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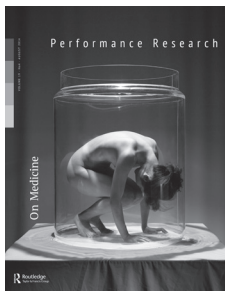
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On Medicine

KÉLINA GOTMAN

You recall that Galen [130-210 CE] does not present the person to whom we must resort as a technician; he is not presented as a technician of the medicine of the body or as a technician of the medicine of souls, neither as a doctor nor as a philosopher. According to Galen's text we should appeal to a man who has reached a certain age, has a sufficiently good reputation, and who possesses, in addition, a certain quality. This quality was *parrêsia*, free-spokenness.... So we have, if you like, a whole structure, a whole bundle of important notions and themes: care of self, knowledge of self, art and exercise of oneself, relationship to the other, government by the other and truth-telling, and the obligation to speak the truth on the part of the other. You can see that with *parrêsia* we have a notion which is situated at the meeting point of the obligation to speak the truth, procedures and techniques of governmentality, and the constitution of the relationship to self. Truth-telling by the other, as an essential component of how he governs us, is one of the essential conditions for us to be able to form the right kind of relationship to ourselves that will give us virtue and happiness. Michel Foucault (2010 [2008]: 44–5)

Foucault is lecturing; it is 12 January 1983. It is just a year before he would give his final lecture course, *The Courage of Truth*, part two of a series he called *The Government of Self and Others*. At the start of the next year's course, which would begin 1 February 1984, he would apologise for the delay at the course's start date: 'I was sick, really sick' (*J'ai été malade, réellement malade*). He assures his auditorium that he had not claimed this falsely, to get rid of people – the course was notoriously overcrowded, listeners perched on every step, cramming the hallways, flooding his desk with tape recorders – never, as he noted, not without sadness, addressing him directly, querying his offerings, but scurrying over to pick up and take home an audio transcript. No, he notes, 'I was really genuinely sick' (*réellement* here connotes genuineness, as opposed to falsity, and very muchness; he was really, genuinely and very sick). It is well-known that Foucault died of

acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS)-related complications in June 1984; what is less well-known is the extent to which he dedicated the last years of his life to an exploration of the critical space of care: not just a care of the self understood as a rhetorical, aesthetic cultivation of self-knowledge (the Greek *gnōthi seauton*), but with this the practice of truth-telling. And, as I explore here, that these were intimately in his reading of Galen, among other physicians, embedded in a search for practices of philosophy that were relational – performative – grounded in a radical interrogation of the space between (the core enmeshing of) an affective (a passionate?) and a philosophical body, a body that thinks and a body that feels ... a lot – genuinely.

The year before, in his 1981–2 lecture course on *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault – surprisingly perhaps – aligned philosophy with spirituality, and both with the healing arts. This hearkened back to a pre-Cartesian moment, to a Greco-Roman set of practices according to which the subject gives herself over to truth – winds her way towards it – inasmuch as her very being comes to be risked in the process; it is transformed; it is a work in progress, a life work. This is what Judith Butler (2001) would reprise in her analyses emphasizing the performative, the 'aesthetics of existence', Foucault's manner of drawing our attention to the ways that normality, normativity, structure, form, sexuality, health, politics and governmentality come to be aligned with a continuous process of decentering, shifts of the gaze, what can only be read as a dramaturgical project, a set of uncoverings and recoverings: for Foucault, 'the movement of *erōs* (love)'; work (Foucault 2005: 16). Work on oneself with others, elaboration of the self with oneself, progressive transformation of the self, this is what Foucault calls the work of *askēsis* – not Christian asceticism but an erotic and ascetic work towards truth that comes later to be subsumed into confessionalism,

self-flagellation, alienation and another sort of cult of the self: not open on to transformation and truth (or the other), but narcissistic (Foucault 2005: 15–16; Foucault 2015: 153–87). Yet, in this first moment he returns to, friendship is a space of giving and vulnerability, and the healer, the friend, cuts to the chase: tells the truth, and one is oneself – this is the pact – open on to it. There are of course subtleties and variations; sometimes, the friend is a master, a teacher or what we could also call a physician – or a philosopher. The point here is to muddy, to find in the rumbling a vanishing point between what we think of as medicine and what we think of as theatre and what we think of as philosophy and friendship and care: that we may see, with Foucault, a prior space of entanglement – a concept of pain and pleasure that worries the edges of what today we call science, or we call art.

