrine or celebrate.

Frames are after all selective, as Butler rightly argues:

The frame is always throwing something away, always keeping something out, always de-realizing and de-legitimizing alternative versions of reality, discarded negatives of the official version. And so, when the frame jettisons certain versions of war, it is busily making a rubbish heap whose animated debris provides the potential resources for resistance. When versions of reality are excluded or jettisoned to the domain of unreality, then specters are produced that haunt the ratified version of reality, animated and de-ratifying traces. (xiii)

In other words, what is omitted always finds a way to manifest itself.

Amalgamation through repetition is Alameddine's way of revealing the hidden links of these parallel realities.

The ghostly hauntings truly reach their nadir when Alameddine places the repetitions at wide distances within the text. The *jamaïs vu* effect mentioned earlier gets ahold of the reader due to the distancing effect of the experiences that echo each other. Moreover, this distancing effect places the reader within proximity of the characters' sense of being under attack. The notion of "attack" echoes throughout the text and takes on different modalities. For example, during an early episode Samir's mother, who keeps a diary which is interspersed within

the novel, narrates one particular attack that took place during the early days of the civil war in Lebanon. She writes about the sounds of shelling getting closer to their apartment, the look in her children's eyes, and the general anxiety that pervaded the night. Suddenly a shell hits, sending glass and debris flying. Samir's mother proceeds to lead the family down the stairs to the underground shelter. Once there, she looks around to find that her friend Najwa and the latter's family are missing. Samir's father leaves to check on them and returns with the wounded:

When my husband came into the garage carrying Najwa, her face covered in blood, I lost it. I screamed. The children screamed. Mr. Hafez, who followed my husband, was carrying Marwa, Najwa's four-year-old daughter. Everybody stared at them in disbelief. I got myself under control and ran to help my husband put her down. He told us Najwa's husband and three boys were dead. Killed by the explosion. (7)

Given that this is part of a diary entry, we know Samir's mother is grappling with the memory after the fact. But she is also trying to narrate an event beyond reach. She witnesses the aftermath, but she was not there to witness the actual blast and the result on Najwa's family. Thus, what she deals with is their haunting in the form of *jama'is vu*. The family is never embodied in this episode; instead, it is the specter of their existence that is invoked after death, in absentia.

Scott, Mohammad's former lover and friend, who suffers from the ravages of AIDS, is equally invoked in absentia. Scott haunts the text in a similar way to Najwa's family. In an episode narrated by Kurt, another former lover of Scott who takes care of him in his final days, the language employed invokes the earlier attack on Samir's family:

He was coming up the stairs to my flat when he got his first attack. He had been looking haggard the past week, but nothing was seriously wrong. I can't recall exactly what happened. He was coming up the stairs. He had to stop midway because he ran out of breath. I was at the top of the stairs waiting for him to come up.... He then fainted and fell down the steps. (61)

The location in a staircase returns the reader to a physical landscape similar to that of Samir's apartment. The reader learns of an "attack." Later, we find out that Scott has developed AIDS, therefore, we link his attack to him having Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia.

But beyond these linkages, the experiences are quite reminiscent of each other. In both, the characters' sense of awareness is put to the test. Kurt "can't recall exactly what happened" (61), while Samir's mother cannot "recall much of what happened for the twelve hours before we were able to drive [Najwa] to the hospital" (7). The traumatic events defy clear apprehension. Moreover, the victims of the attacks are narrated into being. We gain access to their attacks through the senses of witnesses. And much as Najwa's family haunts the text, Scott's haunting proves even more pervasive, an extension of other ghosts. In fact, Scott dies many times throughout the text. For example, Mohammad marks Scott's death in the text by sharing Scott's last request: "Scott said he wanted to be immortal. He wanted to be cremated. He wanted me to use his ashes in a painting" (103). Mohammad then notes how he had to cancel an exhibit (130). This occurs at other moments too, but it is early on that Scott becomes the haunting specter that he will represent when his death immediately follows Samir's mother's telling in the text of the incident that took Najwa's family:

Scott died in 1990. They never really figured out what finally killed him. You know how some people die and it seems just right? They are at peace. They have a glow about them in their last days. They say the wisest things. Scott wasn't one of those. (7)

Scott's death remains an enigma. Despite knowing the fact that it has to do with having AIDS, we never know which opportunistic infection took hold of him in the final moment. Moreover, his death occurs outside of the actual text, much as Najwa's family dies outside of the scene. The reader can substitute Scott in this passage with Najwa's family. In fact, the focus is on the power these events have on everyone after a loved one has been lost.

Scott's death also serves as a problematization of the romantic ennobling of death usually attached to casualties of war and illness. In revealing the kernel of truth of violent death in both acts, the text disturbs our expectation of finality, revealing to us how narrative possesses the capacity to build fictional forms of death, which are in turn constructed for the benefit of those who want to remain untouched by their violence. What the reader receives in their stead is a confrontation with the fact that many of these lives are lost senselessly, with no peace or glow to speak of, and no act of fictionalization can erase the horror of the reality these subjects experienced in their lives. Therefore, Alameddine exploits the elements of narrative to bring us near these bodies.

Scott's death, like a thread, joins the other haunting experiences within the text, each one adding a voice to the quilt. As each voice speaks, as their bodies speak, the sense of siege then reverberates into a chorus that haunts the mind and the body of those who come into contact with these experiences. However, in positioning Najwa and Scott's deaths at the beginning of the novel,

Alameddine shifts the focus from the fictional death that usually accompanies these types of narratives to a palpable sense of affect. Death, in other words, filters the *senses*, that is, the significance, we ascribe to these subjects after they are gone. But more than that, death shifts the *senses* of loss, fear, anxiety, and protracted threat onto the witnessing reader. Death does not represent the finality but the beginning of the effect of loss for the witnessing reader. A closer look at Samir's mother's diary entries reveals how this shift is meant to occur in the reader, leading to a haunting phenomenology that binds all the senses of siege.

The first time we meet Samir's mother she narrates the Najwa incident. Dated March 20th, 1976, Samir's mother opens her entry stating that "[t]his is without a doubt the worst day of my life" (5). This opening line becomes a refrain in most other entries, serving as a phenomenal introduction to her perception of each event narrated as well as another linkage within the text of the senses of siege. Applying similar language to an entry dated September 5th, 1988, Samir's mother writes,

Today is without a doubt the worst day of my life. Samir told me he has the AIDS virus. I don't know what to do. I love him so much. I don't know what to do. As if we didn't have enough problems. I don't know what to do. Oh God, why us? What have we done to deserve all of this? I don't know if I can go on. I don't know what to do. (16)

In many ways Samir's mother comes to stand for the reader within the text given her status as observer and casualty herself. It is through her that Alameddine leads the reader's transition from spectator to direct witness. Thus, when she narrates the moment when she finds out about her son's development of AIDS in a manner that echoes the assault on her apartment, the reader is meant to

activate the received memories of that assault on the sense and ascribe them to her senses on the new revelation. Conversely, Samir is to be seen as a casualty of this new war, and his suffering, both mentally and bodily, is meant as an avatar to the suffering of those during all the events of the civil war. In other words, the bodies are fused: the PWA body with the casualty of war body; Samir's mother's body as witness and victim with the reader's body.

Each of these events represents the worst moment in Samir's mother's life. Furthermore, in returning constantly within the entry to her insistence that "I don't know what to do," she leads the reader to feel her disorientation. She cannot make sense of her son's illness. She cannot make sense of Najwa's family's death. And contrary to the usual narrative where those on the periphery obtain some space within the text through which they can make sense or cope with their family member's affliction, here Samir's mother is forced to confront reality. In fact, she is forced to relive the Najwa episode and Samir's announcement in perpetuity, since in prefacing each event as "the worst day of my life" she builds up the specters and fuses them together. Thus, with each traumatic event, Samir's mother not only revisits the past, but is confronted with new phenomenal experiences which she feels she has already experienced, whether she has in fact done so or not.

The fused specters demand memorializing. Their presence must be felt and addressed even in apparent absence. To convey this dichotomy hauntingly, Alameddine utilizes a most unexpected object. The phone book bridges the sense of loss attached to both war and AIDS. The phone book, with its list of

family, friends, and acquaintances, serves as a perfect symbol of the connections we make and the passage of someone's presence in each individual's life. During one poignant diary entry, Samir's mother finds common ground with her son as they both compare their respective tragedies through an observation about their phone books:

When I asked him what made him cry, he admitted he was cleaning out his phone book. It brought tears to my eyes. What have we done to deserve all this? He said he had to erase out the names of a number of friends who have died. I cried as well. Both for him and me. I had done the same thing so many times. In the eighties, I would go through my phone book every year. So many friends died, so many simply moved away, emigrated. The war took a terrible toll. (31)

Such a simple observation reveals the interconnectedness of their experience of siege. In both their black leather address books, Samir and his mother account for their respective losses. Samir's mother comes to understand her son's sense of siege through the act of erasure. Each name erased represents a casualty in both conflicts. Moreover, each event amplifies the protraction of the other; an endless parade of bodies that feel pain and succumb to it. The fear and loss of control in the Neyla episode, in the Najwa episode, and in the moments when Mohammad, Samir, and the latter's mother have found out about an AIDS diagnosis seep into us in this act of amplification. We have been there, too. We have lost people, we have been forced to erase someone from our phone books. We have been forced to confront the reality of loss, and we have been forced at such moments to confront our own sense of imminent erasure. Alameddine denies the reader an escape or any sense of relief, instead amplifying threat, fear, loss.

As a result, *KoolAIDS* becomes a memorializing text. I have mentioned the deaths of Scott and Najwa, but, in fact, seemingly every character in the novel ultimately represents a ghost – by the time the novel ends, almost everyone has died, the majority from either war or AIDS. And like Scott’s death, these deaths occur at various points of the text, amplifying the haunting effect as the dead multiply. Scott, Samir, and many others succumb to AIDS. Lebanese, Palestinians, Syrians, Israelis and many others die during the war. Even Samir’s mother we come to find out has passed away during a conversation about the possibility of publishing her diary, the very text we have had access to. Thus, the reader have traversed a chamber of specters, each one vying for their attention in telling their story. Each one, in effect, communicating their sense of dread and threat. Each one demanding that we bear witness to their narrative.

As the last stitch in this textual quilt, Mohammad’s body, the body that lied on its deathbed, the body that hallucinated the four horsemen into perception, the body that grappled with its sense in the world, provides a final utterance: “I die” (245). In the same statement Mohammad speaks his presence by invoking his absence. As a result, he haunts the reader, demanding that we witness his moment of erasure as we retain his memory in the felt phenomenology of his experiences. Regarding victimhood, Hicks explains that “the representation of war, and of the victims of war, does traditionally tend toward the silencing of victims – toward holding them out as objects of pathos rather than as subjects that speak for themselves” (47). As I have shown throughout, Alameddine has granted Mohammad and others, both casualties of war and AIDS, the chance to

speak for themselves. The patchwork in *KoolAIDS* creates a space where each voice stands for its own experience while amplifying the rest. The siege experience, thus, is conveyed as both collective and individual. To speak the body into such a narrative pulls other bodies into the possibilities of feeling and grants the capacity to memorialize other's suffering. At the nexus of signification, these bodies challenge the "epidemic of signification" through the act of speaking for themselves. If silence equals death, as ACTUP members famously chanted at their rallies and sit ins, then speaking the body, even after death in the form of haunting, breaks the complacency that silence traditionally has granted.

CHAPTER III

MY BODY IS A TEMPLE AND A PRISON: DEREK JARMAN'S CORPUS

Could our fingers touch across this page,
across the fleeting minutes?
Derek Jarman, *The Last of England*

I am involved as one body.
Derek Jarman, *At Your Own Risk*

Tilling The Soil

To encounter Derek Jarman's work is to immerse oneself in various forms and manifestations of art and artistry. Late in his life Jarman proclaimed that he was a painter who chose film as his primary medium (Watson 33). Jarman's proclamation sheds light on his approach and perspective regarding the limits or lack thereof in artistic production. Consequently, we can speak of a painterly quality in his films, particularly those made on Super 8 film stock; of a textual emphasis in his paintings, where words are occasionally scratched onto impasto applications; even of a prevalent montage technique that characterizes most of his writing, jumping from memoir, to poetry, to critical analysis without any transitions, usually within the same text. However, along with being a filmmaker, a painter, and a writer, Jarman was also a gardener. After finding out about his AIDS diagnosis, Jarman bought a fisherman's cottage on Dungeness, the southernmost tip of Kent, England. In what is known as Prospect Cottage, Jarman built a garden populated with found items that washed ashore.

The shores of Dungeness are notorious for their shingle beaches. The elements batter this plot with persistent waves, brutal salt-infused wind, and a

cold that rarely lets up. Such a location seems like a less-than-ideal place for a garden. And yet, Jarman, against the odds, succeeded in creating arguably his greatest work, one that has served as the blueprint for similar gardens and which remains widely documented and celebrated to this day. Jarman's gardening process, documented in detail in books like *Modern Nature* (1991) and *Smiling in Slow Motion* (2001), included a lot of trial and error. Plants were tested out. Many perished on the first night. Others succumbed in due time to the salt and the storms. But, ultimately, Jarman hit on those plants that were sufficiently robust and resilient to grow in this inhospitable environment. Jarman's fascination with gardening, cemented at a young age – he vividly remembered his parents giving him his first “grownup book” in April 1946; a book on gardening, no less, titled *Beautiful Flowers and How to Grow Them* (1922) – returned in force in his waning years. The garden became for him, as Michael Charlesworth notes, “his place to stand,” a respite to contrast with the ramped up activity after his AIDS diagnosis.

