

Resisting the Logic of Ambivalence: Bad Faith as Subversive, Anticolonial Practice

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This article critiques Homi Bhabha's proposal that mimicry, as a transgressive performance of ambivalence, disrupts the colonial violence of the stereotype, and as such, generates emancipatory conditions for postcolonial subjects. I am critical of this naming of mimicry as enabling a possible liberation from colonial violence not only because it fails to address the loss of belonging that significantly marks the experience of being so violated, but also because it seems to intensify this loss in the hybridity and fragmentation that it celebrates. Through the work of María Lugones and Mariana Ortega, I propose a reimagined sense of Sartrean bad faith as one that corrects for this failure. This account of bad faith—as subversive, anti-colonial practice—legitimizes my longing for a stability made impossible by the violent ambivalence that pervades both the colonial and postcolonial condition. Lugones's accounts of multiplicity and ontological plurality, as well as Ortega's conception of hometactics, help me argue that this reimagined conception of bad faith ought to be considered productive when it comes to existential strategies that pursue the possibility of free black life.

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha proposes that mimicry, as a transgressive performance of ambivalence, disrupts the colonial violence of the stereotype, and as such, generates emancipatory conditions for postcolonial subjects. I am critical of this naming of mimicry as enabling a possible liberation from colonial violence not only because it fails to address the loss of belonging that significantly marks the experience of being so violated, but also because it seems to intensify this loss in the hybridity and fragmentation that it celebrates. I bring Bhabha's work into conversation with acts of bad faith to correct for this failure, presenting bad faith as a subversive anti-colonial praxis that, so understood, legitimizes the postcolonial subject's desire to overcome the instability of nonbelonging.

To be sure, as Betty Cannon writes, "I fall into bad faith if . . . I pretend . . . to be a fact in a world without freedom" (Cannon 1991, 46). While recognizing that this is the case, there is something to be said about insisting that one is "a fact" in a world predicated upon your remaining a fiction in a colonial fantasy. In other words, in

choosing this mode of bad faith, I create for myself a stable ground upon which I might feel my “realness,” and do so against racialized and gendered stereotypes that exist for the sake of colonial (and postcolonial) power. I find sensitivity to this desire for stability in Mariana Ortega’s notion of hometactics, and so I draw on her conception of homemaking to argue for an understanding of bad faith as subversive anticolonial praxis. My argument also turns to María Lugones’s conceptions of ontological plurality and multiplicitous selfhood. Her work helps me show that, in pursuing a comportment of stability through a choice of bad faith, I do not inevitably reproduce a colonial relationality that rests upon rigid borders and fantasies of security. This distinction (between homemaking and atavistic conceptions of being at home) is important for Ortega’s account of hometactics, and so I identify the concerns of both scholars to resonate with my own—to identify, as legitimate, the desire for stability and belonging in the experiences of postcolonial subjects, as they live under the violence of colonial stereotyping.

In her seminal work, *Borderlands*, Gloria Anzaldúa writes, “I am visible—see this Indian face—yet I am invisible. I both blind them with my beak nose and am their blind spot. But I exist, we exist. They’d like to think I have melted in the pot. But I haven’t, we haven’t” (Anzaldúa 2007, 108). Here, I read the negotiations of a gendered and racialized subject whose body shows up, quite ambiguously, as both hyper-visible and invisible. This subject is essentialized by the stereotypes that reductively signify her within a colonial matrix of power, and mandates that she exists *for* the agenda that keeps that matrix alive. But fixed within that fantasy, this subject is also profoundly absent from the scene, hidden behind the outline of the stereotype’s empty signification. Out of this world (one that, to be sure, is constructed not *for* her thriving but rather, against it), her proclamation that “I exist, we exist” is noteworthy. It is a proclaiming that she resiliently remains, and resistively marks her being there, despite the instability and nonbelonging produced for her in that political space. My proposal is that, out of such a world, a choice of bad faith conveys a similar (resilient and resistive) proclamation, and as such, ought to be seen as subversive anticolonial praxis. In what follows, I hope to show that, as the pursuit of a lived comportment of being at home with and in oneself, bad faith is a mark of resistance when enacted by subjects living under the discursive violence of colonial stereotypes (much like the gendered and racialized ones to which Anzaldúa responds in her testimony). More important, it is a choice that acknowledges this desire for homemaking in a way that Bhabha’s conception of mimicry fails to do.