In the space of ‘truth’, there is something like a self that is entangled, indissociable from the other(s) who coax(es) truth to light and to whom it is also given. The question is how can we alienate ourselves from the concepts of self we hold, and that may be understood – again and again – to be broken, in need of *therapia*. What is the sort of *therapia* that actually, really, we seek? What is the void that our ‘medicine’ today rushes to fill? What sense of absence and malaise, what sadness? Panic, anxiety, these are injuries of the day: what if we were to squeeze these out with cultures of friendship, structures of care rested on the grounds of a pact such as this – fearless speaking, a sense of grounding that goes beneath the radar of power?

■
If medicine is a ‘healing’ practice, surely then it is that we posit there is something to heal. Something is broken, ruptured, awry. So ‘medicine’ presupposes an arts of diagnosis – an arts of interpretation, the theatre of observation: the practice that sees, or feels, that compares, and so determines not just what the proper remedy may be but what there may be that is (not) there.

That (not) there-ness is ... pain, perhaps: there is something that hurts. It is a heart that aches, a knee joint that is quivering or throbbing – a shoulder, a neck, with a lump.

■

Imagine a world with no ‘medicine’: a world in which this term is absent. What do we put in its stead? What are the ways in which language is organized such that ... in a sentence, the term ‘medicine’ (or ‘medical’ and so forth) should appear? This is the question that Daniel Boyarin asks of ‘religion’, reading backward to the Second Temple period: there is no ‘religion’, but a set of terms that come to be translated as such. There is, indeed, for example, most prominently, *thrēskeia*, something like an overly zealous fearing of the gods – or *eusebia*, something like ‘proper reverence’; interestingly, fittingly, the Greek Jew Philo (25 BCE – 50 CE), writing in Alexandria right around the Christian year zero, deliberates the proper practice of sacrifice, offerings and so forth in relation to *therapeia*, which Boyarin renders “‘proper’ divine service’, and that moreover Philo renders with regard to the ‘genuine class being the soul bearing simply and entirely truth’ (2017: 20–1). So ‘religion’ is not a thing, but what is a thing – a practice – is something like truth-telling, soul-bearing, which may be contrasted with excessive fear – also with bribery, with believing one can buy one’s favours with the gods ... that one can perform sacrificially, we may say; but the gods cut through this.

Thus, *hosiotēs*, too, suggests that ‘bringing truth from [one’s] soul’ is ‘sacrifice’: that this is right worship (Boyarin 2017: 21). Although Boyarin does not further the entanglement of soul-bearing or truth-telling with healing arts, the family resemblances between truth, as opposed to falsity, and with sacrifice, as opposed to reverence, suggest that knotted in some distant ancestral past are sets of conceptions marrying something like truth and healing. This, we find, once we have evacuated ‘medicine’ and ‘religion’.

What if we evacuate ‘performance’? What scene then do we find ourselves on, in the hazy auditorium of our imaginal investigation? What is gained in positing ‘medicine’ as a contingent and an abstract thing? As I have noted elsewhere, Michael Taussig describes ‘disease’ as a set of appearances, an abstraction into language (Gotman 2018; Taussig 2001: 83–109). It is, thus, theatre – and it is, thus, performative: when you say that this, and this and this, makes say cancer, thus it is that, and not another. When you say that this, and this and this is depression, or panic or

■ (right) Figure 1. Adriaan van de Spiegel and Giulio Cesare Casseri, *De formato foetu liber singularis*. Padua, Io. Bap. de Martinis & Livius Pasquatus, 1626. Courtesy the US National Library of Medicine

grief. But to cure that? So, language is magical; it transforms the reality that it is meant to describe. It is, thus, medicine. So, if I say healing words to you, then?