Few artists have highlighted the body and energized it the way Derek Jarman did. But as far as Jarman was concerned, the emphasis on the body in his art attained greater pertinence on December 1986. Four days before Christmas of that year, Jarman learned that his body had been exposed to the HIV virus and, as a consequence, had developed AIDS. From that point onward, AIDS informs Jarman's corpus. Jarman infuses his body, its senses, its experiences, with more insistence into his artistic work. Jarman's devotion to his garden and the conditions surrounding it reflect a reaction to the bleak outlook of

being diagnosed with AIDS at the time. Here we have a garden tended to constantly because of all the factors that threaten its survival: the waves that threaten to uproot and wash away the foundations and the plants; the wind that threatens to blow everything away; the sea spray that burns the plants and oxidizes the metal which gives the garden its structure; the cold temperatures and lack of sun that deny the conditions necessary for the plants to thrive. In his garden Jarman presents us with the theater of an ongoing siege. It is this sense of constant assault, I believe, that drew Jarman into the obsessive work that went into keeping this garden alive. In the garden he built a parallel to the siege he was under. In keeping it alive, he kept himself alive. Jarman, who had already spent the majority of his life creating work that combated the prejudices and attacks he received as a Queer man in conservative Britain, – B. Ruby Rich calls him the “King of Queer” (49) – found himself having to erect new defenses against the added burden of “Living With AIDS.”

The garden afforded Jarman a renewed connection to his senses. A lot of the writing that details his gardening foregrounds the color of the plants; the sounds of his creaking cottage; the smell of sea spray and blooming flowers; the texture of his gardening utensils as well as that of the dirt, rocks, and found items that comprised his garden; the feel of the cold temperatures clashing with his skin and burrowing deep into his bones. The garden’s sensorial stimuli instilled in him a renewed comprehension/apprehension of what it meant to *sense* and *make sense*. Away from the city, the garden became a place beyond the reach of dominant language, culture, society, and politics. And while the city always

demanded his return, be it for the purposes of filming, presenting work at a gallery, or visiting the hospital during his bouts with the opportunistic infections common for a Person With AIDS, the garden provided enough time and space to reassess his life and find new ways to think and engage the world. Given his access to this new space, we can trace a sensuous turn in his work, including his film work. Although his work was always sensuous, his reconnection with gardening at the time of his AIDS diagnosis heightens the sensorial dominants in his work. And that is why Jarman's garden provides an ideal theoretical frame through which we can assess his post-1986 output.

In *At Your Own Risk* (1992), Jarman offers the following concise assessment of his Corpus: "My work is my life" (114). Informed by Deleuze and Guatarri's concepts of the plateau and the Body-Without-Organs as well as Jean Luc Nancy's idea of *corpus*, this chapter will look at Derek Jarman's physical body and his body of work as equal parts informing and forming Derek Jarman the individual. It is my intention in this chapter to reconstitute Jarman's feeling body through his work. I want to retrace and understand the siege experience he went through with AIDS by focusing on the sensations he so meticulously captured in his oeuvre. We can speak of artifacts like Jarman's garden, his film work, and his body proper as plateaus on which his philosophies on life, art, and living with AIDS assemble. Each selected unit grants a necessary component towards assembling Derek Jarman the person. I want to connect these units in the hopes of sensorially connecting with Jarman himself. I want, as my epigraph suggests, our fingers to touch across the page. To achieve this, this chapter

approaches Jarman's post-1986 artistic work as a collection of elements which, when taken together, assemble into a meticulously tended corpus, which, as I hope to show, is to this day alive and expanding in influence and reach.

In their influential book *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), Deleuze and Guattari propose the notion of plateaus as spaces where momentary encounters between elements take place; in the act of assembling, elements give rise to new spaces, connections, and encounters. Each plateau provides the individual and the collective with an opportunity for the expansion and growth of ideas, thoughts, possibilities, and potentialities. Because of their momentary nature, Deleuze and Guattari think of these connections as nomadic. One of the plateaus which Deleuze and Guattari explore is the Bodies-without-Organs (BwO). The BwO captures the state of potentiality immanent in everything, from people, ideas, and situations, to art and philosophy. Using the symbol of an egg as their ideal example, Deleuze and Guattari propose that the BwO carries the possibilities of development onto a limitless horizon. A BwO harnesses creative and innovative energy, not to retain and store, but to deploy towards renewed positive creativity and innovation. A BwO seeks to dissolve into parts that will eventually develop into new BwOs; thus, creativity and innovation remain positively on the move in perpetuity.

Jarman's garden fits the mold of a BwO. His gardening choices are nomadic, always on the move, developing ideas, teasing out potentialities, awaiting results in order to further develop new ideas. Each added item changes the garden's constitution, becoming part of the greater body while also remaining

itself. Jarman's artistic work can be seen as an extension of this gardening philosophy and work. Each film, each book, and each painting – assemblages in their own right – are at once their own self-contained manifestations, but each also represents a component of the greater assemblage that is Jarman's corpus. Corpus here is meant to signify multifaceted embodiment; in other words, not just Jarman's body, but his entire body of work.

Jean Luc Nancy developed the concept of corpus as a way of speaking about a multitude of bodies, some embodied, others embodying. Nancy explains in his book *Corpus* (2008), "bodies are places of existence" (15). By this, Nancy, following Martin Heidegger, means to stress the ontological centrality of the body in apprehending the phenomenal world. Our bodies allow us to feel, sense, experience, connect, communicate, and "rendre l'incorporel touchant" (10), that is, bodies "make the incorporeal touching" (11). In other words, our bodies allows us to be, giving us access not only to other tangible bodies, but, perhaps more importantly for Nancy, rendering perceivable those experiences in life that sometimes remain beyond the reach of the senses proper. Therefore, phenomenology for Nancy is not just about the certitude of the phenomena that activates the senses, but also about those sensations perceptible through the emotions, which the body renders as real as the strictly sensorial. As a result, Nancy extends the idea of the embodied body to include a person's body of work. What we produce through the use of our individual bodies (art, tools, artifacts, labor, ideas, techné, ars) throughout our existence is as much a part of us as our bodies proper. The body of work can evoke sensations in the absence

of its creator's body. Furthermore, our body of work helps build the social body and its historical archive. For that reason, corpus includes flesh, bone, sinew, blood, and all the materials that makes up the human body, while also including psyche, soul, ideas, and our humanity. My use of the term corpus throughout is both a recognition of the presence and absence of Jarman's body; a perception of his artistic work as a body that is always fused to the artist's flesh, blood, and essence; and an attempt at blurring the distinction between both. The artist's oeuvre, his trajectory, his body, his *sensibilities*, his political beliefs, his experimentation with form, his family history, his AIDS diagnosis, his activism: all of these parts assemble and build Jarman's corpus. Like a garden, the corpus is tended to. And in creating art, in tending to his corpus, Derek Jarman created Derek Jarman.

One key element mobilized in Jarman's corpus which is pertinent in this analysis is his use of the war narrative. Jarman's filmic work after his AIDS diagnosis features elements of the war narrative in order to capture the duress a subject experiences while under siege. When presenting his corpus and its sensorial qualities, Jarman settles on a pervasive militaristic frame of reference, building worlds dominated by a theater of war emblematic of his life as the son of an RAF pilot, a Queer man, an avant-garde artist, and a Person With AIDS. In *The Last of England* (1988) Jarman captures England under siege, with citizens either being assassinated or deported for not fitting the nation's identity. *War Requiem* (1989) serves as Jarman's adaptation of Benjamin Britten's musical piece of the same name, itself based on the WWI poetry of Wilfred Owen. *The*

Garden (1990) works as a continuation of the attacks on the Queer body, this time with an emphasis on religion as the main belligerent. Finally, *Blue* (1993), Jarman's final film, sets a soundtrack that captures hospital visits, fascist speeches, and the sounds of bombs and weaponry against an Yves Klein Blue screen for 75 minutes. This chapter will look at each of these films as assemblages of sensorial qualities and military rhetoric. After analyzing each film in isolation, I return to Jarman's garden for a pointed look at how these individual plots work to build the artist himself, like parts of a body. This chapter will end with a more pointed look at Jarman's garden, in an effort to assemble the films together as parts of Jarman's overall gardening work.

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The Last Man, Accompanied

I've never been interested in the future, only in the past insofar as it relates to the present. I can't waste time mulling over hypothetical scenarios.

Derek Jarman, *At Your Own Risk*

In his 1978 film *Jubilee*, Jarman paints the picture of a destroyed England ruled by punk gangs. The frame of the story presents Queen Elizabeth I asking her advisor John Dee to show her a vision of England in the future. In that future, Queen Elizabeth II has been murdered, the streets burn, and the infrastructure is reduced to rubble and ashes. The film becomes a lament on the part of both Elizabeth I and the filmmaker himself; the former sees her once-great empire destroyed, the latter meditates on what he sees as the inevitable downfall of British culture and society due to the rise of conservatism (Margaret Thatcher would become Prime Minister a year later). Ten years after *Jubilee*, and now

diagnosed with AIDS, a wiser, perhaps less hopeful Jarman returns to this apocalyptic vision with his film *The Last of England* (1988). If *Jubilee* served as a harbinger, *The Last of England* functions more as a documentary of a new reality, a film in which Jarman seeks to “explore through metaphor and dream imagery, the deep seated malaise of current Britain” (Turner 82).

Tellingly, *The Last of England* opens with Jarman working on notebooks in his study. Unlike *Jubilee* where Queen Elizabeth I frames the film, Jarman’s presence serves as the frame, the artist now bringing his own body into his work. Consequently, the story we are about to witness is no longer meant as a vision, but as a reality, Jarman’s reality. Defending the film at the time of its release from moralist attacks in the Sunday Times, Jarman explains that “the decay that permeates *The Last of England* is there for all of us to see; it is in all our daily lives, in our institutions and in our newspapers” (Charlesworth 134). For Jarman, *The Last of England* serves as a reflection of the world. This reflection of the world extends beyond what is “there for all of us to see” and includes those things that are there for all of us to listen to, as well.

The Last of England brings together seemingly isolated segments that build on each other through internal visual and aural tendencies. Segments include sporadic youths destroying structures, a group of hooded individuals rounding up people either to execute or deport, footage of various wars, unknown subjects carrying flares in the dark, a wedding party, and a group of bodies orgiastically dancing. The bodies in each of these segments are depicted as being under threat; daily life represents a source of ongoing danger and

confusion. The film opens to a sequence where Jarman splices together images of himself in his studio, a male youth tying his arm as if preparing to shoot up drugs, and Caravaggio's painting *Amor Vincit Omnia* (1601-02), first as an out of context hyperkinetic image captured on Super 8, then as the object of rage at the hands of a second male youth. The youth tramples and dances on the painting, occasionally hitting it with a plank. To these images, Jarman adds a voice over delivering two of his poems, *4AM* and *Imperial Embers*, published in the accompanying book *The Last of England* (1987).³⁷ The *Imperial Embers* segment of the poem mourns a multitude of losses; the loss of innocence, of youth, of country, of friends, of memory:

The household gods have vanished, no one remembers quite when. Poppies and corncockle have long been forgotten here, like the boys who died in Flanders, their names erased by a late frost which clipped the village cross. Spring lapped the fields in arsenic green, the oaks died this year. On every green hill mourners stand, and weep for *The Last of England*. (emphasis added, 189)

These apocalyptic lines set up the film as an aftermath. A survivor is forced to look back at better days and contrast those with the present situation. Utilizing the elegiac form enhances the sense of loss. But who exactly has been lost here? And who is doing the looking back? Jarman summons the ghosts of WWI, particularly those lost in the region of Flanders, where some of the greatest numbers of casualties occurred during the war. But are we to read more into this notion of the Last of England?

To answer these questions, we must summon another ghost: Jarman's father. Perhaps no figure is as towering in the the life of Derek Jarman as the

³⁷ The book would be renamed *Kicking The Pricks* (1997).

artist's father. An RAF pilot during WWII, Lancelot Jarman represents a problematic figure for Jarman. In a sense, *The Last of England* constitutes Jarman's attempt at exorcising the memories and influences of his father. In the book *The Last of England*, Jarman constantly returns to his father, shedding light on how many elements in the film are responses to his father's, and by extension the nation's, militaristic ways:

[H]e created my aversion to all authority, to the extreme patriotism with which he fought the war, which bounced back and destroyed our tranquility. I looked in his poisoned well and saw others celebrating the war, using it to bolster their dominant positions.... All I saw was deceit and bankruptcy.... This country stinks of platitude. *The bomb dropped in this child's eye.* (emphasis added, 179-81)

In many ways, Jarman saw himself as a child who never grew up due to his father's abusive behavior. By extension this means that Jarman saw himself as a casualty of his father's war. Abuses such as forced feeding marked the artist, who developed a deep-seated hatred towards his father. Jarman's aunt, Moyra, does not mince words when in a letter to her nephew she writes, "Your dad really was a strange man. Yes you were impossible with food, he used to try and force feed you, and meal times became a *battle*" (emphasis added, 249). There was, however, also much admiration. Jarman always recognized his father's service and the fact that the latter "fought a hard war. He fought Hitler, prosecuting the war with a violence that proved uncontainable," going so far as to accept that "without men like my father the war would not have been won" (Jarman, *England* 107). Unfortunately for both Jarman and his father, war ultimately meant more harm than good. Once the war ended, Jarman's father "carried on the war" (107) to the detriment of his family. Jarman explains that for his father "family became

an extension of the war” (121). On that account, we could read Jarman’s father as one of those whose name has been erased, forced to carry the burden of the war into oblivion. In the days after the war, Jarman’s father lost his sanity along with the love of his family. *The Last of England* stands as an elegy to Jarman’s father as yet another victim of loss; the loss of sanity, the loss of family, the loss of the promised rewards of a hard war, the loss of glory.

