

12-1-2021

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Recommended Citation

Ahiokhai, SimonMary A. (2021) "The Demands of Encounter in a Globalized Community of Scholars: Shedding Light on the Place of Trust in the Ritual of Knowledge Creation," *Journal of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium*: Vol. 13, Article 4.

Available at: <https://ecommons.udayton.edu/jbcts/vol13/iss1/4>

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The Demands of Encounter in a Globalized Community of Scholars: Shedding Light on the Place of Trust in the Ritual of Knowledge Creation

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Abstract: As institutions of learning become more diverse in their members and their curricula offerings, it has become necessary to articulate the demands of encounter. A distinction must be made between meeting and encounter. The former refers to a choreographed proximity of bodies. The latter refers to the totality of what it means to be human – a being intricately linked to other beings through life-giving webs of relationships. Therefore, transformative education must be grounded in the ritual of encounters because such a ritual allows for the possibility for new discourses that lead to knowledge creation. Such discourses allow for a fluidity of identity in a manner where the teacher is both a teacher and a student, and the student is also both a student and a teacher.

Keywords

Encounter, knowledge creation, transparency, trust, vulnerability, visibility.

Introduction

Some years ago, while living in an international community of professed religious, I heard the following words uttered by a member of the community, words that may speak to the challenges that we face today as institutions become more culturally, racially, religiously, ideologically, politically, and ethnically diverse; he said, "I have lived in this community for some years. I have met the members of the community, but I have never encountered anyone." As is to be expected, when the said member of the community uttered these words during a time of discernment that the community was forced to enter into to help it understand the relevance of the rainbow identities that define the tapestry of the community, some members of the community pushed back and wondered what the difference was, if any, between 'meeting' and 'encountering' others. While meeting may sometimes omit the dynamic realities shaping the persons involved in the interaction, encounter, on the other hand, evokes a recognition of the persons involved in the interaction as persons radically conditioned by the

multiple realities defining their existence. In this work, I intend to shed light on the contours of relational encounters within the vulnerable space of learning and knowledge production.

Encounter as Decentering – A Pathway to Surplus of Meaning

The challenge that institutions of learning and their members face today, especially those who are radically conditioned by what I call the biases of the Enlightenment, which presents the human as a self-sufficient being, is to articulate ways of knowing the other and themselves that move away from fixed narratives of identity. The temptation thus arises when the following question is asked: Who is this person? It is a temptation because the dominant conditioning that is operating in many western societies preferences a bias for single narratives. This point is well stated by Boaventura de Sousa Santos when he writes, "Today the sociology of absences is the inquiry into the ways colonialism, in the form of the colonialism of power, knowledge, and being, operates together with capitalism and patriarchy to produce abyssal exclusions, that is, to produce certain groups of people and forms of social life as nonexistent, ..." ¹ To address this challenge, a deliberate embrace of encounter as a transformative process of community building has to be made by institutions of learning.

The focus on encounter in this work is deliberate because encounter points to an embodied approach to learning. Embodiment is conditioned and defined by the totality of the human experience. Encounter points to the totality of the human experience as means for furthering knowledge production within the spaces of learning in institutions. Encounter is not just about embodiment in the spaces of learning. It also speaks to a form of witnessing that can be affirmative or subversive depending on the factors defining such spaces that the human person enters. Appropriating Jarvis R. Givens's notion of fugitive education, encounter, as a pedagogical tool, can become "a way of looking that critiques the practices of exclusion" and challenges discriminatory practices that tend to favor those whose narratives and experiences have traditionally been used as the norm for authentic educational praxis. ² In such spaces of learning where the ritual of

¹ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire. The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South* (Durham, North Carolina and London: Duke University Press, 2018), 25.