■
My heart aches and as a consequence I have virtually ceased breathing; not once, not a puncture, but chronically – my lungs are stiff; they are too small. They are grieving. I wrote above, the ‘aching heart’, the stiff knee; this is my life. These are the body parts with which I live: they are not all mine – the knee is another’s. But it inhabits the sphere within which I (fail to) breathe. This thinking is not ‘embodied’ – what would that mean? It does not emanate, it does not radiate, it does not transform or transfigure either; it is materially a vital and plastic set of resonances, images moving across these planes, this language. The body parts tumble, jostle, as I attempt to work with what it is that I live, as this surely must be a place from which, and with which, there is sense taking place. I do this by feeling the feet on the ground, by feeling also the stiffness in the wrist; there is a light in the corner of my eye, and, yes, my neck, as always, aches. It is the posture of the weary writer.

■
 Adriaan van de Spiegel and Giulio Cesare Casseri, in *De formato foetu liber singularis* (Padua, Italy, 1626), show a woman, her eyes cast downwards, softly, doing a sort of dance; her arm is up as if to say, here we are – this is this. Her right leg is bent, knee resting on the stump of a tree, from which a branch rises, covering what appears to be a hairless pubis. The hair – the tuft – is at the base of the branch, slightly displaced. The foetus, cradled in her middle, rests on what looks like a splayed-open cabbage, or else these are sections of skin open to reveal the child-information inside. Behind her left thigh, cupped in her twisted left hand, an apple? What fruit does she hide from us? And, so, in this anatomy text, we find ourselves confronted with ... Eve. Possibly, in the background, Noah’s ark? The volume’s engraver is a student of Titian’s; the first atlases of anatomy, mapping the human body, botanic worlds, mythological creatures date from around then. As the world is mapped, so is the ‘body’.



■
Avulsion (ἀπόσπασμα) [apóspasma]: in Galen, ‘a tearing away with separation, as with a tendon from a bone’. This is the gloss, in the Loeb edition (Galen 2011: cxiv). So, heartbreak, is this *avulsion*?

■
Dislocation (ἐξάρθρωσις) [éxárhtrh̄sis]: ‘Grouped by Galen with παράρθρωσις [parárhtrh̄sis] as a disease involving change of position’ (cxvi) – so, a choreographic disease, we could say. A translation. The body shifts.

■
What if, in this, there is no ‘body’ either? Jonathan Sawday reminds us that it is a ‘construct’, a thing produced in the European Renaissance, with dissections, partitions and the anatomization of ‘bodies’ – acquired among the lowest classes, criminals, colonial subjects. That the notion of the ‘inside’ or the ‘outside’ of a body is of course highly culturally specific; that it is unthinkable in say the Melanesian islands, where bodies are gifts the anthropologists bestowed upon Islanders, for whom there was rather a set of relations, say, relations

between, and with spirits (Sawday 1995: 1–11). So, what is the language of this? To set that into this is to enact a partition, to perform a reading, an act of anatomization, a theatre of observation. If we have no 'body', do we have 'medicine' still? How is this 'medicine' a conjuration, a moment? And if that dissolves?

We find we are in a diaphanous web; that language becomes uncanny. That it is haunted, ghostly; that what that ghost is, is not even a ghost (a figura), but a manner of (dis)organizing we find we cannot grasp; there is no grasping there. There is reaching, but that reaching – what is that? What sort of a gesture?

Fatigue (κόπος) [kópos].

Surely, there are things that break the body; the body spills outside of itself; this hurts. I am wounded in battle, I am dying. But if death is no longer the end point of disease? Cf. on this Georges Canguilhem: even death, of course, is conceived as something bad, to be avoided, abnormal (1994: 88–90). We medicalize birth; we medicalize death. In Buddhist teachings, death is another place, a rematerialization or a reorganization of what was never entirely material – the language falters. Death is after; after this; also contained within this; also here. It is not a place or a state to fear, to shun.