But ultimately, the Last of England really represents Jarman’s generation. In the story of his father and his generation, Jarman sees an important parallel to his generation’s experience during the early days of the AIDS epidemic. Talking about his father, Jarman writes “He had many friends who were killed, he laid his life on the line but survived” (107). As the epidemic progressed, Jarman similarly found himself seeing his friends passing, not only as bodies, but as memories, their names equally erased. At one point in the film, the voiceover proclaims “I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness. Starved. Hysterical. Naked. Not with a bang but a whimper” (*Last of England*).³⁸ To capture the physical and mental onslaught of the situation, Jarman mines the possibilities of the visual and aural montage, connecting the idyllic home movies his father filmed with the sounds of the destruction of a nation by bombs and war machines. The footage Jarman’s father captured shows Jarman as an infant, occasionally being carried by his mother Betts, a smile ever-present on her face. The footage also includes Jarman and his sister playing around in the yard. At one revealing point, Jarman chooses footage of the siblings playing in front of an

³⁸ The final sentence in Jarman’s voiceover comes from T.S. Eliot’s quintessential poem “The Hollow Men” (1925).

ivy-laden wall, on the top of which we see the barbed wire that surrounded and protected RAF camps on foreign soil, in their case either Italy or Pakistan. Jarman's choice here is meant to convey the contrast between the illusion of bliss with the realities of a world at war. In his book *Modern Nature*, Jarman recalls talking at an exhibit about "the barbed wire that had hemmed me in, quite literally, in the RAF camps - the fenced-in boarding school, the proscribed sexuality, the virus" (167). Thus, we see Jarman connect the RAF experience - the war and its effects on his father's generation - to his experience with AIDS. The war represents a virus in his family; a virus that affected them all.

To punctuate these images, Jarman resorts to the use of very meticulously chosen sounds. During much of the domestic scenes, Jarman adds the sound of bomber planes flying overhead, hovering over their intended targets. To hear the droning of these planes elicits a sense of doom, creating anxiety in the viewer/listener. One is made aware of the dangers of the time when the footage was taken. Seeing the family evidently unaware of the war machines above their heads shatters the illusion of innocence and happiness Jarman's father intended when filming these events. To these moments, which recur throughout the film in sporadic, almost invasive ways, Jarman eventually adds the sounds of gunfire and bombs exploding. Consequently, there is a reinterpretation of these events on the part of Jarman who reinscribes the actual history lurking behind the footage. In shattering the illusion, Jarman brings forth an approximation to the real. But beyond the obvious historical connections, the sounds anachronistically capture the danger that presently hovers over Jarman upon learning of his

diagnosis. It is with that in mind that during the latter part of the film, Jarman adds footage of his father's bombing runs, footage that was actually shot by Lancelot Jarman himself. Jarman cuts the bombing run together with a wedding sequence that goes from a happy celebration to an overwhelming event for the bride-to-be, who cannot withstand the pressure or magnitude of the moment and flees, eventually cutting the dress to shreds. Embedded in this wedding sequence, though, is an interesting image. An infant, seemingly the child of the couple that is to marry, lies inside a pram, crying, and covered in newspapers and tabloids which mostly informs us of the Malvinas War of 1982. There is a troubling and frightening parallelism at work here. Jarman, during one of the home movies, can be seen in a pram, being pushed around by his mother. The connections between this baby covered in news about war and Jarman as an infant are inevitable.

At this point in the film, Jarman invites the viewer to surmise that these bombing runs are sent forth to destroy Jarman himself. In the book *The Last of England*, Jarman writes "I was born with sirens wailing, bombs fell through my childhood, I watched the world militarise, I watched the industrial machine destroy the ecological fabric..." (109). Thus, war looms large over Jarman as a child in the family films. War looms large over Jarman as the infant in the pram, covering him with its effects. After all, it is the outcome of the Malvinas War which some credited for the Conservative Party's cementing of its hold on power in

England during the 1980s and well into the 1990s.³⁹ The images and sounds of war always find a way through in this film. But more importantly, the effects of war *touch* Jarman; through his father, through his country's history, through his position as a social outsider.

Sound in *The Last of England* elicits a physical response from the viewer. It is this response which Jarman hopes will connect the viewer to his experience. There is a physical connection here to the past by way of the sounds that loom large within the film. As he insists, "The air raid sirens still send a *shiver* through me, something that those born after '45 will never experience" (emphasis added, 203). That might be the case with regards to war proper, WWII to be precise. In that case, it is Jarman's father who is doing the looking back, witnessing his friends succumbing to war. But with regards to the epidemic, the hope is that we will in fact experience that sense of hovering doom that comes with living with AIDS at a time when this segment of the population have been cast as the Last of England. Here, Jarman is the one looking back, seeing his friends falling to the virus. In a country where conservatism demands the erasure of Queer identities and that made no qualms about blaming the AIDS epidemic on this fringe identity, Jarman's move of calling these identities the Last of England places the onus of mourning on the reluctant nation. Not only has the nation failed to remember, both those who fell during war and those who were falling due to the virus, but in forgetting and the inaction that comes from failing to remember, the

³⁹ For an analysis of the direct correlation between the work of British filmmakers, the Malvinas War, and the rise of Margaret Thatcher, see *British Cinema and Thatcherism*, Edited by Lester Friedman, University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

nation has brought about its own apocalypse. Jarman reluctantly looks back so as not to fail those the nation has chosen to forget. He calls upon us to do the same; to listen, see, and feel.

—

To Feel Old at a Young Age

Merry it was to laugh there –
Where death becomes absurd and life absurder.
Wilfred Owen, “Apologia Pro Poemate Meo”

Midway into *War Requiem* (1989), Jarman inserts a sequence that serves as a visual translation of Wilfred Owen’s poem “The Parable of the Old Man and the Young.” In the poem, Owen narrates the well-known biblical tale of Abraham and his son Isaac. However, at the conclusion of the poem, Owen decides to change the script. Upon receiving instructions from an angel to desist in killing his son, Abraham decides to continue with the sacrifice: “But the old man would not so, but slew his son,/ And half the seed of Europe, one by one” (99). For Owen, WWI represented a betrayal of all that is humane and enlightened. War, which for so long had been a source of honor, became for Owen, upon closer examination and first-hand witnessing, a sham. Soldiers died, usually in agony, and the grand theater of war was in effect a gallery of horrors. The odes written about war had chosen to paint glorious, almost attractive deaths. Owen, through his poetry, sought to put an end to this false narrative. *The Parable* encapsulates this mission. Here, Owen breaks with tradition, pulling the veil from the story of honor and safety by thrusting the reader into a headlong confrontation with a cruel reality. Owen also destroys the notion of brotherhood and citizenship, severing

the old from the young, the past from the present, the myth from the truth. In a sense, this rift can stand for the rift between Jarman and his father, but it also stands for the rift between Jarman and conservative England in general at the time. Therefore, *The Parable* becomes an indictment of those responsible for sending their sons and daughters towards death. For Jarman, *The Parable* rings true when transposed to his corpus and the plight of People With AIDS. Like Abraham in the poem, the nation looked the other way, and opted to sacrifice the afflicted, less as an offering and more as a way of guaranteeing their erasure.

Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* represents a sustained meditation of a nation's willingness to sacrifice its young in the hopes of perpetuating the false narrative of fellowship, honor, and glory, all the while waiting and hoping for some eventual "victory." Juxtaposing Wilfred Owen's poetry and the Christian Requiem mass, Britten's work functions as a critique of the institutions that caused WWII; for Britten this means the church and the culture of modernity. Commissioned by the BBC to create a film based on Britten's musical piece, Jarman takes Britten's Requiem and uses it as the aural backdrop to narrating Owen's war experience. Jarman makes Wilfred Owen the main character, a far cry from the plurality of identities presented in *The Last of England*. However, Jarman retains the vignette structure found in his previous films. The film sporadically shows Owen lying in repose, joining the military, losing colleagues, enjoying time off in domestic bliss, writing poetry, and even haunting the living and the dead long after his own death. Most of the film depicts the events Owen witnessed and used as material for his poems. That being the case, Jarman also inserts graphic

archival footage of the two World Wars and wars in Cambodia, Afghanistan, and Vietnam. Beyond directly presenting these conflicts, Jarman's film indirectly captures the specter of AIDS. While AIDS is never mentioned per se, it is clear that it hovers over the film as a guiding principle to the drama unfolding. As William Pencak explains, throughout *War Requiem* Jarman "compares the slaughter of the war with the persecution of homosexuals and the AIDS epidemic..." (122). Chris Lippard and Guy Johnson note that "being the first film made entirely after his diagnosis,..." *War Requiem* "needs little displacement to be seen as an imagine of the AIDS crisis" (287). Lippard and Johnson add that Jarman's choice of using the abandoned hospital at Darent Park in Kent in *War Requiem* "

allow[s] Jarman... to stage a war in adjoining rooms. Its setting, resonant of a decline in public health facilities, continues to demand for attention to physical suffering that pervades the earlier films" (288).

Consequently, Jarman continues to apply the senses of a siege onto his corpus and the experience of living with AIDS, transferring the sensual dimensions of the former onto the latter.

The film opens with an old soldier, played by Sir Lawrence Olivier in his final on-screen performance, being pushed across an open field on a wheelchair by a nurse, played by Tilda Swinton. As he shows his medals to the nurse, the old soldier, via voiceover, recites lines from Owen's "*Strange Meeting*." The poem narrates a fever dream in which a soldier sees his colleagues succumbing or already having fallen to death in the battlefield. The field is littered with bodies, some of which reach up to the narrator. Upon being addressed by one of these

companions, the soldier comes to a realization: “And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall, –/ By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell” (88). The poem recalls depictions of purgatory, a place where the lost remain lost. To Owen’s lines Jarman pairs images of the World Wars. At the end of this montage, the old man, looking directly at the camera, suddenly realizes how vain his accolades seem. The old man has survived; in turn, he is cursed to look back at his losses. He is forced to live with the memory of the horrors he outlived but also the horrors he helped commit. These horrors are a part of him, a part he cannot excise from his corpus.

This aforementioned sequence sets up the film’s play between images and words. Throughout, Jarman will use the Requiem and Owen’s poems in tandem to narrate the events on screen; at other times this juxtaposition will enhance each element; and yet at other times the play between images and words will echo across the film to refer to other sequences, demanding that the viewer reassign images and words at various spacial and temporal distances. One important figure gains prominence alongside Owen in all of this. It can be said that the nurse who cares for him and other soldiers shares equal footing with Owen in this theater of horrors. It is to her that the old soldier explains his plight. She is also called to tend to, cure, and mend the casualties throughout the film. She is also called upon to witness and mourn the dead. In all of these roles, the nurse’s body is summoned to serve as a vessel that captures the individual experiences. Her body’s senses capture and transmit stimuli as they work towards witnessing and mourning.

Immediately following the *Strange Meeting* introduction, the film presents Owen lying in repose. Eyes open, Owen's body seems oddly alive, clutching a wad of paper onto which he has written his poem "*Anthem for Doomed Youth*." There to keep watch is the nurse. Heaving in apparent anxiety, the nurse cannot accept the poet's death, much less his body's presence, it seems. Angrily, she proceeds to cover the poet, trying to avoid acknowledging the influx of information she is receiving. Jarman's treatment of this sequence highlights the primacy of the senses as avenues for the absorption of pain and emotion. Owen's *Anthem* chronicles an assault on the senses in its recording of more losses than the senses can bear:

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
–Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, –
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires. (77)

There is a sonic quality to Owen's verses that insists on conveying the sounds of warfare. The reference to sound throughout the poem is relentless; bells ring, guns rattle away, voices scream in agony. Jarman adds the famous opening notes of Britten's *War Requiem*, the *Requiem Aeternam*, to the sequence. However, Swinton's performance stands in stark contrast to both the poem and the musical piece. Unable to cope, the nurse proceeds to belt out a scream, but this scream remains silent. All we get is the moving image of the nurse screaming. Because Jarman was forbidden by Britten's trust from adding sounds over the Requiem, he opts for a type of visual sound cue instead. And yet, in its

very lack of sound, the nurse's scream rings louder and truer. The image of someone screaming demands the audience's insertion of the missing aural scream. At once, the audience must supply the scream, generating the necessary mental and bodily exercise to fill in this gap, but the audience must also recognize the lack and be affected by it. It is a two-way intervention.

The invocation of the body does not end with the scream. In her performance, Swinton adds a blocking out of vision, too. While screaming, the nurse presses her fingers onto her eyes. Owen's poem also invokes the eyes in the act of pain and emotion:

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds. (77)

Swinton's performance brings forth in the viewer the negotiation of a dichotomy involving both denial and rejection of vision. The eyes cannot fully comprehend the horrors they are being shown. The events themselves deny vision's access. Confronted with the magnitude of the horrors, the subject proceeds to extend the distance by rejecting vision altogether. The nurse blots her eyes, even after initially seeing the dead body and covering it. She first denies the fact of the dead body. When that fails, she physically rejects her faculty of sight. Within the film, Jarman uses denial/rejection as a way to comment on war. The first encounter with the horrors of war elicits a denial which proves insufficient to the traumatized subject. The subject must implicate the will as a way to control the body.

Therefore, the subject actively rejects its body's capacity for seeing these horrors

as a way to convince itself of not being part and participant of the horrors. In essence the difference is between non-conscious processes and conscious processes.