² Jarvis R. Givens, *Fugitive Pedagogy. Carter G. Woodson and the Art of Black Teaching* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London,: Harvard University Press, 2021), 201.

encounter plays itself out, the entrance of diverse bodies becomes a statement of liberation and transformative education when the bodies serve as a source of de-centering the monopolizing narratives previously constructed to serve the interest of the dominant group. For example, the history of education in the United States of America reveals an agenda of exclusion that promotes the primacy of the experiences of White bodies as the locus for authentic human experiences that serve as the ingredient for learning. The entrance of non-white bodies into such spaces of learning becomes a form of resistance that shatters a monolithic narrative and forces all to reimagine their narratives to allow for inclusion, especially when such non-white bodies also embrace their own agencies in such spaces. The diversity of narratives that play out in such spaces of learning become liberating tools for all to become aware of the rich realities defining human life. Also, these diverse narratives allow for new epistemic negotiations to take place in ways that may never have been possible when the only narrative given legitimacy was that of the dominant group.

Again, encounter, as a pedagogical tool, offers a subversive narration that invalidates those narratives of exclusion that tend to be weaponized against historically minoritized bodies. Many years ago, I was fortunate to give a talk to fifth graders at a parochial school in Long Beach, California. During my interactions with the students, several of them were curious to know if Africans lived on trees. Their perception of Africa has been crafted by a racist agenda that allowed for the narrative of White superiority to hold sway over Blacks. Meeting a Black African who shared his experiences back at home upended the false narratives that have defined the psyche of the White students I was encountering. By encountering them, I was able to tell my story and claim my own agency in the process.

One may wonder whether there is a legitimate critique of dialogue by stressing the relevance of encounter over dialogue. To address this preference for encounter over dialogue, it is important that one sheds light on humanistic tendencies inherent in encounter that dialogue, as is often understood, tends to miss. While dialogue can sometimes be scripted, encounter is itself an unscripted ritual. It upends expectations or predictabilities on the part of the persons involved in the relational dynamics. Furthermore, dialogue can sometimes appropriate the markers of "standpoint theory" which, as noted by Ann Gray, tends to "essentialize the individual as it assumes that identity is somehow there

before experience."³ Encounter, on the other hand, accounts for the totality of all that defines one's identity not as a static marker but as a continuum that is constantly being shaped by the different experiences one is having. In a globalized classroom, encounter allows for all involved to embrace a sense of self that is evolving based on the relational dynamics playing out in those learning spaces.

I am intentionally using the language of ritual in this work because of its sacramentality. By sacramentality, I mean its ability to mediate a revelatory surplus of meaning as well as its transcendental tendencies. There is a twofold movement in a ritual. A ritual reveals, and a ritual conceals. When what is revealed is totalized as the only meaning of the ritual itself, the hermeneutic process slips into the domain of idolatry, and it is no longer an encounter. It is simply a projection of an image of the self. While idols mediate only one meaning, on the other hand, encounter allows for an iconic expression that is saturated with meaning. Encounter allows for fluidity and surplus of meanings.⁴ Gray makes a salient point when she calls attention to the risk scholars make as researchers when they essentialize the other by appropriating rigid identity markers to define them.⁵ Her concern can be addressed through the ritual of encounter because encounter, though it brings to the surface the historicities defining the bodies involved in the relational engagement, plays out by creating spaces that demand new negotiation of meanings and identities for all parties. In a globalized classroom, both the instructor and the students, when engaged in the ritual of encounter, are forced to constantly negotiate their sense of self. But such a sense of self has no meaning unless it is intricately linked to the other. A bond of connected identities is enacted through their encounters. Because encounter allows for iconic identities, such identities cannot exhaust the surplus possibilities of self-other awareness inherent in the interactions.

The relevance of encounter as a didactic tool is best explained by Levinasian notion of speech. By speech, Emmanuel Levinas does not mean the utterance of sound. Rather, he means the entire communicative processes that are mediated by the human person and

³ Ann Gray, *Research Practice for Cultural Studies: Ethnographic Methods and Lived Cultures* (London: Sage Publications, 2003), 183.

⁴ SimonMary A. Ahiokhai, "Encounter A New Icon of the Martyrs of Uganda," *Portland Magazine*, vol. 39. No. 1 (Fall 2020): 27.