So, disease, then, is what is shunned. Sawday reminds us that anatomy is pornography minus desire; a peering-into the body, a peering that is 'strictly' scientific, strictly for knowledge (1995: 11–12). And what of the unspeakable, the delicate parts, reaching-towards in intimacy, what of the shudder of skin, what is skin? A peering, a knowing; Foucault reminds us that to make sex into an object of scientific knowledge, to make it into a work that incites discourse, to account, to count; to tabulate and set into buildings numbers of births, to make this a science, which is to say, an inscription of life into registries and economies, to harness this to a system of compliance; that this sex is a thing forged – made into a scene, gazed upon, arranged in 'organizing therapies', proliferating 'issues' less 'private' than 'public' – that, too, this notion of privacy itself is forged through sex, as sex is extracted, set to light

(Foucault 1978 [1976]: 26, 34). That this 'medicine of sex' is a way to extract truth, the truth of theatrical confession – not to find, within the *ars erotica*, truth (54–9), another sort of interior cave, a shared space of light. So, what if the shiver – dissolution of self in self – what if this self, this may be dissolved?

'Bodies' are then these forces of resonance, say, these shapes that change shape, plastic and amorphous and morphous things: body is spasm, is spill, is sore. And it is nothing, the heartbeat you call towards. And I smile in writing this, and this smile, that is the body now, setting to words this, in this terrifying, this rhythmic pulse.

What if we were to 'heal' the concept of 'medicine' – to perform a shamanic conjuring, a magic trick – would disease then, would death, then, would suffering then go away? Perhaps there may be another way to render the language. Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen describes an elderly woman, 'infirm' in every standard respect, but she bore herself well, her spirits were strong. Cohen writes, surely one could not describe this woman as ill (Cohen 1993: 61). For Jasbir K. Puar (2017), it is maiming – what Puar calls 'the right to main' – that is the proper object of biopolitical analysis; that to see who is classified ill, not ill, disabled, not disabled and the rest – that misses an essential point. What she calls 'incapacitation' – the rendering unwell of an otherwise perfectly well body, the rendering unwell performed by the police state, through systematic, for example, shooting not to kill (cf. *black bodies, brown bodies in Ferguson, in Gaza*) – is what wears, wears down, destroys up to the limit of a biological death. If you grind down, wear down – worse, if you abrogate for yourself (if the state abrogates for itself) the right to grind down, to wear down, to wound without killing – to torture, too – then what is that? Surely, that is the opposite of a healing art.

And, so, to heal: to hear. To allow to take space. To allow to be. To do no harm: we find ourselves back where it all started, back to the Hippocratic Oath. But biopolitics detour this, find ways to – apparently – do no harm, and the harm is very deep indeed. If we subjected our governments to some medicine? Some parrèsia, some truth-telling? That is a difficult task indeed: first we must speak

truth to ourselves, among ourselves: who are these ourselves? To refuse to live a lie. What lie? The lie that accepts a right to maim, for instance.

Perhaps in this truth-telling, among ourselves, government dissolves. There is another order that takes its place: one – imagine – within which we may rest, quietly; there is not vigilance, not watching-over, not complying-towards. Imagine – but we can't. We dare not. We are too full of a fear that suggests there will always be someone out to harm another.

■
This essay is performed in the manner of a patchwork, a textual anatomy, a series of hiccups, an awkward polyphony, perhaps *polypraxia*, a proliferation of textual and critical practices, of voices. This, too, is a way to perform a sort of protest: against what? The organization of thought as the organization of bodies that assumes a right order, a proper shape. The misformed essay, the misshapen, the grotesque: that, surely, Montaigne reminds us, is the essay – the *foray*, the attempt, the journey. So, is an essay a healing art? And why not?