In this context, denial/rejection means much more to Jarman. Returning to his family relations, Jarman's mother was a potential witness to the horrors inflicted on her son by her husband. Yet, over and over, according to Jarman in his recollections and to others close to him in interviews and letters, she decided to look away, never confronting her husband over the treatment of their son. Thus, if *The Last of England* finds Jarman exorcizing the demons of his father, *War Requiem* can be seen as an intervention into the effects of his mother's non-interventionism. In that sense, it is still an indictment of the old generation and its willingness to sacrifice the youth they were supposed to protect.

At another level, the nurse's denial of the senses comes to represent the denial of the AIDS epidemic on the part of the nation. By 1989, the motto "Silence Equals Death," developed by Avram Finkelstein and mainly associated with the activist group ACTUP, would have been known to Jarman, who himself participated in OutRage!, a gay activist group in England. Jarman's choice to have the nurse enact a silent scream would serve as an extension of the dangers of the pervasive silence associated with the AIDS epidemic in most countries, particularly the UK and the US. Like Reagan in the US, Thatcher in the UK refused to recognize the epidemic due to its early association with the gay community. Moreover, the year prior to the release of *War Requiem*, the UK had passed Section 28, an amendment to the Local Government Act of 1986 that

proscribed the promotion of homosexuality as a viable lifestyle. The effect was the silencing of advocate groups for fear of legal retribution which, by extension, lessened the visibility of People With AIDS due to the overwhelming association of the epidemic with the gay community. In Jarman's film, Owen comes to stand in for this marginalized segment. His death in Jarman's film represents not the poet's death but the death of all those who have been silenced by the cultural war surrounding AIDS. As a result, Owen's poem becomes, through Jarman's treatment, a commentary on the AIDS epidemic and the nation's response. It is People With AIDS who die like cattle and who are denied the light of the candle to speed them onto eternal life. People With AIDS are denied the holy glimmers of goodbyes; in fact, they are denied visibility, period, as the nurse clearly shows in blotting out her eyes and eventually blowing out the candle that accompanies the poet. Similarly, the nation gladly drew their blinds down to this reality. When denial was not enough, the nation rejected the truth.

Near the end of the film, Owen, now dead, walks down a corridor, carrying his own torch down into a catacomb. Like Orpheus descending into Hell, Owen finds a place strewn with bodies, trapped in a purgatory. Fellow soldiers, enemies, and victims inhabit this place. There, a child reaches down and picks up a bugle, blowing on it but producing no sound. An adult male also picks up the bugle but similarly fails at producing any sound. Given that this purgatory lacks any walls, silence becomes the missing walls, trapping them in this space it would seem. The mood is contemplative but also melancholic. Since the world cannot make space for them, they make a space for themselves in this new

location. Collectively they proceed to physically and metaphorically cleanse themselves from the grime of the underworld. Bodies touch and wash each other. Bodies listen to each other. Bodies see and recognize each other. The dead save themselves. It is a bleak vision on the part of Jarman. In his memoir *Modern Nature*, Jarman provides a meditation which captures a mood similar to the one contained in this scene:

Could I face the dawn cheerfully, paralyzed by the virus that circles like a deadly cobra? So many friends dead or dying – since autumn: Terry, Robert, David, Ken, Paul, Howard. All the brightest and the best trampled to death – surely the Great War brought no more loss into one life in just twelve months, and all this as we made love not war. (56)

One gets the sense that Jarman's commiseration is directed towards the ones he has lost but also towards himself. He tried playing the bugle as a child to rid of the pain he felt. He now tries to play the bugle as an adult in an attempt to revive those who are gone. In both instances he fails, and worse yet, he seems to be convinced that he will join the list of the brightest and best he is memorializing.

Like Owen, dead, haunting, and walking down to the underworld, Jarman descends in search for his friends only to get lost along the way and seemingly die himself in the process. Interestingly, in *Modern Nature* Jarman writes of an art school friend who called him to tell him that his obituary had appeared in their alma mater's art magazine. The nation has already denied him his status as a physical presence. His body has been erased. The effect, as with so many others, saps his will:

How many aftershocks must I endure till my body broken,
desiccated and drained of colour, fails to respond. I live in a

permanent hangover, after years of good health.... St. Derek of Dungeness, a hermit in the wilderness of illness. (307)

This permanent hangover is the purgatory which Jarman insists upon in *War Requiem*, a space of erasure that must be assimilated and redefined. “The hopelessness” invoked by Owen in *Strange Meeting* stands as the same hopelessness Jarman senses and needs to communicate to his audience. Here we find Jarman at his lowest, with a hope “Which lies not calm in eyes” (88). Still relatively young at the time, Jarman’s body and experience render him old, like the old soldier who opens the film. And like that old soldier, Jarman serves as both victim and witness of “The pity of war, the pity war distilled” (88). Having come face to face with the decisions of the older generation of his mother and father, Jarman places these segments of his Corpus momentarily aside and moves into a closer consideration of his generation and himself.

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Under a Blood Red Sky

I walk in this garden holding the hands of dead friends.
Derek Jarman, *The Garden*

The garden feels under siege this winter. In my absence the gales have freeze-dried everything. In spite of the rain the plants look parched.
Derek Jarman, *Modern Nature*

The Garden constitutes an assemblage of dissimilar parts, each highlighting a different aspect of the AIDS experience and the siege mentality the ailment provokes. As was the case in *The Last of England*, Jarman himself serves as the frame that gives form to the film. Jarman invites us into the process of creation that gives shape to a film like *The Garden*. The film opens during

nighttime with Jarman walking around the light-flooded movie set handing out commands. The image lacks clarity and definition, hampered by the contrast between artificial light and natural darkness. But this approach is soon abandoned, as Jarman shifts gears, choosing to present his artistry in a different manner. Jarman intersperses images of himself tending to his garden in Dungeness: tilling the earth, watering his plants and rocks, and designing the placement of items in his garden at different moments within the film, Jarman directly includes his body in the film's body. Gardening becomes a metaphor for filmmaking, artistic creation, and life in general. Like his garden comprised of randomly found items, the film moves in and out of situations, as if stumbling through a space that also lacks clarity or definition.

At the start of the film, a voice, perhaps that of Jarman himself, calls on those on set and in the audience to be "very quiet," a demand that imbues the moment with a sense of reverence, even caution. There are rules of decorum in this space and we are to follow them. Another voice, this one non-diegetic, enters the soundtrack, intent on connecting with the audience. "I want to share this emptiness with you," the voice explains. We are being spoken to directly, in a way that previous Jarman films have not attempted. The voice continues,

Not fill the silence with false notes or put tracks through the void. I want to share this wilderness of failure.... I offer you a journey without direction, uncertainty, and no sweet conclusion. When the light faded I went in search of myself.

A narrative whirlwind, *The Garden* takes us on this undefined journey towards self-discovery, arguably making it Jarman's most personal film. Jarman's body is now fully fused to his work. The film follows various threads which are united

through an emphasis on authority figures and their effects on Jarman's corpus. In this case, the church stands as the great belligerent against Jarman and the Queer identities he identifies with. Through its various guises, the church inflicts violence on those who align themselves with identities which are contrary to its teachings. A man in drag is pelted with rocks by a cabal of fashionable women, while the masked soldiers of *The Last of England* return, this time wielding cameras as their weapons of choice, documenting the violence inflicted on the man. A queen-like figure reminiscent of the bride in *The Last of England* is harassed and persecuted by these same masked paparazzi who cash in on the cult of personality she represents. A child is forcefully taught in school, teachers menacingly beating sticks in mock discipline. But within these various threads, one particular thread stands out prominently when contrasted to the rest in terms of emphasis and onscreen time: two men, lovers, are forced to navigate this hostile world intent on destroying them. The couple is assaulted at various points, by religion, by education, by advertising, and by life in general. They are tortured, ridiculed, and ultimately assassinated by these institutions. Their bodies prominently reveal the effects of the assault, which bear a striking resemblance to the stigmata associated with Christ. In fact, in a film where much of the imagery and narrative follows Christian tradition, the two men come to stand as the Christ. The film, consequently, represents a reappropriation of martyrdom, humility, and sacrifice in the service of Queer identities. By extension, and even more controversially, the film enacts a fusion of the body of Christ with Jarman's

corpus, both functioning as offerings to heal the damage previously done to their respective flocks.

The color red punctuates many of the couple's interventions, linking these events to blood and violence, to infection and war. At first the couple meet and revel in their blissful physical encounters. They bathe together. They kiss and caress. They are seemingly wedded in a sequence that marries the musical number "Think Pink" from the 1957 film *Funny Face* to projected stock footage of Gay Liberation marches, as they wear white suits and carry a baby in their arms. But like Jarman, who at the beginning of the film was roused from his sleep by water seeping in from outside his cottage, the couple are rudely woken out of their dream. As they bathed each other, the sky turned blood red, a harbinger of events to come. What follows is a sequence of events that grows incrementally more violent. During the first tangible violent event, a trio of Santa Clauses disrupt the couple's sleep. Each Santa Claus is in charge of a different task. One handles a camera, capturing the event. Another listens to a hand radio or a walkie talkie, the sound emanating from it included diagetically in the soundtrack. Finally, the third Santa Clause belts out a rendition of *God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*. Eventually the three men join in the song and physically shake the couple, bringing them out of their sleep. Far from being a quiet film, the film possesses an energetic soundscape coupled with a painterly visual palette which constantly engages the audience. Image and sound function as weapons, assaulting the ears and eyes to the point of generating anxiety. The Santa Clauses' choice artifacts represent a continuation of the film's own choice of

tools. However, the Santa Clauses also physically invade the couple's space, bringing touch into the equation as well. Considering the film's foregrounding of religious belligerence as it pertains to living with AIDS, the Santa Clauses come to stand as evidence of false religiosity and morality. The Santa Clauses have less to do with Christianity and more to do with capitalism and consumerism, the latter reaching predatory levels in the West during the late Twentieth Century. There is violence inherent in so called free market practices, including the high cost of health care and HIV/AIDS medicines. And, yet, the church willingly looks the other way, seeing little to fault or condemn in this practice. Thus, Jarman critiques this double standard where somehow Queer identities become the bane of the church, yet Santa Clause serves as an acceptable avatar to Christ. For that reason, Jarman highlights the couple's greater closeness to the piety and sacrifice usually associated with Christ.

After being loudly mocked and harassed by a group of elderly, business types in a sauna, the couple find themselves in a diner fashioned into a police interrogation room. There the violence turns brutal. The couple, already bloodied and tied to chairs, are progressively covered in a tar-like substance by the ring leader as the rest of the men jeer and egg him on. The leader proceeds to rip the sleeve of his jacket, revealing the down that served as insulation, and covering the couple in plumage. Whether Jarman intended this to be a reference to "pájaro," the way gay men are referred to pejoratively in many Spanish-speaking countries, is unclear. What is important is the vileness of the attack which turns them into prisoners of war. The men are subjected to screams, jeers, and

heckles, all of which never materialize into actual words; they are just disjointed sounds emanating from those doing the torturing in a frenetic orgy of sadism. The men sit across each other; therefore, they are also subjected to the visual spectacle of seeing their significant other reduced to a literal, indecipherable pulp by men in uniform in a visible position of power. The men's bodies are subjected to humiliation. After being beaten, the evidence starkly on display on their bodies, they are restrained and denied mobility. Their bodies become displays of the States' capacity for violence, itself justified through religious morality. Like Christ in the Via Crucis, these men are paraded and displayed, their wounds a warning to those who dare choose the same path.

The torture continues. Jarman cycles the men through these same tableaux over and over again, until the director takes us to a sea shore. Back projected onto the scene, the sea shore is reminiscent of the shoreline that washes on Jarman's garden at Dungeness. The couple is tied to a pillar. The Santa Clauses, now drunk and with their costumes disheveled, proceed to whip the men until blood oozes through their clothes. The stick whipping sound which earlier accompanied the school sequence is now transposed onto this beating. At this juncture, Jarman makes the beating a personal affair. Like the men, Jarman has been attacked for his identity. Moving the scene to a shoreline bridges the story of Christ, the story of the couple, and the story of Jarman together. Here, at the edge of Jarman's garden, violence takes place. The men are beaten savagely. The elements threaten his garden. The illness erodes Jarman's life. After parading the men one last time, depicting them carrying a cross, Jarman

inserts a montage intercutting images of his garden and the elements that surround it, increasingly being engulfed in red: the sea, red like blood, lapping the shoreline; the sun and sky burning scarlet bright; the neighboring nuclear power plant and its antenna portending the incursion of damaging effects on his plot of land and his body. As our eyes take in the montage, Jarman inserts another voiceover, this one narrating his poem, *Scarlet Poppies*, later reproduced in his book, *Modern Nature*:

This is a poppy
A flower of cornfield and wasteland
Bloody red
Sepals two
Soon falling
Petals four
Stamens many
Stigma rayed
Many seeded
For sprinkling on bread
The staff of life
Woven in wreaths
In memory of the dead
Bringer of dreams
And sweet forgetfulness. (8)

Jarman mobilizes many avenues of symbolism through his use of the red poppy. First, the flower, a symbol of military loss after WWI, connects the loss of life due to AIDS to the loss of life due to war by way of those whose names were erased in Flanders, something he already brought up in *The Last of England*. Therefore, the scene reinscribes mourning onto those being lost to the illness. Second, the flower, its red hue and its possession of a part known as the stigma (a part of the reproductive organs in some flowers responsible for receiving and absorbing pollen), summons up the image of Christ and the stigmata inflicted during the

crucifixion. The word “stigma” also allows Jarman to broach the topic of social and religious stigma by way of allusion. Jarman, who as I have mentioned earlier identifies with his garden, recognizes that he is also in possession of a “stigma,” but one very different from the one his flowers possess. In unearthing all of these connections, Jarman assumes the role of seer. Hidden underneath the populist narrative of England as a Garden of Eden lies the stark reality of living under siege. As he did in *Jubilee* and *The Last of England*, Jarman projects a vision of England that is utterly apocalyptic. The emphasis of red imagery calls attention to the plight of People With AIDS, as noted by Niall Richardson:

[R]ed images can be traced throughout Jarman’s films.... The effect... is to suggest the ubiquitous threat of the virus rather than condensing the condition into one quantifiable group of specific infected bodies. AIDS is always a lurking threat..., something coloring every scene with its lurking presence. (188-89)

Transforming their surroundings into a wasteland adds to the power of the red imagery.