OUTLINE

My argument unfolds in four sections. The first traces Bhabha’s account of the discriminatory power of the stereotype. The second section discusses what he identifies as tactical responses, on the part of the postcolonial other, to this work of the stereotype. Such responses, we will see, involve the sense in which the other (the object of colonial discourse) inscribes modes of mimicry and (nonidentical) iterations of

herself, and as such, delegitimizes the epistemological claims inherent in the stereotype. The third section uses Ortega's conception of "hometactics" to anchor my claim that desires for stable belonging ought to be seen as legitimate desires of postcolonial identities. I stress that, to the degree that mimicry fails to do this, it gives an incomplete account of the possibilities of anticolonial transgressive acts. Section IV discusses bad faith at length, and articulates its productivity in light of Ortega's analysis of hometactics. This fourth section also employs Lugones's conception of ontological pluralism to distinguish the homemaking articulated by Ortega from the violent atavism produced through coloniality. Lugones's account also helps me articulate the ways in which a choice of bad faith can avoid similar reductions to atavistic modes of relationality. By way of conclusion, I stress the failure in Bhabha's reading of mimicry to acknowledge as legitimate the desires for home and dwelling on the part of the postcolonial subject. In that light, I reiterate the ways in which bad faith might be understood as a project of free and self-determining appropriations of one's political space.

I. STEREOTYPE AND THE LOGIC OF AMBIVALENCE

Bhabha's analysis of the stereotype focuses on its mode of knowledge-production, and on the effectiveness of this mode. In other words, his analytic is concerned with *how and why* this mode of discrimination is as effective as it is. What does the stereotype attempt to accomplish, how does it go about doing this, and, most important, why does it ultimately succeed? These questions take him directly to the logic of ambivalence. Not quite something that can be empirically proved (so not grounded purely in experience), and not quite something validated through a *a priori* logic either, the stereotypical image is always more than, in excess of what (at least since Kant) counts as an epistemological artifact. Its logic of ambivalence means that the stereotype is in a uniquely tenuous relationship to modes of knowing, and it is this tenuous relationship that Bhabha aims to detail.

His account is indebted to both Michel Foucault and Frantz Fanon. In particular, he reads Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* as a text that, if not read carefully, can be used to support a Manichean (or dichotomous) psychology of the colonial condition. Like Foucault, Bhabha recovers a more careful reading of a discursive account of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Peter Childs and Patrick Williams note this when they remind us that "Bhabha points out that in Foucault's concept of power/knowledge subjects are not in a simple relation of self and other or Master and Slave but in a complex discursive relation which places them both simultaneously as not just adversaries but also supports" (Childs and Williams 1997, 148). Such discursive moments in *Black Skin, White Masks* establish racial stereotypes as supporting both the figure of the native and the colonizer. "[Colonial] identification... is always the return of an image of identity which bears the mark of splitting in that 'Other' place from which it comes" (Fanon 1986, xvi). The native and the colonizer call for each other (desire each other) in this always incomplete process of

identification. As such, in the aftermath of colonial rule, both the postcolonial subject and the European are ambivalently placed together, mutually tied up in colonialism's stereotypical representations. As I will discuss later, this discursive relationship is grounded on a disavowal of difference, and for this reason, it is prescribed through a logic of ambivalence.

Bhabha's account aims to understand the stereotype in terms of the manic desperation that drives the constructions of power and knowledge within the colonial scene. "[The] stereotype, [as] a complex, ambivalent, contradictory mode of representation, [is] as anxious as it is assertive" (Bhabha 2004, 100). All this means that, operating within the space of ambivalence, the stereotype is never a "secure point of identification" (99). An oscillation is involved in its internal mechanisms, which does not (as one might expect) result in undermining its effects. Rather, it is in this oscillation that the successful stereotyping of postcolonial subjects occurs. For this reason, Bhabha holds that our object of analysis must be this manic tension between the anxiety and the assertiveness that makes up the process of stereotypical representations.¹ It is only then that we bring into view what he calls the "effectivity" in their articulations of identity (and in colonial discourse, more broadly construed).

Bhabha identifies the place of this tension in the fetishized "fantasy of origin and identity." This means that stereotype formations respond to the colonizer's existential desire for atavistic belonging and originary wholeness. It facilitates nostalgia for a time gone by, where the colonizer dreams of locating clearly demarcated boundaries of homeland, inside of which fellow countrymen belonged by virtue of an indelible mark of bloodline.² Under the stereotype, the native's bestial savagery, irrational unpredictability, and childlike disregard for the value of (adult and serious) political life is tracked, localized (put in proverbial chains, if you will) in order to sustain this colonial fantasy of origin and identity.