■
*What fails to materialize is the wound, the thing broken; indeed, there is nothing broken here. So why write? Perhaps what is broken is the space of questioning, the space within which we say there is this, there is this – that to write is to worry the edges of language, to worry the edges of concept, to puncture the heart of the concept and to watch it shift, to find ourselves on tenuous grounds, where there are no certain concepts to hold on to. Why would we subject ourselves to that? In the bare space of not-knowing, we find ourselves in *alethēia*, the unravelling appearance of something like 'truth', composed of many parts. I can imagine much 'sickness' comes from an excess and a deficiency of 'truth'; that to partition the world according to its measures of truth or untruth, that to carve spaces of falsity – not to say play, theatre, but misalignment – may show us a map of our suffering. That, therefore, to right ourselves within a space, that to practice location, locating ourselves within other atlases, other body forms – that that may, too, be 'medicine'.*

But see further: Foucault notes that *parrēsia* involves a risk to the speaker, the truth-teller. That what defines *parrēsia* is not the internal structure

of discourse, or its aim relative to the speaker's interlocutor, but to the potential effects on the speaker of this speaking. Effects, Foucault notes, which may (in the scene he reads, this is addressed to the tyrant Dionysius) lead to the speaker's death (Foucault 2010 [2008]: 56). And, so, to speak the truth is not to heal oneself, but another – a relation – a politics. A space-between (in Arendt's terms, inasmuch as, she argues, politics is the space-between people (1993: 33)). We are quite far from 'medicine' here, from Foucault's reading of Galen; yet we are not so far away – we are seeing that frank-spokenness, that fearless speech, that *parrēsia* signal a reaching towards another who will openly, at the right moment, in a way that may hurt us and, because of our possible anger, or rage, in a way that may hurt him or her, speak and tell us what hurts – that this, this relation is 'medicine'. And, so, friendship – that is a healing art. Not flattery friendship, but the sort that cuts.

We find ourselves, thus, in ethics, in politics; this 'medicine' thing, this is a spidery notion. And, indeed, Foucault calls it that (2010 [2008]: 45). So, too, 'convulsions' are a 'spidery notion' (Foucault 2016 [1999]: 213). So, too, 'madness' itself is a thing beneath speech and discourse, the murmur of insects (2006: xxxiii). This is a 'natural' space within which language moves, biting and hurting and twisting the ways we imagine ourselves in and with others, in and with an 'environment'. And if there was no such thing as 'environment' but only tangles of webs, sinews, relations – no bodies but that space-between? And if even betweenness dissolves? And so we find ourselves in a space of diffraction, perhaps, the ricocheting of atoms, instances – so that time too vanishes, and space too curves, and we are in a space of mathematical figuration, and in this space we may travel. But even travelling dissolves, if there is not a here and a there – separate spaces, separate places. And, so, this then is shamanism. Which is to say, the occupation of a transfer and a transformation, the occupation of a curvature – the sliding along an axis that twists.

And then shamanism dissolves.

And then there is not a discipline – not a knowledge – but what Joan Retallack calls the know ledge, and on that ledge, we teeter (2003: 63–80). If forty years ago Jean-François

Lyotard in a plea to rethink our institutional structures of knowledge could enjoin us to move past imagining that we exercise a performative professionalism indebted to capital and rather connect fields jealously guarded (1984: 52), then what are the fields we plough and nurture and cultivate today, in their wild and weary cross-pollinations, their weedings and overgrowths? And what is 'performance' in this? A living throbbing settling, sifting, shifting, moving thing, an idea, and a stiffening genealogy, also new outbursts, new softenings and other modes of openness on to alterity – another teetering. Galen writes:

'Problematical' is the name given by those concerned with anatomy to certain movements in living creatures where we see clearly that a movement is occurring, but either we fail totally to know the part of the body by which it is produced, or, if we do know, we have no idea how it takes place. (Galen 2011: 123)

And he adds, 'So the first question to ask about movements that are absolutely clear is whether they are actions of, or effects on, particular parts' (Galen 2011: 123).