After this montage, Jarman interestingly chooses to omit the moment of crucifixion, opting instead to jump directly to the image of the couple’s bodies on the ground, exhibiting the wounds of crucifixion. Intriguingly, Jarman tints this moment with a purple hue, the only time in the film he does so. The men, beaten, crucified, and murdered, exhibit lesions on their bodies. The visible lesions in conjunction with the purple tint bring to mind the lesions associated with Kaposi’s Sarcoma, the type of skin cancer commonly seen in People With AIDS with immunocompromised bodies. The intersection between the visibility of Christ’s stigmata and the Kaposi’s Sarcoma lesions stands as a powerful commentary on

the stigma associated with AIDS. In Christianity, the broken body of Christ is elevated to reverent status precisely because it suffered like any human body, precisely because the wounds are visible. That is not the case with the bodies of People With AIDS. In omitting the crucifixion, Jarman fuses one body with the other. Kaposi's Sarcoma lesions are emptied of their stigmatizing associations and at the hands of Jarman are elevated to the status of reverential bodies.

At the start of the film, Jarman offered to share his emptiness with his audience. Through the onslaught of sounds, visuals, and tactile references, he fills the emptiness, substituting false notes for urgent ones, shattering the silence we are assured can lead to death. And although the couple in the film physically perish, Jarman has them resuscitate and live on in memory. At a table, the men share a moment of joy. Joined by a child, an old man, and a woman who brings cookies, they eat to their hearts content; a stark contrast to the diner scene where they were tied to chairs and tortured. That Jarman chose spaces where people usually eat food to set these two scenes speaks of the horror the torture represents for him (a return to the memories of his father force-feeding him, his mother watching on), but also of the possibilities of resignifying otherwise painful locations, artifacts, and memories. The story of Christ gains meaning in the salvation it enacts at the moment of his resurrection. It seems that Jarman is reappropriating this trope in the service of his corpus and People With AIDS. The wilderness of failure and illness breaks Jarman's body. But he rests in the knowledge that, like his garden, he finds ways to live on. An entry on his journal

dated February 3, 1989, at around the same time he was conceiving the film *The Garden*, echoes this sentiment:

In July my bank bloomed with two distinct wild poppies.... I carefully gathered the seed heads and raked the mound – as poppies like to grow in newly disturbed soil. The rest of the seed is scattered far and wide.... Some of the seedlings are already two inches across, but the slugs seem particularly fond of them and continually crop them; *they survive though*, and are soon sprouting again. (8)

The poppies are being consumed by slugs, much as the couple were consumed by religion and authority, much as Jarman feels he is being consumed by his illness and the nation at large. By reflecting on the nature of his garden, Jarman contemplates the nature of his illness. Like ebbs and flows he recognizes the illness comes and goes as it pleases. The reflection is bittersweet, for he knows the body can only tolerate so much. As he explains, “The day of our death is sealed up. I do not wish to die...yet. I would love to see my garden through several summers” (310). But like his poppies, he survives and sprouts again.

—

Wading Through the Dark

Used to the shadows, my eyes cannot adjust to light.
Derek Jarman, *Modern Nature*

Jarman’s corpus is built on a foundation of sensorial hyperawareness. As I have shown, his latter films fully engage his audience with an artistic phenomenology that balances the senses while activating them, rarely deploying one without at some point equally considering the rest. After his AIDS diagnosis in 1986, Jarman’s health progressively deteriorated. He developed various opportunistic infections which sapped his energy, causing him to increasingly

retreat to Prospect Cottage in hopes of improving. Particularly brutal were those infections that targeted his eyesight. *Modern Nature* documents some of the early instances. On April 1990, Jarman started to notice difficulty adjusting to changes in light intensity. “Used to the shadows, my eyes cannot adjust to light. I have planned the garden in detail, won’t be out too late to plant the summer seeds...” (273). Days later, Jarman visits the doctor as a precaution. He writes, “Eyes tested. One of the drugs I’m taking can make you go blind. Everything OK. I’m on the drug another three weeks. Beware, first the world turns monochrome – it’s reversible, thank heavens” (276). However, his condition in fact did not improve, and by July of the same year a frustrated Jarman puts down on paper the following entry: “I have partially lost my sight.... This left me disorientated. I kept forgetting and would pick up a book to read” (303).

During an emergency hospital visit that week, Jarman found out he had developed toxoplasmosis, requiring that he remain at the hospital, connected to an I.V. line constantly supplying medicine to combat the infection. Jarman’s entries documenting his hospital stays capture the sense of a body and mind under siege. Jarman makes no qualms about growing tired of the assault on his body on the part of the illness:

My mind drifts forwards and backwards.
How many assaults will my body stand? At what point will life cease to be bearable? I worry for HB (Jarman’s partner), who keeps my spirits soaring. When he is there, I could cope with blindness. Am I unhappy? The answer is definitely not, although I wouldn’t have believed it if I had dreamt up this scenario. Scuttling across the road like a rat on my way here, I took my life in my hands and arrived on the far pavement safe. Like taking a first high-dive. (emphasis added, 304)

Jarman's words read similarly to those of a person under threat of sniper fire, deciding on whether to risk their life and run out in the open or whether to remain safely under cover. This threat became ongoing as Jarman would regain his eyesight only to lose it at many points for the rest of his life, sometimes to toxoplasmosis, other times to cytomegalovirus (CMV). Eventually, Jarman suffered from a detached retina; whether this was due to his illness or the medicines used to treat the illness remains unclear.

Jarman's final film, *Blue* (1993), arose out of these hospital visits. In the film Jarman captures the sounds and voices heard during a hospital stay. Ever the sensorial architect, Jarman creates a soundtrack which places the audience in the hospital room, in the waiting room, and in all the spaces in between. Location is evoked through the detailed stereophonic cues, isolating or blending left and right channels at various instances: x-ray machine balanced towards the right channel; the beeping of an I.V. machine oscillating between the left and right channels; a cyclist riding past from back to front, left to right, screaming "Look where the fuck you're going." However, in order to place the audience squarely in his corpus, Jarman makes a truly fascinating choice: he dispenses with imagery altogether. More specifically, he cancels the iconic and indexical registers of the filmic image. The only remaining register is that of the symbolic. An Yves Klein blue hue saturates the screen⁴⁰ for the 75-minute duration of the film. At the

⁴⁰ Yves Klein (1928-1962) was a French painter and performance artist who patented a particular type of deep blue paint which would be known as International Klein Blue (IKB). Klein's work after the 1950s would almost exclusively be done using IKB. This included a series titled *Anthropometrie* (1960) in which Klein painted female bodies with IKB and proceeded to have them come in contact with a canvas in order to capture their silhouettes.

symbolic level, the blue on screen changes meanings according to the episode being narrated. Within the film, blue can mean water, memory, bliss, loss, and even death. But above all, blue is meant to capture and transmit the sightlessness Jarman was going through in his final days.

At this point in his life, Jarman's body is breaking down, his loss of eyesight just the most recent development. Knowledgeable of his predicament, Jarman tries to relay this condition to his audience. *Blue* assembles many threads previously at work in Jarman's corpus. Considering that his previous films all engaged one way or another in the theme of war, *Blue* thus can be seen as the culmination of that trope. As William Pencak explains, "*Blue* hopes to elevate the personal sagas of people with AIDS to the consciousness of those who write the grand historical narratives" (159). By placing the audience in his corpus, Jarman simultaneously invites the audience into the body of a Person With Aids and the body of a war casualty. While previously Jarman heightened the senses cinematically to evoke externalized sensations, with *Blue* Jarman internalizes these sensations, relying greatly on suggestion. That is, he moves from an emphasis in exteroception and proprioception to an emphasis on introception through intersubjectivity. He moves from an emphasis in tangible stimuli to more abstract, but no less real stimuli and its effects on the body. All of the bodily senses are deployed throughout his corpus, but in the case of *Blue*, Jarman's personal internal experience becomes the locus of the phenomenological events he is communicating.

The film starts with the use of Buddhist meditation bells, also known as singing bowls. Jarman calls the audience into silent awareness for what is to follow. After an invocation of the color blue, Jarman wastes no time in calling forth the specters of war and AIDS. The soundtrack places us inside a café, sounds of leisure all around. Our narrator disrupts the ambient sound, stating,

I am sitting with some friends in this café drinking coffee served by young refugees from Bosnia. The war rages across the newspapers and through the ruined streets of Sarajevo.

Tania said, 'Your clothes are on back to front and inside out.' Since there was *only two of us* here I took them off and put them right then and there....

What need of so much news from abroad while all that concerns either life or death is all transacting and at work *within* me?
(emphasis added)

The peculiar sequence serves as an example of the ongoing confusion and sensorial emphasis that characterizes the film. First, the soundtrack establishes that we are in effect inside a café. However, there is more than “only two of us here.” There are, indeed, a whole host of voices milling about inside the café. Additionally, calling attention to an actual conflict raging at the time, the Bosnian War and the Siege of Sarajevo, places the events of the film in a particular moment in time, both for Jarman and the world at large. Interestingly, Jarman removes the sounds of the café, pointed by clattering dishes, at the mention of the war and inserts the sounds of explosions, only to immediately return to the café sounds. Transitioning to the fact that Jarman was wearing his clothes backwards, while trying to convince the audience that there were only two people in the café, hints at the filmmaker’s diminishing eyesight. One could also extend this physical sightlessness to a sense of voluntary emotional sightlessness in the

form of denial/rejection on his part. Jarman may be in denial/rejection of his condition, much as the world was in denial/rejection of the horrors happening at the time in the Balkans. In connecting both situations, Jarman places his corpus under siege. His body is under attack. The explosion heard, associated with Bosnia, is also happening within him at a metaphorical level. Thus, in the end both events converge in his corpus, the actual war serving as a metaphor to his current bodily state. Reading about the Bosnian War in the papers functions as an undesirable reminder of his current state, a battle between life and death occurring “within” him.

Jarman internalizes this realization early on, the film becoming an awakening into hyperawareness. Jarman takes us through the motions of ongoing doctor visits and the usual daily activities, most relating to his eyes. Listening to the doctor’s commands of “look left, look down, look up, look right,” the audience is summoned to do the same; needless to say, all we can see is the blue screen, nothing actually visually perceptible, much as it did for Jarman when he followed the doctor’s instructions. But as mentioned above, the blue screen is there to also symbolically stand for other cues. At one point, wind gusts and water laps on a shore. For those acquainted with Jarman this can only mean Dungeness. The narrator joins the sounds of the shore:

I’m walking along the beach in a howling gale. Another year is passing. In the roaring waters I hear the voices of dead friends. Love is life that lasts forever. My heart’s memory turns to you, David, Howard, Graham, Terry, Paul....

The blue screen calls attention to the water from whence the haunting of dead friends originates. Looking out onto the void of water and sightlessness, Jarman

is incessantly reminded of those he has lost and the fact that he keeps surviving them. The names echo in the soundtrack and are repeated into eventual silence, a desperate attempt at grasping their essences. In being presented with the blue screen, the audience can place the faces of lost ones onto these names, thus serving as avatars of intersubjective suffering. We feel with Jarman that hard-to-define individual sense of loss of loved ones; we are literally moved to mourn in our own way and remember, but also to feel guilty for surviving them.

Jarman hardens these specters later on in the film when he connects these names with more tangible identities and experiences. In a passage that recalls the Greek myth of Charon, the ferryman who transports the dead to Hades, Jarman materializes his lost friends, foregrounding their bodily presence:

David ran home panicked on the train from Waterloo, brought back exhausted and unconscious to die that night. Terry who mumbled incoherently into his incontinent tears. Others faded like flowers cut by the scythe of the Blue Bearded Reaper, parched as the waters of life receded. Howard turned slowly into stone, petrified day by day, his mind imprisoned in a concrete fortress until all we could hear were his groans on the telephone circling the globe.... Karl killed himself. How did he do it? I never asked.

Hardening these specters makes them tangible and more accessible for Jarman who in turn is trying to make the experience of Living With AIDS equally tangible to his audience and himself. Furthermore, Jarman, who at one point mentions that he has “no friends now who are not dead or dying,” catalogues with specifics the different ways in which these bodies are coming under assault:

It started with sweats in the night and swollen glands. Then the black cancers spread across their faces. As they fought for breath, TB and pneumonia hammered at the lungs, and Toxo at the brain. Reflexes scrambled, sweat poured through hair matted like lianas in the tropical forest. Voices slurred, and then were lost forever. My

pen chased this story across the page tossed this way and that in the storm.