However, as a thing in need of being mastered, controlled, and dominated, the stereotyped other is also, invariably, the object of fear. (What happens to us, heaven forbid, if she escapes, unbeknownst to us, and bleeds into the social fabric of our pure white lives?) The racialized woman, as gendered other, shows up for colonial discourse as that which threatens the universality upon which this discourse grounds white male embodiment and white male culture, and this forces the colonial narrative to reckon with its own dismantling (some human beings are *not* white men). This reckoning is deferred by deploying the stereotype in order to dominate and mask the racialized female body as such. To the degree that it accomplishes this, the universality of white male embodiment is restored.³ In this regard, the stereotype is a fetishized object that (quite ambivalently) recognizes, then disavows racialized difference. The black body must be recognized in order to facilitate the pleasure that results in mastery and domination. But it must also be disavowed to the degree that it threatens the universality of whiteness. Bhabha writes, "[Narcissism] and aggressivity [are] precisely these two forms of identification that constitute the dominant strategy of colonial power exercised in relation to the stereotype which, as a form of multiple and contradictory belief, gives knowledge of difference and simultaneously disavows or masks it" (Bhabha 2004, 110).

Subsequent to this account of the violence of stereotypical ambivalence, we might ask: What of the lived experience of this racialized woman, this postcolonial other, stereotyped and fetishized so as to provide this release valve for the colonizer's anxiety over difference? As it stands, the postcolonial figure is "a repertoire of conflictual positions" (110)—feared and desired (desired in order to be feared), and visible to the degree that she is invisible (recall, here Anzaldúa's "I am visible—see this Indian face—yet I am invisible" [Anzaldúa 2007, 108]). What are her strategies for maneuvering through what Bhabha describes as a splitting or doubling of her identity across this logic of ambivalence? We find Bhabha's response to these questions in his turn to mimicry.

II. MIMICRY AS TRANSGRESSIVE AMBIVALENCE

When a stereotype is repeated in time, I am made to occupy a nonchanging image across the movement of time. For identities born out of mimicry, there are *iterations* of the self, such that the postcolonial figure occupies an altered image (that, despite this alteration, is still *her* image) across the movement of time. In what follows, I trace Bhabha's account of mimicry, with the ultimate goal of bringing it to bear on questions of belonging. Most important, I aim to negotiate the relationship between mimicry and bad faith to the degree that I regard the latter as a fundamental choice of colonial resistance in general, and as counter-resistance to the violence of stereotypical discourse in particular.

Bhabha writes, "The success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure" (Bhabha 2004, 123). Such "inappropriate objects"—either the figure of the native during colonial rule, or the figure of the postcolonial subject during the period of colonial hegemony—remain all too savage to tame, all too childlike to be self-motivated, all too animal-like to be reasonable (and responsible) stewards of nature. This means that, within the colonial scene, these figures can only mimic the rational humanity of whiteness. This "almost but not quite" mimicry is necessary to sustain the logic of colonialism, insofar as its legitimacy requires a fundamental and unbridgeable difference between the European and the native. That is to say, a "proliferation of inappropriate objects" is necessary for the justified continuation of colonialism's missionizing work (both the theological and secular-capitalist phases), as well as the postcolonial *neocolonialism* that shapes the lives of postcolonial subjects.

It is within this context of strategic failure that the postcolonial subject is converted to what Bhabha will name "an authorized other" (122), sufficiently controlled to belong to the social order *as other*. But it is also in this (near) resemblance that her authorized difference becomes the quite *unauthorized* menace of difference. The figure of the mimic contains an ambivalence within the narrative of colonial authority, which means that she often slips (or runs the risk of slipping) into a caricatured performance of European subjectivity. It is this slippage that, for Bhabha, grounds the possibility of transgression. An enactment of subversion is clear when it becomes *unclear* whether the mimicry constituted in the postcolonial figure is fully sincere

(operating out of a genuine acknowledgment of colonial authority), or a mere parody of that authority. To be sure, the subversiveness that Bhabha locates in this menacing mode of mimicry looks nothing like explicit political transgression. It is, as Childs and Williams note, not the “oppositional political agency” of an intentional anticolonial praxis.⁴ Nonetheless, it is important to remember that the work of the stereotype facilitates the colonial fantasy to the degree that, through the stereotype, colonial difference is presented as what can be fully known/seen. As such, lines are clearly drawn between European humanity and postcolonial subhumanity in a way that offers full transparency on the colonial scene. To the contrary, in the space of the ambivalence generated in mimicry, things are no longer all that clear. Through her performance of mimicry, the postcolonial subject could really be acknowledging that she is forever locked out of the “club” of European humanity, of which she is nevertheless in awe. Or she could be utilizing her partial resemblance to produce a mockery of that club. Insofar as this second possibility is always ambivalently coded into her performance, “[colonial] authority’s near-duplication produces a powerful representation of counter-domination” (Childs and Williams 1997, 131).