He goes on to discuss the involuntary swelling of the penis, the extension of the tongue; these body parts that move, that trouble – that appear to be filled with *pneuma*, with air or soul, and yet that occur, it seems, he suggests, on account of the action of a muscle (146–7). And what if there is no muscle? In recent mesoscopic investigations, drawn from hand surgery, Jean-Claude Guimberteau and others have shown that the fascia – what was previously seen as connector tissue, between muscle and skin, often peeled away for the sake of anatomical investigation (on dead bodies) – revealed instead, through the peregrinations of live observation with cameras inserted into living tissue, substance traversing bone, muscle, skin – that in fact there is no distinction between these parts. That there are no parts, only clusterings or conglomerations, only zones; that we have seen these systems, but that another look, between the macro and the microscopic, on or in living bodies, suggests the webs of tissue – the filaments, the fibres, run and swim and sweep majestically across the whole of the body. It is a beautiful set of sights (figs 2, 3 and 4). But, so, where is will or agency or power or what have you? Where does motion come from?

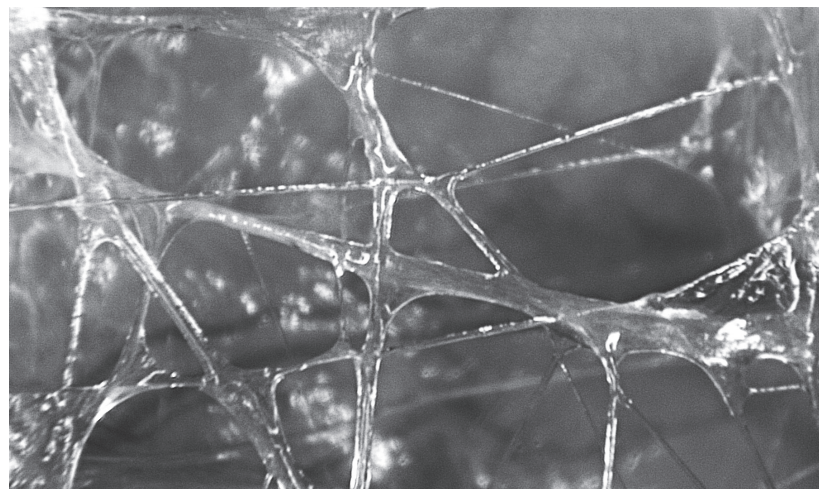
Where and what is disease? What is rupture? And, what, if we think culturally, politically, is muscle-building? This fantasy, this brawn; rather, we are all sinew, all slide. All elasticity.

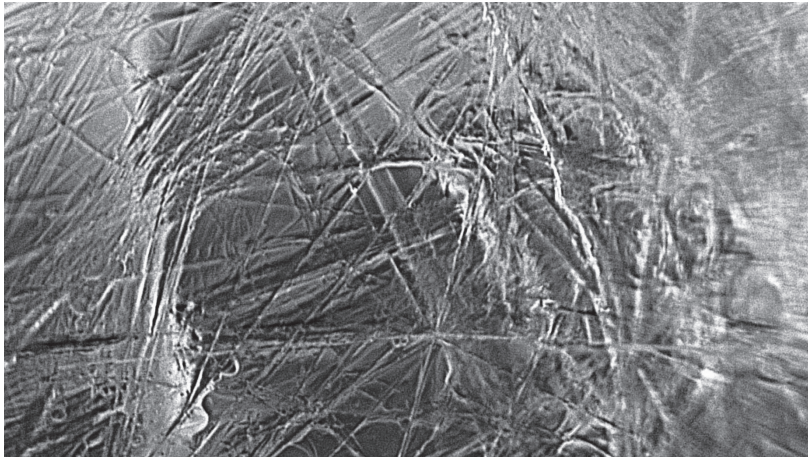
And, so, one is observing, when one is a physician. One observes tremors, flesh; one sees what cannot be seen – one reaches towards the ineffable, the source – one is a searcher after ghosts. Thus, perhaps, we are all in this way physicians. If rather than borders and bridges, we had – but what is the metaphor for this, this new physics, this moment? What is it that we see? What is the theatre of our world? Foucault wanted to write the scenes, the gazes, the story of the theatre of our observation, our partitions (2001: 571–2); thus, this includes scenes of hurting and healing and the language for that. The arrival-into scenography of an action, a theatre, a type of relation, a drama – a cure and a resolution.