Beyond engaging in a memorial to lost friends, Jarman's cataloguing represents a realization of his own corpus. True, his friends are gone, but he recognizes that he will soon join them given the similarity of their physical conditions. Jarman in this case is Charon, his tribute moving his friends from the realm of the living into the realm of the dead. However, we must also remember, Charon is a member of the dead himself. Thus, this meditation on dead friends is also an acceptance of his own mortality. The concretization of specters represents a need in Jarman to remain tangible, present, alive. Jarman himself admits to this desire when he has the voiceover explain, "In the pandemonium of image I present to you with the universal Blue. Blue an open door to soul. An infinite possibility become tangible." Borrowing from Trond Lundemo, Davina Quinlivan proposes that "blue and white are the most haptic colours, the most inviting to the senses..." (45). If that is the case, the blue screen becomes sensorial evidence of Jarman and his friends' passage through this world; "Blue is darkness made visible." Like fingerprints on a page, the film makes them present. The blue screen fuses Jarman's corpus with the bodies of his friends and, by extension, the bodies of People With AIDS, bringing the experience closer to the audience.

Extending the fusion of sensations and bodies, Jarman includes war in a highly effective way during one particular episode. First, he is in the hospital as an in-patient, visiting twice a day to be connected to an I.V. which supplies his medication. He muses about being attached to the drip, which impedes his mobility. The meditation is followed by the repetition once again of the names of

his departed friends, accompanied by the echoing sounds of the singing bowls.

Suddenly, Jarman returns to the café space. And again, he mentions Bosnia:

There is a photo in the newspaper this morning of refugees leaving Bosnia. They look out of time. Peasant women with scarves and black dresses stepped from the pages of an older Europe. One of them has lost her three children.

Like specters, the refugees return to haunt the film, this time not as employees at the café, but as actual casualties of a war ravaging their country. That the refugees “look out of time” is certainly evidence of their haunting quality. War disrupts our perceptual notions of time. But it also disrupts our notions of space. These refugees should not be leaving Bosnia. They should not be living through war. But, as far as Jarman is concerned, neither should they be invading his space and time with their presence. Furthermore, to be “out of time” also carries the possibility of death looming not just for the refugees but for Jarman himself. Death is metaphorically knocking at his door. Ending this passage by mentioning the loss of three children mobilizes the deadly effects of the Bosnian War and hangs them over the spaces Jarman inhabits, where others are similarly dying from AIDS.

Having called on the refugees and the Bosnian War, Jarman does not linger in the café for long. He swiftly returns us to the hospital, capping a dizzying shift of spaces and temporalities in the soundtrack. The sudden shift opens the possibility of the audience visualizing Jarman surrounded in the hospital by casualties of the Bosnian War. To make this connection evident, Jarman punctuates the episode by narrating an encounter with a patient’s mother upon leaving the hospital:

[A]t the door an elderly woman stands waiting for the rain to clear. I ask her if I can give her a lift, I've hailed a taxi.... On the way she breaks down in tears.... Her son is in the ward – he has meningitis and has lost use of his legs – I'm helpless as the tears flow. *I can't see her*. Just the sound of her sobbing. (emphasis added)

All the shifting of space and time is meant to disorient the spectator. As Jarman reminds us, "The worst of the illness is the uncertainty," uncertainty being a trait that characterizes the state of siege. The woman's son gives shape to the siege experience by simultaneously representing the body of a Person With AIDS and the body of a casualty of war. He is one of the three children lost by the Bosnian woman. He is the son succumbing to opportunistic infections due to AIDS. He is also by association another of Jarman's friends that has echoed in the soundtrack and in the memories, both individual and collective, touched by the film. And he is Jarman, mired in the uncertainty of his illness. The fact that he cannot see her, as the rain in the soundtrack pours down, captures the uncertainty that defines his state of siege. Preventing vision, in theory and in practice, creates disorientation. Roger Hallas proposes that the film "reverses the visual attention of the spectacle of AIDS from the body with AIDS out *there* back onto the spectator's own body right *here* before the blue screen" (45). In offering a blue screen to the audience, Jarman prevents us from seeing as well, Jarman projects the bodies of both casualties and People With AIDS onto us, the blue light traveling from the screen and suffusing our own bodies.

Late in *Blue*, Jarman asks, "How are we perceived, if we are to be perceived at all? For the most part we are invisible." *Blue* stands as an exceptional exercise in the politics of visibility. Omitting the iconic and indexical

registers mimics the selective erasure of People With AIDS and casualties of war from the public's eyes during its time of production and release. However, the film's selective visual omission along with its heightened soundscape actually moves these identities from the shadows of invisibility into spaces of tangible presence, making these bodies manifestly "visible" in ways that foreground the other senses. Speaking of the color blue at one point within the film, a voice states that "Blue transcends the solemn geography of human limits." The same is true of the film *Blue* and of Jarman's corpus. The film's form and foregrounding of the senses expands the possibilities of the body as a modality of communication. And in offering up his body for scrutiny, Jarman transcends not only the limits of the human body, but also the limits of cinema in their capacity to communicate the siege experience.

—

"Invading Many Private Worlds"

The geriatrics have passed on,
the HIV patients moved, exhausted, sick, trembling.
Derek Jarman, *Derek Jarman's Garden*

Well, I haven't died.
Derek Jarman, *At Your Own Risk*

So far I have followed the filmic path Jarman left behind and found in each of the covered films a remnant of the artist and the person. In each work, Jarman worked through some aspect of his life which proved either influential or monumental to the person he became. Whether it was his father, his mother, culture, or the nation, each one pressed the filmmaker into the task of building assemblages of memories, ideas, and desires in order to come to terms with

their respective effects on his overall (well)Being. Each film, then, represents an opportunity for working through his lot, wherein Jarman could contemplate distinct parts of himself, setting them apart in order to *make sense* and move ahead towards the next obstacle or challenge. That being the case, each film contains a fragment of Jarman, and given his heightened sensory tendencies, these fragments vibrate with the power to communicate his *sensibilities*. This is also true of his treatment of AIDS and how the illness pertains to his life after diagnosis. Each film stands as an assemblage of the effects of the illness on his body and mind during each film's window of time. Tapping into each film allows for audiences, even decades removed from their original release dates, to feel and approximate Jarman's experience. We can still hear the echoes, we can still see the reflections, we can still sense the presence.

It is also the case that with each piece of himself Jarman set apart, his body grew more frail and debilitated. Each work put additional strain on his already taxed body and mind. As much as his corpus kept him alive, it also brought him closer to his end. Near the end of his life, Jarman struggled to maintain the pace he had set after the AIDS diagnosis. Hospital visits increased while time and energy dwindled. I have already mentioned the fact that *Blue* was made during Jarman's bouts with sightlessness. However, Jarman's painting work also took a hit. Standing on ladders to create the paintings that would comprise the series "Queer" and "Evil Queen," Jarman would tire easily, "now and again [feeling] the need to climb down and lie, or even fall asleep, on the wooden floor until he was able to summon strength to continue" (Morgan 117).

Stuart Morgan notes how during that time, a blind and debilitated Jarman enlisted the help of two assistants who would work on his paintings, following Jarman's instructions. Roger Wollen has also noted how these last two painting series were criticized as not being truly the artist's creation (27). His health diminished so badly that Jarman developed ataxia⁴¹ during his final weeks of life; at one point Jarman could not even hold his paintbrush.

With the loss of physical control, Jarman's body arrived at a juncture where it was unable to work. Close to death, Jarman's organs began to fail. As he himself wrote in *At Your Own Risk*, "I've had all the opportunistic infections. I've strung them round my neck like a necklace of pearls..." (122). These opportunistic infections attacked his brain, his eyes, his skin, his intestines, and so forth. Under siege, Jarman's body became a body without functioning organs. And while this represented a terrible, tangible reality, with the passage of time, Jarman's corpus reveals the possibility for an alternate reality, one in which Jarman combated all the way to and well beyond his death.

Nancy speaks of corpus as "infinitely broken, distributed among the multitude of bodies, a line of separation imparted to all its sites—tangential points, touches, intersections, dislocations" (*Corpus* 11). Starting in his formative days at the Slade, Jarman enjoyed and reveled in acts of collaboration that in essence made use of a multitude of bodies. For him, to work with others represented a way to tap into potentialities; working with others, the direction of artistic work could truly be limitless. As Wollen explains, Jarman gravitated

⁴¹ A condition characterized by the inability to control voluntary and involuntary bodily movements.

towards the theater rooms at the Slade because of the collaborative nature of the work (27). Never abandoning painting, Jarman increasingly worked in theater as a designer. He later applied the same ethic of collaboration to the film world. As a director, Jarman always delegated and welcomed input from everyone on the set. While his films carry his name as the creative force behind each of them, he was the first one to point out the fact that many were involved in the final result. Looking at the credits on his films, one notices a pattern of recurring names. Aside from *War Requiem*, Simon Fisher Turner served as composer in all of Jarman's late career films. Similarly, James McKay produced the majority of Jarman's post-1986 films. Nigel Terry provided his voice, narrating many films. And Tilda Swinton, one of Jarman's closest friends, serves as his muse and female counterpart in the vast majority of his cinematic output. A cadre of recurring artists, technicians, and friends populate his films.

By nurturing and harvesting these collaborators, Jarman assembled his films out of individual, inspired work. Consequently, as his body waned, the bodies of others stepped into his corpus. Earlier I mentioned Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the plateaus and the BwO as spaces that offered the opportunity for connections, encounters, and potentialities. Jarman, his corpus, is the epitome of a plateau, a space from which other bodies and their work could launch. Much as he did with his gardening, Jarman found other bodies and inserted these new segments, sections, components into his corpus. As his body's organs failed, other organs were enlisted to continue the work, new assemblages giving shape to new becomings of the total work. Viewed this way,

the fact that Jarman uses two assistants to finish his paintings must be seen as a logical extension of Jarman's corpus; not as limitations but as potentialities turning into becomings. Regarding these becomings, Jarman's comments about the film *The Last of England* could be applied to all of his corpus:

It would be true to say I am making this film for myself with my collaborators, we are the community. I am the pivot who gathers the communal threads and creates the pattern, I pull some strands, leave others. The work is the end.... The important thing is the creation of work itself, not the finished product. This harnessing of everyone's creativity, so that when you call 'wrap' for the last time *you can feel the loss physically.* (emphasis added, 197)

In other words, Jarman's Corpus stands as a BwO, the ongoing creative act giving rise to new flows, new possibilities, new assemblages.

Note that embedded in Jarman's commentary is the notion of physical loss. While working collaboratively to create, placing each segment in new configurations to elicit an outcome, Jarman is also seeking to transfer the senses onto everyone else involved, including not only his on-set collaborators, but, subsequently, the audience as well. When a work ends, everyone involved or witnessing should reach a revelatory, almost cathartic moment wherein the energy harnessed, both positive and negative, is put to new uses as it is jettisoned. Therefore, the corpus always demands an open-ended, ongoing collaboration on the part of the audience. We are as much a part of the flows and connections of the BwO. Encountering Jarman's films, we bring our own concerns and questions to the event. Leaving the film we are summoned to carry Jarman's losses, both creatively and physically, and to project these senses in an effort to both bear witness and disseminate the experience.

Living with AIDS, Jarman often expressed the sense that his body represented a prison to him. The more the epidemic spread, the more confined he felt in his body. With all the false information running wild in the press and the public forum, an act as simple as a handshake or a hug became a questionable act. In *At Your Own Risk*, he writes,

My mouth is open but my body is in prison.... [W]e have been turned into the people who have to bear all the responsibility. We have to bear the responsibility for the epidemic, for educating people. Then *we have to act responsibly* while they do nothing. (emphasis added, 124)

As his body tried to mount a defense against the virus within, his body also hemmed itself in from the sociocultural siege transpiring outside. It is no surprise, then, that Jarman devoted himself so firmly to his garden. “Involved as one body,” Jarman’s gardening work protected him from vilification, as it also allowed him to perform the type of assemblage work he had perfected in the other artistic forms. While working on the garden, Jarman worked on his imprisoned body. Placing found objects in different areas, his garden became an assemblage of memories, tendencies, and tropes. The garden was noticeably “full of metal: rusty metal, corkscrew clumps, anchors from the beach, twisted metal.... The twisted grimace of wartime mines, an arch, a hook, a plummet, a line, a shell case – warlike once...” (Garden 109). But amongst these bellicose artifacts, flowers bloomed. Sea kale, poppies, marigolds, wallflowers, and many more found their ways through the shingles and flints. As much as his body was imprisoned, it was also full of life. New organs sprouting where decay, sickness, and death laid siege. Memories of friendship, creativity, and the flow of life mounting a defense

against loss. Consequently, Jarman's body, as shown through his garden and the corpus of which the garden represents a segment, stood equally as a temple, proof of his survival in the face of adversity.

Once Jarman died and his physical body disappeared, his corpus remained to fill out his absence with presence. In *Corpus*, Nancy writes about what he calls the "Exscription of our bodies" (11). In effect, Nancy explains what he sees as the body's capacity to expand into other "bodies," bodies here signifying all types of embodied iterations, be they human, mechanical, organic, inorganic, material, or abstract. Going against Jacques Derrida's famous dictum "Il n'y a pas de hors-texte," Nancy proposes that in the act of exscription, our bodies become "inscribed-outside," that is, they gain access to spaces "outside the text" (*Corpus* 11). In other words, Nancy sees the corpus as being precisely what can be outside the text. Corpus is not limited to a textual space. Corpus *is*. It is prelinguistic. It is before language. It is full of potentialities, pain, sensations, pleasure, involuntary movements, etc. The act of writing itself is corpus. It's the act of letting the body write; not the preparation that goes into writing a particular story or tale, but the movement and the trace that remains. I would argue that ultimately this is how Jarman can touch us across the page. He worked, ceaselessly until his death, moving among other bodies, including other bodies, so that upon completion of his corpus we would encounter the work, its energy, and absorb it into our corpus in order to create new spaces and potentialities. The journals, the films, the paintings, and the garden remain as traces of the

artist. But it is the corpus and its being, its engagement with the sensorial world, which reaches us.