For Bhabha, mimicry is a mode of political subversion out of a scene of violence that, at least at the outset, forecloses any emancipatory experience. As stereotyped, the postcolonial other “is” as invisible, silent, present in the form of an absence. But, in that invisibility, there is the *menace* of mimicry conditioning the possibility of an alternative mode of transgressive practice. Said otherwise, transgression happens out of the “erasure of self-presence,” and on the very grounds of that erasure’s paradigm. The figure of the mimic “is” and “is no longer” each instance in the iterative process of her identity-production. As partially present, she is neither this nor that, neither here nor there. But in another sense, her identity iterations mean that she is *both* this and that, here *and* there. Bhabha employs a language of doubling and splitting to capture the ways in which mimicry transgressively reworks colonial discourse *against* its own authority. The iterative identity performance is chaotic and fragmented, undermining the very synchrony of the time presupposed in the colonial narrative.

Hence, as erased, the postcolonial subject “gives” herself over in the time of ambivalent iteration and not (stereotyped) repetition, which is to say that she resists the light of colonial appropriation. When this light looks (in the white gaze, in Foucault’s all-encompassing panopticon), there is never “all of me” to be seen—“I both blind them with my beak nose and am their blind spot” (Anzaldúa 2007, 108). At any given moment, this light will illuminate the location of my absence. It illuminates in order to look, but sees only a sign of what I was, what I am already on the way to no longer being (or have already begun to “be no more”). Despite her gendered and racialized stereotype, this subject makes herself to be always missing from the scene of colonial representation, which is why, for Bhabha, her mimicry is menacing. She utilizes her (impossible) identity for the transgressive purpose of resisting fixed repetitions of herself. Quite ironically, then, the mimic would find the promise of counter-domination insofar as the colonial scene names her in terms of “what she is not.”

I read, in these mimetic identities, the perpetuation of a somewhat pathological “nervous condition,” or a schizo-existence, which, in the name of existential health, I

would want to evade. As Emily S. Lee reminds us, “Homi Bhabha leaves us with a [postcolonial] subjectivity estranged and isolated in split moments” (Lee 2008, 544). To be sure, the ambivalence of mimicry constitutes a counter-force to colonial authority, but it is not quite clear that this disruption is ever for the sake of my homemaking (which, as Ortega’s and Lugones’s work shows us, is a vital aspect of a liberatory experience). Though mimicry replaces the stereotype’s identity reifications with the radical iterations of *nonidentity*, I argue that it rests on a nonacknowledgment of the ways in which “existing ambivalently” undermines the stability needed for human flourishing. Bhabha’s analysis of colonial stereotyping locates, in fragmentation and ambivalence, the promise of reclaiming free life out of the torture of being made invisible (or not visible enough). I call this into question, with the claim that a reimagined account of Sartrean bad faith can acknowledge, as legitimate, what mimicry ignores: the desire for home and belonging. I develop this reimagined account through Ortega’s conception of hometactics and Lugones’s account of ontological plurality, both of which explicitly identify “home and location” as something of which I am robbed by colonial violence.

III. “HOMETACTICS” AND A WILL TO BELONG

Ortega develops an account of “hometactics,” aspects of which I find supportive of my deployment of bad faith. I read Ortega’s driving concerns and questions to resonate with my own, particularly in the question, “What can we do except feel the cactus needles embedded in our own skin?” (Ortega 2014, 179). This seems to be a question about possibilities for the racialized and gendered subject whose corporeality does not manifest as being at home *in the world*, but rather as “in between worlds” (interstitially), at the world’s edges. It is a question about what such subjectivities desire in this in-betweenness, and about how theory might legitimize those desires in the face of a lived comportment of alienation, foreignness, and yes, fragmentation among spaces and locations that seem to work to tear apart instead of make whole. Ortega’s hometactics pays attention to the “will to belong,” in such experiences, and engages with the meaning of this longing. This is also what I attempt to do here.

One might be inclined to dismiss this will to belong as a nostalgic atavism (the same atavism that grounds the violence of stereotypical discourse). However, Ortega’s conception of hometactics reads, in this pursuit of home and location, a desire that is *not* atavistic in kind, since it calls for a “demystification of the idea of a full, safe sense of belonging” (180).⁵ In a similar vein, Lugones’s work stresses the importance of shifting from a language of safety to a language of generativity and creativity, when it comes to how we ought to approach building community and home spaces (Lugones 2003). In this shift, these spaces signify as “communities of choice” that work, positively, toward the production of emancipatory conditions (and are not, more reactively, only protection from perceived danger).

It is important that I articulate my account of bad faith in relation to Lugones’s important work on what it means to choose one’s space of belonging, and I do so at

length in the following section. But for now, I draw attention to Sarah Hoagland's point that the choice of flight from freedom is complicated when enacted in a world that is constructed against the subject in question. Likewise, Betty Cannon's rendering of bad faith as the desire to be "a fact without freedom" is one that uniquely signifies when manifested in a world that reduces you to a colonial fiction. To be sure, scholars like Ortega and Lugones are acutely aware of such historical locations out of which women of color enact their lived experiences. My reading of bad faith joins their call to complicate the narrative of homemaking practices that emerge out of a context of colonial and postcolonial violence. As such, I will show that the choice of bad faith can be a subversive praxis that is neither atavistic nor destructive of the complexities of in-between and multiplicitous living. At the same time, I also understand this choice as appropriately belonging to that complex experience, insofar as it addresses the need for stability in a world that, through the discursive violence of the stereotype, robs the postcolonial subject of such stable ground.