⁵ Gray, *Research Practice for Cultural Studies: Ethnographic Methods and Lived Cultures*, 182.

an embodied creature. Thus, one can conclude that humans are creatures that speak with their entire being. Their bodies tell their stories and bear witness to their historicities. Again, for Levinas, "Speech situates the self in relation to the other in a way that shows us how being for the other is the first fact of existence."⁶ Consequently, "sound, or words, produce a transcendence by breaking the world of self-sufficiency." In other words, speech reveals the hidden or the forgotten sense of self. I always find it amusing when I posit the following question to my students: Who are you? They immediately result to their intellectual and social conditioning by appealing to either what they do or what they think they are in their minds. There is nothing wrong about that. But that does not exhaust the response to the question. Who they are is a continuum situated in their histories of connectedness or disconnectedness to all that has come before them that define them as humans.

Again, Levinas offers a lens for understanding encounter as the pathway for understanding surplus of meanings brought about by the multiple realities defining the persons involved when he makes a distinction between "the saying and the said." As cleverly noted by Seán Hand, "for Levinas, however, the saying and the said, the act of expression and the thing expressed are never correlative, as noesis and noema, since in the saying there is always the trace of alterity that goes beyond anything that can be measured in terms of its thought content."⁷ In other words, meaning is never derived solely between what is spoken and the intentionality of the speaker. Meaning has a transcendental dimension to it, the side that escapes even the intentionality of the one who utters the word. Language thus brings about a surplus of meaning that allows for encounters to come to be. Stated differently, language resides in the domain of encounters. If the word spoken does not always define in a totalized manner the intention of the speaker, then encounter offers a lens for exploring the multiple meanings that are conveyed through the bodies that speak in the contexts of their interactions. Even if meaning can be said to reside in the intentionality of the author/speaker through the words written or spoken, speech, itself, insofar as it operates within the context of community, it allows for a space of surplus of meanings where the hearer brings to bear their own historicities in making sense of the spoken word through the process of

⁶ Seán Hand (ed.), *The Levinas Reader* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 1989), 144.

⁷ Ibid.

reception. By historicities I mean the totality of all that humans have become within the context of their shared histories. In an institution of learning, when a member of that community of scholars walks into their shared spaces, they bring with them the markers of their existence. These markers include their cultural heritage, virtues and vices, excellence and failures, aspirations and ambitions not just of themselves, but of all that they re-present as persons held captive by webs of relationships that foster a sense of community.

Language makes for the possibility of encounter because of the fact that language builds community. As Martin Heidegger rightly notes, "Language is the house of Being. In its home man [human] dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home."⁸ What being does language create within the framework of encounter? In agreement with Levinas, I would argue that it is an ethical being that comes into existence. Thus, one can argue that to encounter another is to become responsible for the one being encountered. Encounter defines identity as relational because it allows for one to become aware of who one is as a being radically shaped by connectedness. This point has been stressed by scholars like Levinas. Reading his works through the eyes of Claire Elise Katz, Katz notes the following: "Levinas affirms that teaching is not simply about the transmission of truth, the search for forms, or the knowledge of true beauty; teaching is about assuming responsibility for the Other."⁹ Such responsibility for the other is grounded in the belief that all beings are radically conditioned by connectedness.

Again, such a description of teaching evokes immediately an understanding of encounter as an ethical bond that binds all parties interacting with each other. Thus, in a globalized classroom setting where the ritual of encounter is playing out, the teacher, as a subject, derives their identity never in isolation from or outside of the domain of the encounter mediated by the art of teaching but within it. The same can also be said of the students as well. The ethical dimension of encounter comes to light through the Levinasian critique of subjectivity as the locus of identity. For Levinas, identity comes to be through the ethical summon of the subject initiated by the other. Consequently, "all encounter begins with a benediction, contained in the word 'hello'; that

⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 193.

⁹ Claire Elise Katz, *Levinas and the Crisis of Humanism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 70.

'hello' that all *cogito* [subject], all reflection on oneself already presupposes and that would be a first transcendence. This greeting addressed to the other man is an invocation. I therefore insist on the primacy of the well-intentioned relation toward the other. Even when there may be ill will on the other's part, the attention, the receiving of the other, like his recognition, mark the priority of good in relation to evil."¹⁰ In other words, to encounter the other is to commit oneself to be concerned with ensuring that the other experiences goodness and flourishes in and through that encounter. This is hindered when one comes to the encounter with already preconceived biases defining how one perceives the other. The other is never an object to be perceived, rather, he/she is a gift to be received with gratitude.