The reconstituted body extends the reach of the artist and the person ad infinitum. Furthermore, as his corpus constitutes an open-ended assemblage of visuals, sounds, textures, contacts, *sensibilities*, collaborations, partnerships, friendships, and even witnesses, its reach continues to expand, as evidenced in the growing interest in his work, which included a 2014 film festival named after him at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and a retrospective at the Zagreb Film Festival in November 2016. Consequently, Jarman still remains one of the most important and relevant thinkers when it comes to the AIDS epidemic. While he may have set the early tone of representations of the illness, incorporating war references and rhetoric, the open-ended nature of his work has also allowed those who followed to approach AIDS in a myriad of experimental ways. But perhaps more importantly, Jarman's corpus stands as a relevant example of militancy in the face of the illness, its meanings, and the way it has been used as a weapon. Under siege, it would have been acceptable for him and any other People With AIDS to surrender. Even at his lowest point, Jarman resisted; as he poignantly responded once during an interview to questions about the severity of his illness, "Well I haven't died" (*Garden* 121). In the face of it all, he remained humorous and at times hopeful. Responding to allegations of pessimism in his film *The Last of England*, Jarman once stated, "The act of making the film is the opposite. I'm not cowering in this room, I'm going down fighting, that's optimistic. *This is war*, it doesn't matter if I lose the battle, *someone else will win the*

war" (emphasis added, 167). Jarman harnessed all hostilities directed at him, transforming them into becomings, flows, creations. His corpus stands immune to assaults in the security that "someone else will win the war" for Jarman and, by extension, People With AIDS. Like his beloved plants, Jarman continues to scatter even in the most inhospitable locations, carrying endless potentialities that flourish upon contact.

CONCLUSION:

SEEING THINGS (MOSTLY) HIDDEN:

AN ALTERNATE VISIBILITY OF WAR AND AIDS

A group of children play on the floor inside of their home. Using clay made from the soil just outside, they mimic the war that surrounds them. Their hands shape the moist earth into tanks which are destroyed when they roll over mines made of the same material. Their play disintegrates into a shoving match when they argue over who gets which piece of clay. As bodies push other bodies, military helicopters suddenly fly overhead. Disrupted from their games by the deafening ruckus, the children run outside, bumping into each other as they rush madly to catch a glimpse of the war machines passing by. Their eyes and faces express equal parts awe and fright. Their bodies shiver at the uncertainty of the events they cannot control. This is their day-to-day life in occupied Iraq, circa 2003. The scene plays out towards the conclusion of James Longley's short documentary *Sari's Mother* (2007). The film follows Sari Zegum, one of the children I have described playing above, and his mother, Fatin Hamid Daud, as together they brave both the war in Iraq and Sari's daily struggles with AIDS.

In the 2003 *Poz* story that served as the catalyst to the documentary, reporter Fariba Nawa sheds light on Sari's background. Sari developed AIDS after contracting the HIV virus from contaminated blood used during a transfusion intended to treat a bout of severe diarrhea. At the time Sari was ten years old. Sari lives each day in perpetual exhaustion. His skin attests to the effects of a rash that simply will not recede. To treat pain brought on by osteochondritis, Sari

receives painful injections directly into his ankle joints. In the film, Sari expresses his wish to attend school, but pain and weakness prevent him from enduring the ninety-minute walk. Instead, Sari stays home most of the time. He and his mother only venture into Baghdad, a forty-minute taxi ride from their home, when Sari is in urgent need of care at the city's hospital, or when they need to pick up his medication. The effects of war – the bombings, the roadside mines, the checkpoints, the damaged roadways, the bombed-out health care facilities – compound the difficulties of living with AIDS for Sari and his mother.

In *The Body In Pain* (1985), Elaine Scarry writes of the ways pain, injury, the wounded body, and other tropes of bodily harm that arise within war discourse become absorbed by the body politic for the purpose of defining its identity. It is pertinent to quote her at length here. Scarry warns that war is,

a convention that assists the disappearance of the human body from accounts of the very event that is the most radically embodying event in which human beings ever collectively participate. It is not that "injury" is wholly omitted, or even that it is, strictly speaking, redescribed, but rather that it is relocated to a place (the imaginary body of a colossus) where it is no longer recognizable or interpretable: we will respond to the injury (a severed artery in one giant, a massive series of leech bites in another) as an imaginary wound in an imaginary body, despite the fact that that imaginary body is itself made up of thousands of real human bodies, and thus composed of actual (hence woundable) human tissue. (71)

Longley presents Sari's body as evidence of the "woundable" reality our bodies experience when under siege; evidence that AIDS and war, as actual threats far from imaginary, remain important concerns to this day. It is this stark reality that beckons me to write about the novels, films, and bodies I have considered throughout this dissertation and their effect on my body, their demand for me to

bear witness. Reading Goytisolo, experiencing Alameddine, or watching Jarman's films, I am made to feel. These texts urge my body to feel pain, empathy, dread, anxiety, helplessness, sadness, and many other countless sensations. It is also the recognition of the woundable reality which impels me to end this dissertation with Sari. Bearing witness to experiences of war and AIDS implies recognizing real bodies over a body politic, the actual over the imaginary.

Sari's body, like the other bodies explored throughout this dissertation, which include the bodies of People with AIDS and those of war casualties, is not imaginary but all too real. To speak of these bodies as anything but real would constitute in and of itself an act of violence. Throughout this dissertation my mission has been to bring forth these bodies once again, out of the shadows of historical amnesia, to make them real, pertinent, present, and available to the senses. When I invoke a presence attainable to the senses at large, not just sight, I intend to call attention to our capacity for phenomenal absorption. Furthermore, presence in this frame of thought is not just present to the eyes, but to an inner vision accessible through our shared sensorial capacity. To invoke presence is to reveal the hidden. The artists analyzed in this dissertation and their subjects seek to connect with a deeper capacity for empathy and understanding. Clinging to the possibility of communicating their experience, they place their faith in their art and in its potential to connect to our bodies through the senses. As I have shown throughout, this method succeeds in communicating the siege experienced in both war and living with AIDS.

There has been a growing danger in recent years of erasing PWAs, war refugees, and casualties of both as if the effects of AIDS and war are no longer a pertinent reality. While for many AIDS has gone from a terminal illness to a chronic condition over the past decade – thanks in great measure to breakthroughs in treatment and medication – the fact remains that the illness is still incurable and that many still die from it. For those who have access to the medications needed to control its effects, AIDS poses a burden and nuisance of regimented pills and doctor visits; death has mostly receded into the horizon of probable outcomes. This has caused many in the press, the government, and the general public to think that AIDS no longer represents a problem in need of attention.⁴² However, a look at recent statistics published by organizations like UNAIDS paints quite a different picture.

There are, as of June 2016, 36.7 million people worldwide living with HIV/AIDS (AIDS.gov). Of this number, only 18.2 million have access to the antiretroviral therapy needed to stave off the symptoms associated with AIDS. While the number of people on antiretroviral therapy has steadily increased over the last sixteen years, there are still over half of the people with HIV/AIDS who go through their lives without the necessary medication. Most of the people who do not have access live in Sub-Saharan Africa, which also happens to be the region with the most people currently living with AIDS. Sub-Saharan Africa also presents

⁴² Some article titles include: “HIV no longer considered death sentence.” (Saundra Young, CNN.com, 1 Dec 2013); “The End of AIDS: HIV Infection as a Chronic Disease.” (Steven G. Deeks, Sharon R. Lewin, and Diane V. Havlir; Lancet; 2 Nov 2013; 382 (9903), 1525-33); “As a doctor, I’d rather have HIV than diabetes” (Max Pemberton, TheSpectator.com, 19 Apr 2014), and “Australia declares AIDS no longer public health issue.” (Harry Pearl, Reuters.com, 11 July 2016).

the greatest number of new HIV infections, according to UNAIDS numbers.⁴³ That said, AIDS is far from being an African problem. While many countries in the West show a decrease in new infections and a stabilization in the percentage of people living with AIDS, low-income and minority communities within those same countries have registered a steady increase in HIV infections and AIDS diagnoses over the last decade. For example, according to numbers made available by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in 2015, both African American and Latino communities in the U.S. have shown over 20% increases in the amount of people diagnosed with HIV.⁴⁴ To put these increases in perspective, the CDC notes that while African Americans and Latinos represent only 12 and 18 percent of the U.S. population respectively, these two communities accounted for 45 and 24 percent of the newly-diagnosed HIV cases in 2015. Therefore, the HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to lay siege, but mostly (at least outside these two groups) on less visible fronts.

While raw data is usually not collected in territories and countries under the fog of war, it is unquestionable that military conflicts insert the confusion and disruption necessary for health services to lose their effects in war torn areas, and that these conditions bring similar increases in the effects of HIV/AIDS at both individual and collective levels. As a 2014 Médecins Sans Frontières writeup observed, “People living with HIV/AIDS in conflict zones are victimised twice – first by the virus itself, and second by the breakdown of health services, which

⁴³ See “Global Statistics.” HIV.gov. www.aids.gov/hiv-aids-basics/hiv-aids-101/global-statistics/

⁴⁴ See “U.S. Statistics.” HIV.gov. www.aids.gov/hiv-aids-basics/hiv-aids-101/statistics/index.html

can make treatment impossible to come by” (Ferreyra). Cecilia Ferreyra explains that, during wars, many people flee their homes or home countries. For refugees, it is rare to find HIV/AIDS treatment in refugee camps. During the ongoing conflict in the Central African Republic, for example, people with HIV/AIDS have fled to Chad, Cameroon, Ethiopia, and Uganda. In the process they left behind their medications and the facilities where they sought treatment. Consequently, many PWAs and people diagnosed with HIV break from their treatment regiment, causing many to fall ill or regress from whatever benefits they had attained from being on anti-retroviral medicine. This is true, not just of those who flee their countries, but also of the ones who stay in these areas of conflict, Sari included. Sari’s situation in Iraq thus reveals the typical effects of war on PWAs and evinces how intertwined these conditions remain for many.

As Longley’s documentary makes clear, AIDS and war continue to find ways to intersect in our present. When these two events converge, the consequences become all the more damaging and disheartening. Sari’s case encapsulates many of the effects and conditions of the intersection of war and AIDS highlighted throughout this dissertation and adds some that have not been as visible. To begin, Sari lives in poverty with his parents and eight siblings. Location makes it so that he does not get the ideal care at all times. Bureaucracy limits his access to medicine, professional care, and monetary help. And stigma accompanies all of his exchanges, not just with the government, but also with his family. For example, in her Poz article Nawa notes how, on some nights, Sari is forced to sleep outdoors, away from his family, for fear of infecting his siblings.

Therefore, AIDS for Sari represents as much a terminal illness as it was during the era captured in Goytisolo, Alameddine, and Jarman's works. It is imperative that we acknowledge that the siege continues for many, and reject the argument that it is an illness of the past. Access, or lack thereof, has become the newest bastion in the war against AIDS, a situation which determines the illness' status as either mortal or chronic. It is to be seen how, for example, the impending repeal of the Affordable Care Act in the US and the nation's continual treatment of healthcare as a for-profit enterprise will affect the access to retroviral medicines for People with AIDS, not to mention the effect on the treatment of other conditions, like diabetes, which have been shown to affect minorities at a greater rate.

The state of siege, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, serves as common ground in the sensorial landscape of the two experiences of war and AIDS. Instability, fear, danger, and the threat of pain and harm – conditions that characterize the state of siege – permeate the lives of PWAs and civilians in war zones, then and now. Like Sari's story, the texts that I have analyzed bring to light the intersectionality of the two experiences and their effects on the body and the mind. Like Sari's story, they also seek to make visible the invisible. Some of the subjects depicted in these texts have had the benefit of attaining social and cultural visibility; but for the majority, their reality is one that remains hidden from the public eye. These are still predominantly bodies, identities, and segments left un(der)represented, either because of race, class, sexual preference, or many other factors that intersect with these experiences.

Writing specifically about war, Jim Hicks explains that, “the representation of war, and of the victims of war, does traditionally tend toward the silencing of victims—toward holding them out as objects of pathos rather than as subjects that speak for themselves” (47). A double bind is at work here in which the silencing of voices works in conjunction with the visual objectification of the bodies of those going through the experience of war. As I have shown throughout, the erasure of the human body in war by way of its absorption into the imaginary body of the colossus, as Scarry observed, similarly takes place in the experience of the body of the Person with AIDS. With that in mind, I would argue that an analogous silencing tendency has been promoted through mainstream AIDS narratives. As mentioned in the introduction, films like *Philadelphia* and texts like *And The Band Played On*, representatives of the microcosmic and macrocosmic narrative structures respectively, have tended towards the (re)presentation of its subjects as objects to scrutinize for their supposed questionable decisions. Andrew Beckett and Gaëtan Dugas were made visible as warnings, but their voices were essentially muted from the conversation. As Kruger notes regarding the dangers of mainstream microcosmic and macrocosmic narrative structures, “[b]oth narratives present the picture of a “battle” already lost: individuals and populations affected by HIV and AIDS are irretrievable” (80). It is this type of traditional absorption of the victims' narrative into the body politic that the avant-garde texts analyzed in this dissertation have tried to contest. If, as it has been

repeatedly asserted by AIDS activists, silence equals death,⁴⁵ one key purpose ascribed to AIDS art, then, is the task of bringing back the senses into these representation; this includes the shattering of silence and the challenge to the reluctance of the senses at large from engaging with the reality of AIDS.

Narratives where war and AIDS intersect depend on the senses to communicate; by tapping into the senses, they bring their audiences closer to the experience.