The task at hand is to engage this desire for stability in a way that distinguishes it from those atavistic desires for security and fixed enclosure. Bringing this account of bad faith into conversation with a notion like hometactics accomplishes this, insofar as Ortega uses this notion to demand a re-envisioning of the very meaning of home and belonging. She writes, "[Given] the complexities of the selves as well as the complexity of the spaces of belonging (in terms of its members as well as its criteria for membership), there is no sense in which one can be said to *fully* belong. There are only different senses of belonging depending on which markers of identity are chosen" (Ortega 2014, 180).⁶ To this end, Ortega is right to point out that my will to belong (to feel at home in my body, and to encounter my body as one that belongs in the space of my political landscape) can be legitimized without reproducing a nostalgic border-loving/other-bashing.

Without this turn, hometactics describes the work of a fragmented subject, as she "[produces] a sense of familiarity in the midst of an environment or world in which one cannot fully belong, due to one's multiple positionalities" (182).⁷ Familiarity is produced, created *ex nihilo*, perhaps, out of a political space in which I *should not* belong, or even appear as an object appropriate for belonging (recall, here, Bhabha's "inappropriate objects"). I identify a similar capacity in the choosing of bad faith, and for this reason, argue that it accomplishes a kind of homemaking that grants stability without permanent enclosure.⁸

To the extent that hometactics is this—a strategy of homemaking, in response to a violence that, by all measure, ought to preclude its possibility—how is it different from Bhabha's notion of mimicry? Simply put, the practice of hometactics corrects for mimicry's failure to account for my will to belong. On my reading, mimicry centers its maneuver on a metaphysics of nonpresence insofar as it maintains the invisibility that is ascribed to postcolonial subjects through stereotypical discourse. One might argue that Ortega's hometactics is no different from Bhabha's mimicry, insofar as they both acknowledge multiple locations of identity. Nevertheless, I find, in the strategy of hometactics, an orientation around my right to be *there*, and an honoring of my desire to dwell, as *present*, in a way that would position me to be at home in

my multiple identities, in the multiple communities of which I am a part. Said differently, hometactics is not a poetics of invisibility, whereas mimicry continues to signify within that frame. More important, hometactics transgresses colonial violence as it responds to a longing for home (in ways that mimicry does not).

IV. DO WE NEED A LITTLE BAD FAITH?

It is in this vein that I consider bad faith as subversive anticolonial praxis. I locate it within the orbit of Ortega's conception of hometactics, as an avenue for recognizing my will to belong, and as a free (and creative) pursuit of that desire. As it is described by Sartre, bad faith constitutes a fundamental project that responds to my being a locus of transcendence in being. On his model, transcendence is "situated," which is to say that consciousness's projection beyond itself and beyond being is always a projection that is positioned historically and socially. Sartre refers to these historical and social factors (factors that include how my body is constructed in a world of others, as well as the intersubjective nature of that world) as the "coefficients of adversity" with which my choices engage, as I make meaning for myself. Hence, as transcendence, I encounter the facticity of existence, which I then freely appropriate into my network of signification. It is important to note that facticity is not diametrically opposed to my existential freedom, but rather, informs it and gives it meaning. Sartre writes, "[This] residue [this facticity] is far from being originally a limit for freedom; in fact, it is thanks to this residue—that is, to the brute in-itself as such—that freedom arises as freedom" (Sartre 1956, 482). To say this differently, it is out of being's resistance that my freedom becomes the freedom to engage in a way that is meaningful for me. Hence, it is not the case that freedom is magical. Rather, freedom means the freedom to encounter the fact of my body (race, gender, nationality, its formulation for others) with meaning that fits into my fundamental project.

A choice of bad faith describes a mode of encountering the truth of this "freedom in/as facticity." Of the structure of bad faith, Sartre writes, "We have to deal with human reality as a being which is what it is not and which is not what it is" (58). In this sense, the structure of bad faith presupposes, both on the ontological and existential levels, that consciousness encounters itself as this synthetic unity of transcendence and facticity. As transcendence, consciousness is the spontaneity of choice, of projecting ahead of itself, and (in that projection) "not being" what it is. But as facticity, it must project *from* a position, or in terms of a position, which is historical, spatial, and social. A fundamental attitude of bad faith aims to be either purely facticity (to be a "fact," in Cannon's words), or purely transcendence, even though encountering oneself as such already presupposes that one comes to oneself *from* somewhere.