What we do in critique is to find something wrong. But what if nothing is wrong at all. Or if everything is. What is the language that hovers between these irreconcilable poles? And what is the *form* – the structure – of that writing? How can it show itself as contingent, anarchic, an archeological (Foucault 2014 [2012]: 76–9) – if it is nothing more than that?

■
The aphorism: an admission of failure. A partitioning; the anatomy of despair. Despair at seeing it is all undone, *décousu*, unsewn, not of a whole; that between the parts, there are gaps. That within the gaps, there is infinite recess. That

■ Figure 2. Living fascia: fibrillar network, demonstrating biotensegrity. Captured in vivo via digital endoscopic videophotography (200×) © Jean-Claude Guimberteau / EndoVivo





■ Figure 3. Tissue continuity: revealing a mesh of polyhedral forms. Captured in vivo via digital endoscopic videophotography (65×)
© Jean-Claude Guimberteau / EndoVivo

the gaps are necessary to show the impossibility of this grasping. That the gap is a reaching motion, and it is retreat. Rebecca Whiteley notes that to unfold the pages of an anatomy text – to peel back the skin, to peer at the foetus, is to uncover and cover, to veil and unveil. Turning the page is itself an exercise in poring over, a prying at a distance, a shielding and sheltering from the gaze – the object of the body is a fold, enfolded, the skin and the page perform dissection (Whiteley 2017: 103–5), revealing, perhaps *alēthourgia* – a manner of arriving towards truth, where this shimmers and shifts, comes in tatters, in parts.

■

I write knowing full well that ‘medicine’ is a thing; it is there, in our language and world. It would be there, I think, were there no word for it. There would be herbs, there would be love, there would be a friend, there would be a butcher with a knife or else there would be the consolation and fantasy of a god; there would be experiments, prying, openings, in pots, on bodies; there would be maps, atlases, there would be teachers and students and there would be, yes, those classes that help – help ease pain, where pain is a sense of wanting or a void, a sharpness, or a scratching or some other ineffable thing – an absence, a shudder. But to ‘help’, to help this, this proliferation of movements of the soul or the soul-body or the world within which the body-soul fails quite to fit, this helping, this is also all the arts, and it is the failure of the arts – say the arts of governance, for example – to provide, to make-home, to be protective of a safety, guardians of a zone away from harm. Harm coming from ... anywhere, here or there. To fictionalize that harm as extraneous, always, that

is the lie that pains. And so yes, yes, yes of course there is ‘medicine’ and yes, yes of course, yes, there is the performance of a healing-function, which is to say the action of extending a hand, sheltering.

So, we shelter, we shelter; so to build a home, enough homes, or clean air, that is a healing art. If we were to work together in this? Perhaps we do, we builders of the next world, we dreamers – all of us. And, so, the fetish-monster, the dollar bill, the pound coin, the stock exchange, these that trade in tearing us all further apart, these could be excised, these tumours and these malignant fevers, these hallucinatory ordeals, these false dreams. These producers of want – if want, yes, want if to want and thus to lack is to be in a dull state of pain. A dull state of deficiency, a self-loathing. Imagine no self-loathing! No self-improvements! Imagine full acceptance, which is to say, knowledge that we are always in balance – off balance, delicately entangled, delicately and beautifully enmeshed. Subtly, so subtly part of a one and that gently to nurture this, this web, this fabric – that we are all in this.

ON MEDICINE (REFRAIN)

The state of health is a state of unawareness where the subject and his body are one. Conversely, the awareness of the body consists in a feeling of limits, threats, obstacles to health.
(Canguilhem 1991:91)

The stakes, I want to suggest, are high. It is the work of form to make order. And this means that forms are the stuff of politics.
(Levine 2015:3).