Sari's Mother represents one such attempt at engaging with the senses anew. Stylistically, *Sari's Mother* is a quiet film. Most of its scenes are meditative in a way reminiscent of the films of Terrence Malick. But that does not mean the film is by any stretch silent. The body – in this case Sari's body – speaks. While there is pathos, the contemplation of a life lived as a PWA and a war casualty provides the audience with the opportunity to see past the strictly pathetic and delve into considerations of the body and the psyche and how these, in turn, are moulded by extreme experiences. We witness Sari's plight and feel with him, not because we feel sorry for him, but because he demands that we *feel*. The film focuses on the bodily details and adjoins these with Sari's musings, conjuring a deep connection that moves past the limits of the filmic form and, thus, eliciting in the viewer a physical response. Longley captures the exhaustion and suffering felt by Sari and his mother. We feel the exhaustion and suffering. Sari's eyes

⁴⁵ The Silence equals Death refrain originated with a group by the same name formed in New York in 1985. One of its members, Avram Finkelstein, would later create the iconic poster with the refrain emblazoned on a black background and accompanied by a pink triangle, a reference to the practice, during Nazi Germany's advance on Europe and the subsequent Holocaust, of marking gays in concentration camps with a pink triangle. The refrain and the poster would be adopted by ACTUP some years later. For more, see Finkelstein, Avram. *After Silence: A History of AIDS Through its Images*. U of California P, 2017.

reflect a weariness towards his illness, and towards a war that compounds the challenges already inherent in his illness. We perceive the weariness. When receiving his injections, Sari cannot hold back his visceral pain; he cries and voices his anguish. We hear these cries. Watching the film, one cannot help but become frustrated at the inefficiency of the government and the doctors. The stomach turns at the sight of his injections. The chest heaves in agitation at the sound of his pain. Our bodies feel with him. And we try to avert our senses, but it is of no use; we become one with Sari at least for the duration of the film.

During one of his few verbal interventions, Sari expresses the confusion his embodied self experiences: ““Something is on my mind and I cannot hear. Sometimes pain comes. My heart aches and I grow weak.” These lines are cut to images of Sari lying on a rug placed outside in the open, as his siblings run around him and his mother prepares food. Those who have read the Poz article cannot help but be transported to the idea of Sari sleeping out in the open at night because his family fears him and his illness; out in the open with the elements, which in his case are compounded by residing in a war zone. As we watch Sari during this sequence we take on his point of view. He is the center; the spectacle of life takes place around him and within him, not on him, not on the surface. We are beckoned to be side by side with him. To live his life. And that life screams. He is both spectator and actor. Removing the spectacle of war and AIDS from the surface and substantiating it through sensations allows Sari to speak his own experience of war and AIDS. The pain is his; the weakness is his; the sense of being under siege is his. Yet, in verbalizing the conditions that affect

him, Sari also brings us close to partake in this burden, he invites us to listen to that which he cannot hear. In this interaction, both Sari and his audience work in tandem to break the silence, each helping the other hear what otherwise each would individually be incapable of hearing.

As I have been arguing throughout, the texts analyzed in this dissertation invite their audiences to fuse with the body of those subjected to the siege experience, to bear some of the pain and confusion they experience, to serve as witnesses of events that would otherwise remain hidden. This is also the case with Sari. Lennard Davis observes that for the body politic, “[a]n able body is the body of a citizen.... [D]eformed, deafened, amputated, obese, female, perverse, crippled, maimed and blinded bodies do not make up the body politic. (71-72) One could extend this argument beyond the limits of the body politic and into the realm of individual bodies per se when speaking of PWAs and war casualties at large. There is a danger, I would argue, in the construction and proliferation of AIDS narratives of neglecting or omitting stories like Sari’s, the stories of those who belong to invisible demographics or to segments and nations outside the centers of privilege. His are clearly not “imaginary wounds in imaginary bodies.” Nevertheless, his wounds are left hidden to the Iraqi government, to the US/ Allied Military Complex, and to the world at large, because Sari does not fit a segment that belongs to any body politic. Furthermore, Sari does not even belong to the segments that have traditionally been represented, positively or negatively, in either the AIDS literary canon or the war literary canon. And that is the current reality for many PWAs who find themselves outside the purview of

academia, journalism, and activism. In Sari's case, his situation, already precarious to an extreme, is further complicated by his situation of living within a war zone, making it more challenging for his story to be heard.

The current Syrian refugee crisis represents the latest extension of the ongoing theater of contemporary warfare. Syria is just the most recent reminder that war is never cured. It is always latent, waiting to resurface. If anything is clear from what I have argued so far, it is that AIDS has also not been cured. It is very much latent, waiting to resurface as well, a symptom of our complacency in treating it and our failure in finding a permanent cure. Who is to say that a new, equally damaging illness does not loom currently on the horizon, or that we, all of a sudden, may soon find ourselves once more succumbing to paranoia, sequestering people, and using war and its rhetoric to victimize and separate "them" from "us." If history has taught us anything, it is that such events are cyclical, and that we are always vulnerable to repeating the same mistakes.

One such possible scenario could play out on the island of Puerto Rico. Over the past decade, the island nation has experienced a deep economic recession which has particularly hit hard these last three years, leading many Puerto Ricans to flee to the US mainland. Driving by a town like Santurce, part of the San Juan municipality, in 2016, I was confronted with the disheartening sight of a once-vibrant area now full of abandoned buildings, some exhibiting structural damage similar to what one sees in war zone photographs. The number of homeless individuals roaming the streets revealed that the effects went beyond the merely structural. This economic downturn has been accompanied by an

increase in health care problems. In 2016-17 a Zika outbreak led to a major health crisis on the island. US officials issued a warning advising its citizens residing on the mainland to avoid travel to the US territory. The CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report resorted to language that painted Puerto Rico as a territory alien to the US.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the CDC set up two surveillance systems tasked with monitoring Zika cases; one was in charge of the US mainland and its territories, while the other was specifically created to surveil Puerto Rico.⁴⁷ Whether they intended to or not, the CDC's response effects a rift that sees Puerto Rico as other to the US. Though the crisis has since been officially declared over by Ministry of Health officials,⁴⁸ the situation serves as a reminder of the precarious nature of a nation's health and the importance of infrastructure in keeping these at bay. During this same time span, there has also been an exodus of health care professionals and doctors, who have left the island seeking better paying jobs and more stability. The scale of this exodus has not been fully documented; however, a tally compiled by the Puerto Rico Statistics Institute

⁴⁶ One example of this practice occurs in an early MMWR dated January 29, 2016, which at one point states the following: "By January 20, 2016, locally-transmitted cases had been reported to the Pan American Health Organization from Puerto Rico and 19 other countries or territories in the Americas." Placing Puerto Rico alongside the other "19 other countries or territories in the Americas" exposes the CDC's stance, which views Puerto Rico as a territory foreign to the United States. The practice is sustained in future MMWR's during the Zika crisis, which rarely point out Puerto Rico's legal relationship to the US. Nowhere is it mentioned that Puerto Ricans are naturalized US citizenship.

⁴⁷ See Simeone, Regina M., MPH, et al. "Possible Zika Virus Infection Among Pregnant Women – United States and Territories, May 2016." *MMRW*. 27 May 2016, 65 (20). www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6520e1.htm?s_cid=mm6520e1_w

⁴⁸ See Goldschmidt, Debra. "Puerto Rico declares Zika epidemic over." *CNN.com*. 6 June 2017. www.cnn.com/2017/06/06/health/zika-puerto-rico-epidemic-over-bn/index.html

found that “between 2005 and 2013, 1,200 physicians and surgeons left Puerto Rico to live on the U.S. mainland.”⁴⁹ This number must pale in comparison to the numbers that have certainly left since 2013.

As if the situation in Puerto Rico were not sufficiently unsettled already, the island was hit by hurricane María in September 2017. A situation described as a war zone in many news outlets,⁵⁰ the hurricane caused widespread infrastructural destruction and severe damage to the electricity grid, the latter leading to an ongoing widespread loss of power that is yet to be resolved. Because of the instability lived daily since María, many doctors in Puerto Rico have warned of a looming health crisis and the effects this may have, not only on the island, but in the US and the rest of the world. It is not difficult to see the potential effects this recent hardship may have on the treatment or lack thereof of illnesses and medical conditions. The fragility of the island’s health system and the ease with which illness can take root became apparent some months after the hurricane when a leptospirosis outbreak took root. Up to 74 cases of people contaminated from ingesting or coming into contact with polluted water were reported. Additionally, hospitals are barely functioning, some doctors resorting to the use of their mobile phone flashlights in order to operate.⁵¹ Medicine and

⁴⁹ See Patron, Mariela. “Puerto Rico’s Exodus of Doctors Adds Health Care Strain to Dire Financial Crisis.” NBCNews.com. 8 Aug 2017.

⁵⁰ Examples of the use of war as a metaphor in the press include: “Puerto Rico resembles ‘war zone.’ What Trump must do to help.” (David Bogaty, CNBC.com, 4 Oct 2017); “‘This is like in War’: A Scramble to Care for Puerto Rico’s Sick and Injured.” (Luis Ferré-Sadurní, Frances Robles, and Lizette Alvarez, NYTimes.com, 26 Sep 2017); and “Hurricane Maria has left Puerto Rico like a war zone as humanitarian crisis looms: Army official.” (Denis Slattery, NYDailyNews.com, 30 Sep 2017)

⁵¹ See Farrell, Jeff. “Surgeons in Puerto Rico ‘use mobile phone light to operate’ as Trump gives his relief efforts a ‘10.’” *The Independent*. 24 Oct 2017.

medical supplies are scarce due to many factors, including high demand after the hurricane and the halting of production at factories that are located in Puerto Rico, this last detail affecting supply not just on the island but elsewhere as well. And the situation is far from stabilizing, much less improving.

As the Puerto Rican health crisis has revealed, and despite the mechanisms put in place precisely to prevent this type of crisis, outbreaks and, in more severe cases, epidemics and pandemics are a short step away from manifesting, be these through the forward march of mutation, flaws in the chain of prevention, or, in the case of Puerto Rico, the fall of infrastructure and an ongoing lack of government and public interest. There are many parallels here with Sari and his mother's experience. For weeks, many People with AIDS and HIV on the metropolitan area of the island were unable to get access to medication and treatment. Many of the offices used for education, distribution, and treatment were damaged, the medicines and supplies kept in them lost.⁵² These weeks turned to months in the case of those living in rural areas. So, as in Sari's case, those with access have it easier than the rest of the population. It must also be mentioned that the situation before María was already dire due to the government's inaction and its stance in favor of moral and religious teaching in schools, which relegates sex education to the fringes and sees any sex education, along with information of disease prevention, as an endorsement of promiscuous behavior. María is the latest volley in what was and is already a man-made disaster.

⁵² See Lavers, Michael. "Puerto Rico HIV/AIDS Groups Struggling to Recover from Maria." *PrideSource*. 14 Feb 2018.

Media depictions of situations like these tend for the spectacle early, when the news is novel and shocking. But as weeks progress and the spectacle loses its potency, they become flashes in a pan as other distractions come along, most of us moving on to the next spectacle. Consequently, upon seeing and hearing Sari and his mother's story, I feel a special connection to their plight and see many parallels to the siege experience in venues beyond AIDS and war proper, as is the case in Puerto Rico, where the experience and all its attendant effects on the body and mind manifest daily. While Puerto Rico is not experiencing a war proper, the phenomenological aspects of the current situation make of it a space that highly resembles a place under siege. And as was the case in the narratives I have analyzed in this dissertation, the destruction that has occurred intersects with experiences of living with HIV/AIDS and other illnesses, deepening the strife that is faced. Thus, the state of siege is far from over, far from being an isolated moment in history, far from being something that will remain in the pages of this dissertation.

To claim that we can remedy war, HIV/AIDS, and other siege experiences would be illusory in its optimism. That is not to say that we should not strive to effect immediate change in these venues. But my contention, in concluding this dissertation, is that we should also tap into our humanity, into our shared capacity of sensation and experience. One glaring piece that seems to be missing in Sari's story and in Puerto Rico is the desire on the part of people at large to connect to the sensations they elicit. This is the case when Sari visits a local official who can only focus on the logistics and protocols of offering treatment, not

on the person's pain and struggle at the insurmountable obstacles that pile from war and its effects on infrastructure. This is the case when the President of the United States visits Puerto Rico for a photo opportunity and throws paper towels at a throng of people. Citing procedure and throwing paper towels at people who need support without throwing our very selves into their experience keeps us aloof, distant from truly knowing what it feels like to be under siege. It is imperative that we remind ourselves of the realities experienced by the Saris of the world, at home and abroad, and render these experience as present to our embodied selves. We must continue to reach across the pages, the screens, the distances, the gaps, and listen, see, touch, and feel in order to come closer to these experiences and heed the calls for understanding and connection.

As Disability Studies thinkers often like to remind everyone regarding the idea of disability, we may someday come to be disabled ourselves, be it by accident, chance, or conditions beyond our control. The same is true of war and illness. We must foreground the human and the humane in the humanities, and rediscover what it is to be human and humane outside of the humanities. We must resist the need to focus on "imaginary wounds on imaginary bodies" and feel and see these wounds as they truly are; wounds on actual flesh and blood. We must tend to these wounds. There is no benefit in keeping the human cloistered in the humanities. Therein lies my interest in these narratives of siege; in learning from the experiences depicted so that we can transfer what we learn from these onto our immediate interactions and the world at large. I want to be moved, physically and emotionally; moved to feel, moved to understand, moved

to act. There is much to be gained, individually and collectively, in connecting with our capacity for sense and the feelings that arise from our contact with the world. Not accepting this puts us at risk of not experiencing our selves, thus relegating ourselves to an existence in which all becomes spectacle with no substance.

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