Hence, on this account, bad faith is a mode of self-deceit, and it is possible only on the grounds of "the being of man"—as positioned spontaneity (Sartre 1956, 55). Sartre describes it as an attitude through which "contradictory concepts... unite in themselves both an idea and the negation of that idea" (56). Quite aporetically, or

perhaps, ambiguously, consciousness lies to itself, so that at any given moment it is convinced that it's either all or mostly pure transcendence, or all or mostly pure facticity. Both tales, according to Sartre, are never fully believed, to the degree that the liar and the one being lied to are identical. Nevertheless, he finds bad faith to be a pseudo-inevitability in human existence, insofar as the obligation to be free is an existential burden worth evading. To have nonbeing in the midst of my being is a source of ontological freedom, but it can also be a source of decentering vulnerability. Hence, despite its being a failed enterprise, there seems to be something that is existentially productive in this mode of self-deceit, to the degree that it provides a counterweight to this decentering effect of nothingness.

Sartre's formulation of sincerity also serves as an existential strategy for evading the spontaneity of consciousness. However, on my reading, sincerity does not qualify for the kind of transgressive praxis that I want to identify in bad faith. And here is why. To begin, Sartre describes sincerity as "the antithesis of bad faith [since] sincerity presents itself as a demand and consequently not a state" (56). That is to say, the sincere individual uses a certain *ideal* conception of consciousness, which consciousness must work toward ("demand"). This conception "is not" (at least, not just yet), but is rather the goal to be pursued. In this regard, it is like bad faith, since it is a way for consciousness to hide freedom from itself. However, it is "antithetical" to bad faith insofar as the sincere person postulates, as an *ideal* for herself, an in-itself being. This prototype of "absolute equivalence" (59) represents the container (the prison) for which the sincere person is in search. Of his (well-known) illustration of the waiter in the café, Sartre writes, "He applies himself to *chaining* his movements as if they were mechanisms, the one regulating the other; his gestures and even his voice seem to be mechanisms, the one regulating the other" (59; emphasis added). The waiter plays in and with his "waiter being," but in that play, strives to be at one with his "waiter being." For Sartre this is antithetical to bad faith, "since [being what he is] is the rule and not the interest of the moment" (59). In other words, when it comes to the demand of sincerity, the prototype of absolute equivalence is just that—a prototype, universally and objectively valid, and permanently so. It is a demand, the legitimacy of which traverses the immediacy of the concrete, and is therefore out of conversation with the context of the concrete. In bad faith, reducing oneself to one's facticity is only "for now," a fundamental choice whose life begins and ends in the instantaneous "now." That choice can quickly become (and it often does become) one of disavowing one's facticity, in the name of a pure transcendence.

I want to use this existential distinction in Sartre's work—between the sincere person and the person in bad faith—to do two things: (a) develop the claim that the stability achieved in the choice of bad faith does not reproduce the atavistic encampment of the xenophobic position, and (b) locate bad faith alongside Lugones's account of the multiplicitous self who lives in between worlds. This connection to Lugones's work assists in the accomplishment of (a). I show that, similar to the way in which the person in bad faith chooses in the context of the urgency of the lived moment, Lugones's conceptions enable us to understand politically liberating choices to be context-specific. At the existential level, I can choose to be in bad faith

without upholding a universal prototype of the sincere man. At the political level, Lugones shows us that I can enact liberatory syllogisms that, though legitimately working in the name of emancipatory conditions, are never universally applicable to all political contexts. Instead, their legitimacy is in the context of the urgency of the political world I navigate. I read the legitimacy of bad faith in this sense.

The selves about whom Lugones writes belong to communities of migrating and/or diasporic Latina women who must navigate not only multiple political spaces, but also (in the case of Latina lesbian/queer women) the complexities of gender and sexuality. Lugones's concerns are about theories of oppression that leave unarticulated the possibility for agency in such communities, and these concerns lead her to develop what she calls an ontological pluralism. For her, this pluralism is key to understanding how agency might manifest itself in the context of political oppression without being ahistorical. She identifies an intimate connection between this ontological pluralism and the idea of a self as multiplicitous (or as no longer unified). Of this relationship, Lugones writes, "[The multiplicitous self captures the lives of] people who are very familiar with experiencing themselves as more than one: having desires, character, and personality traits that are different in one reality than in the other . . . animating their bodies. . . in ways that are different in one reality than in the other" (Lugones 1990, 503).