And, so, there is a version of this essay that imagines health: health as stasis, as balance. But we are re-embalancing, balance is a teetering, it is catching oneself; there are always obstacles, we seek the obstacles – we seek to feel – so ‘health’ then is the smallest thing. To be aware? This is ‘disease’? So let me be, then, always and again, and again, ‘diseased’ – dis-eased, uncomfortable, slightly, slightly aware there is something awry; but slightly aware, too, that that awry-ness is the world-within-which – that there is always just a shift, just a glimmer of space, a crack, by which it is possible to move, and that in that stillness/motion, that discomfort – repositioning there is ... we could call it ... grandiosely, life. Canguilhem just before the above quote writes: ‘The invalidity

of the sick man's judgment concerning the reality of his own illness is an important theme in a recent theory of disease' (1991:91). Indeed, it is always the 'patient' who must patiently be silent, play the role of this patience, while it is the other, the other, who speaks. I am, in this, impatient, angst-ridden, I wish not to be told, or else to be told that the telling itself is just that: a telling. It is telling, that it should be telling. For Taussig, writing is contiguous to the thing written – it is a contiguity, it is not away from, standing-apart (2001:6–7); there is nothing 'objective' to the work of description or diagnosis. What is telling in this telling is that we have no ground for homeostasis but habit: for telling can provoke a rupture, just as it can soothe.

In this other part to the 'essay', we hiccup as the language skips; it is failing to perform a certain function, the function of certainty. Formally, then, there is a mimicking of 'disorder', where 'disorder' is the state of chaos after entropy, what Rudolf Arnheim after Wolfgang Köhler also calls a "clash of uncoordinated orders," a manner of 'whirling elementary particles', which, '[a]lthough it may have come about by dissolution ... is actually a kind of order' (1971: 13). Taken yet again further in aesthetico-(de)corporealizing terms – in the language of art/life, Fred Moten (2003:26) offers us 'invagination, rupture' – the improvisatory chaos of the 'break' that compels us to reimagine another (para-disciplinary) avant-garde, a discursive play-space, one that refuses for the disorderliness of the *unform*, the misformed, the misshapen, to dictate 'normalcy'. To dictate the shape, the rhythm, of acquiescence.

In *Medicine, Magic and Religion*, W. H. R. Rivers writes of the doctor, like the medicine-man, to perform a 'leech' function: this is 'a member of society whose special function it is to deal with the cure of disease' (2001 [1924]: 5). And he adds,

[H]e may have other functions, such as the formation of rain, the promotion of vegetation, or even the production of disease itself; but in so far as he is dealing with the cure of disease he will be ... a leech. (Rivers 2001 [1924]: 5–6)

Yet we may say that a nurse, who deals with disease, extends a hand, that there is soothing-work to be done, which is not purgative, but restorative – that to heal is to hold. That to heal is, in a witchy way, to stir, in a cauldron,

a warming soup; to put healing roots in that soup; that a warm bed is also a healing space, that shelter from the rain, like rain; that cultivation of a vegetable patch, that therefore there is no end to this healing, and that leeching like loving is 'dealing' in the business of disease. And, so, we are in love: a sappy place, that.

Oceanic, the dissolution of the mind and the body into ecstasy; a brewed leaf heals, too. Because it opens a crack in the universe through which unicorns tumble, and the plants speak, and in that space, a re-organized, vacuous space, where language plummets into poetry, medical arts and medical men and women journey past the edges of properly medical space, which is to say, past the *fronteras*, the border-guards of normalcy, of norms. And gestures tumble like vision, seized in a moment of rending, of searing alterity, and the 'okayness' of that is not contingent, not liberal, not tolerant, but total and full. For it is I, and it is I and it is I who have failed to see the enormity of possibility – the frailty and the fragility of our concepts of life, who have failed and failed and failed to walk a narrower path, to get lost in the forest of words, the meandering pathways, hallways to nowhere. What is this obsession with getting it right? With showing one is oneself in 'top form' – the same, always the damned same one? A form that looks like certainty and is rent through with anxious – with nervous – hovering, with a doubt that is not a full and a certain doubt, but a small doubt. Rather nervously hover in the borderzone, where Taussig tells us the *curanderos* are waiting.

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■ Figure 4. Living fascia: fibrillar network, fibres appearing in disorderly fashion. Captured in vivo via digital endoscopic videophotography (130×) © Jean-Claude Guimberteau / EndoVivo