Her position of ontological pluralism acknowledges the plural, historically constituted political worlds, which the multiplicitous self navigates. As one such self, I can encounter oppression in one world, and generate choices, or what Lugones (by way of Aristotle) describes as "liberatory practical syllogisms" (502–503) that are necessary for survival in that context of oppression. Yet in another world (another historically constituted political paradigm), those choices give way to different kinds of choices or liberatory syllogisms. "[If] multiplicitous persons reason within and across worlds, one need not see a person at any one point as offering or enacting or intending just any *one* practical syllogism. The practical syllogisms may be many. . . It may be that, at the same time, she is acting in accordance with the norms of one reality, or structure, and acting with the norms of another reality, or in accordance with the possibilities that lack of structure bring up for her" (507).

In this vein, it is possible to see such a multiplicitous person (multiple because of her movements between and in between worlds) enacting a particular practical syllogism like bad faith, which "one would not have chosen except for the arrogant perceiver's mediation" (503).⁹ The arrogant perceiver, here, refers to a male gaze as it renders women's bodies meaningful for its own agenda, in the service of heteropatriarchy. However, it is applicable to the task at hand (situating bad faith as subversive anticolonial praxis) insofar as the effects of this "arrogant perceiver's mediation" generates a world that is structured against me insofar as I am subjected to stereotypical representation that fits into the fantasy of colonial discursive violence. So, when Lugones acknowledges that the liberatory effects of certain choices can be named as such, despite them being context-specific, I find her position in support of my own claim, which holds that a choice of bad faith can constitute a liberatory practical syllogism in the context of a world in which I am scapegoated by an oppressive other,

and in which I am stereotyped through a light that works against me. In other words, “among the alternatives that are possible in the world in which [I am] brutalized and oppressed” (505), bad faith shows up as a concrete choice that provides respite from all this.

Lugones ultimately prescribes playful world traveling as the comportment through which communities of emancipatory living can be built. Through playful world travel, we see that communal spaces are not rigidly closed off, and that I am a multiple and open-ended self who invariably changes through my collaborative experiences with others, and that “we become subjects to each other” (instead of violently objectifying each other, as is the case within both Hegelian and Sartrean dialectics) (Hoagland 1999, 170). Hence, it is through playful world travel that we might avoid the simple and atavistic notion of belonging of which Ortega’s hometactics is critical.¹⁰ To that end, it remains to be seen whether a choice of bad faith undermines a comportment of playful world travel, and thus reinstates the atavistic sense of belonging at the heart of much of colonial violence. I resort to my earlier distinction between the existential choices of sincerity and bad faith to argue that this is not the case, and that, instead, we can acknowledge bad faith as a subversive anticolonial praxis (grounding something like Lugones’s liberatory practical syllogisms) *without* giving up the possibility of playful world travel.

To recall, unlike the sincere man, the existential choice of bad faith lives in its own concrete moment. Beyond this moment, there is no postulation (no demand, according to Sartre) for universalizing the legitimacy of choosing an in-itself mode of being. Similarly, when I choose bad faith in a world that is structured against me, so that I might experience the solidity of being a fact (to counter my stereotyped being for the colonizer), the legitimacy of this choice does not live beyond the world in which it is made. Lugones tells us that there are other worlds between which the multiplicitous self lives. One can imagine playful world traveling between and among them *at the same time* the choice of bad faith is made in one of them in a moment of political exigency. What this means is that the choice of bad faith in *this* world does not foreclose the possibility of playful world travel into and within other worlds, where I am more existentially empowered to face the ambiguity and messiness of being a subject together with others.

In other words, it seems that, when absolute equivalence is the “rule and not the interest of the moment” (as is the case with the sincere man), we slip into the very atavistic and other-averse account of belonging that we should aim to avoid. However, in situating the possibility of bad faith projects as part of Lugones’s account of ontological plurality, we see that such projects can be part of a comportment of playful world traveling. They can gesture toward stability in a way that avoids those permanent enclosures that foster a xenophobic imaginary (a sentiment at the heart of what is most valuable in Ortega’s account of hometactics).¹¹ In other words, in bad faith, the *demand* is not for the *antithesis* of ontological spontaneity, but rather (and only) for some “in the moment” relief of the wobble of nonbelonging (of the “cactus needles in one’s skin”).

V. CONCLUSION: MAKING HOME OUT OF NO-HOME

For bodies made invisible, “at the edges” of community, a demand for grounding is both legitimate and, quite frankly, subversive. My claim is that we find this demand prioritized in a project of bad faith through which I claim presence for myself, and, against all odds, stake a place under my own sun. Bhabha proposes that mimicry—as a subversive poetics of invisibility—transgresses this uncanny existence of being stereotyped. He holds that, through mimicry, *I* take on the reins of my invisibility. I author my fragmented and ambivalent identity, and as such, reclaim for myself an agency robbed through stereotypical discourse. But what of my will to belong, as I continue to exist interstitially, “at the edges” of political life?

To Ortega’s point, what it means to belong will be complicated by the very experience of nonbelonging from which this will is born. Her hometactics demonstrate that, in appropriately engaging with this complication, I can anchor in a nonatavistic way, articulate and appreciate the carving out of a home that is not predicated upon the exclusionary tactics of coloniality. This also drives Lugones’s conception of playful world travel. Through such travel, I articulate conditions of belonging without foreclosing the possibility of the messy negotiations of creating a community with other free subjects. Through the reimagined sense of bad faith that I have proposed, we can mark the importance of stable ground, a desire for which ought not to get lost in performances like hometactics and playful world travel. I have shown that a choice of bad faith can ground certain “liberatory practical syllogisms” without undermining them through atavistic (and colonial) conceptions of belonging. When I *do* anchor in a nonatavistic way, I make a way and a world for myself, and *with* others.

When the political space is shaped by practices of colonial violence, racialized others must navigate the ambivalence of stereotyping, which renders their bodies the fetishized objects of fear and desire. Under the stereotype, my body is feared to the degree that it represents “purity destroyed,” and desired to the degree that it represents a wilderness to be mastered or tamed. In this colonial construction, there is nothing to which my humanity can belong. This only underscores the subversive nature of my daring to make a home, or to desire belonging among structures that codify “the unhomely.” Bhabha’s reading of mimicry as counter-domination seems to miss this “subversion as homemaking.” My hope is to have shown that bad faith, as a pursuit of such homemaking, ought to be understood as subversive in this sense, when coming out of a context of colonial violence.¹²

NOTES

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1. Emily S. Lee recalls Bhabha's description of this mania in temporal terms. "The stereotype [in its challenge to temporal synchronicity] requires but halting time and repeating time. The stereotype halts time in its presumption to be infinitely true. Yet the force of the stereotype requires repetition. . . . The need for the repetition belies the status of the stereotype as something already known and reveals the ambivalence of such a status" (Lee 2008, 541–42).

2. In section III, I will discuss what Mariana Ortega calls "a will to belong" on the part of the colonized. It should be noted that this will to belong is profoundly different from what I present here as the colonizer's nostalgia for a boundaried homeland. This point is significant for my critique of the logic of ambivalence.

3. "Just as the fetish object substitutes for the mother's penis and allays the child's fear of castration, the stereotype substitutes for the racial purity of cultural ascendancy that the colonial subject fears the loss of" (Childs and Williams 1997, 127).

4. For this, Bhabha's depiction of mimicry as a legitimate mode of colonial disruption is often criticized.

5. In the following section on bad faith, I note the sense in which Sartre's conception of sincerity does not respond to the desires to which Ortega's hometactics respond. In particular, I show that Sartrean sincerity comes close to what Ortega might identify as a "mystified" narrative of full belonging in the world.

6. Here, Ortega engages Edwina Barvosa's account of the "self-integrative life project," whereby multiplicitous selves strategically weave coherence for themselves.

7. It is in this vein that Ortega's development of hometactics joins Lugones's exposition on the multiplicitous self. Ortega discusses this in key sections of her book, *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity and the Self* (Ortega 2016). Though it is beyond the scope of this article to delineate the precise similarities between these two scholars, I treat this important dialogue in chapter 3 of my current book project, *Creolizing the Nation: The Argument for an Alternative Ontology*.

8. In the following section, I develop this distinction in an account of how bad faith differs from the choice of sincerity.

9. Here, Lugones uses the work of Marilyn Frye.

10. In the third chapter of my current book project (*Creolizing the Nation*), the notions of multiplicity and curdling subjectivities, which Lugones articulates in her *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes* (Lugones 2003) are a significant aspect of my development of an ontology that facilitates alternative conceptions of the nation. So, though I do not explicitly engage it here, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes* both foregrounds and provides the background for the ways in which I use creolizing compartments to reconceive home and belonging in nonatavistic ways. I find much resonance between the creativity at the center of Lugones's curdled subject and the generativity signified in creolizing compartments. For this reason, chapter 3 of my book develops "creolization as curdling" as a space in which creolist scholars (like Édouard Glissant) and Latina feminist thinkers (like Lugones) might be brought into dialogue around the question of community formations that are *both* ambiguously bordered *and* sources of resistive shelter.

11. In *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*, Lugones diagnoses the paradox in which communities of resistance (resistive “seeing circles”) return to orthodox, static notions of cultural authenticity and tradition in response to the fear that comes with being in the world “under fire” (Lugones 2003, 160). She writes that, when these communities rid themselves of such dangerous orthodoxies, the door opens to “a plethora of resistant possibilities, alliances, understandings, playful and militant connections” (162).

12. In her work, “Existential Freedom and Political Change,” Sarah Lucia Hoagland is critical of the ways in which Sartre’s conception of authentic choice is blind to the lived experiences of political oppression. In these excluded experiences, I would include that of being stereotyped by discursive colonial violence (Hoagland 1999).

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