Within the dynamics of encounter, to speak of the other with fixed images is to simply speak of an idol. While idols point to themselves as the only meaning intended by their mediation as signs for those who embrace them, icons on the other hand evoke surplus of meanings that go beyond themselves. Icons legitimate the agency of otherness in the ritual of meaning making in a manner that affirms both immanent and transcendental approaches to meaning. This is exactly what Levinas means when he writes, "it is between strangers that the encounter takes place ..."¹¹ Levinas is using the noun 'stranger' in an intentional manner to undo the temptation of wanting to box the other into the hermeneutic paradigms we have been conditioned to create for making meaning of who and what the other represents. Stranger, for Levinas, entails the possibility to escape the domain of fixed identities. Again, for Levinas, the other who is encountered transcends all conceptualizations because of the transcendental side of their existence. By transcendental, Levinas is calling attention to the fact that alterity, within the context of encounter, legitimizes the claim that meaning cannot be exhausted.

Rethinking Spaces: Towards Visibility

Education is radically defined by trust. No one can learn in an environment where they feel unsafe. No one can excel in a community where they feel invisible. How then can trust be cultivated as a fundamental ingredient for radical encounter? Trust must necessarily be defined by communication. The body speaks. It speaks through the senses and through the spaces it occupies. The body listens. Speaking

¹⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Alterity & Transcendence*, trans. Michael B. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 98.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

and listening allow for the full expression of how one manifests oneself in all encounters. If speaking and listening are necessary ingredients for encounter to be fully realized, then vulnerability must necessarily be an important ingredient to bring about trust. In a globalized classroom where dominant narratives are being decentered to allow for a polyphony of narratives and experiences to be the markers for learning, all parties, especially those whose experiences have previously been the normative standard for learning, cannot but learn to trust those whom institutions of learning have either erased or been reduced to footnotes. This process of learning to trust allows for power to be decentered while making room for vulnerability as the legitimate tool for mediating and building healthy communities of learners whose members appreciate the insights of each other. Vulnerability allows for authentic humanity to manifest itself. Such a humanity is not defined by the desire to want to monopolize power at the expense of others. Rather, such a humanity is formed within the domain of dependence (trust) that allows for connectedness to reign supreme in a world radically defined by difference.

Institutions are fast becoming globalized communities. By this, I mean they are radically constituted by diverse bodies, faiths, religious affiliations, cultures, ethnicities, races, ideologies, genders, sexual orientations, and so on. Diversity reveals spaces for visibility. I am very intentional here when I speak of visibility. By visibility, I do not mean the validation of the conceptualization of the other by the subject. Grounded in Levinassian thought, I argue that such a notion must be rejected. The subject only encounters a narcissistic image of the self when he/she attempts to conceptualize the other who is mysterious. By visibility, I mean the revelation that the other mediates through encounters. By visibility, I mean the decentering and disruption of power dynamics in the ritual of encounter. As a diverse community, though tasked with different responsibilities, members of an institution of learning participate in one mission: to be agents of knowledge creation through the ritual of learning from each other. Even though they participate in one mission, does that mission define exhaustively their identities? I do not think so. To address this question, I appropriate insights from Cynthia L. Nakashima. In her work, "An Invisible Monster: The Creation and Denial of Mixed-Race People in America," she argues that just as members of the queer community "upset and challenged the general understanding of gender, sexuality, and family in mainstream American society, people who are multiracial and multicultural have

upset, and are just now beginning to challenge, the understanding of race, ethnicity, culture, and community in the United States."¹² Also, just as multiracial identities expose the limits of either/or approaches to identity construction, so also does a globalized classroom and institution. A diverse learning community exposes the limits of the claim to knowledge, even by the instructor. In such a setting, all are both handicapped and gifted as agents of knowledge production. All experience the limits of their own knowledge. This limit becomes an opening to enter into the space for utmost creativity that is conditioned by the hospitality enacted by the other who has something to say and share within that space of epistemic vulnerability. It is the space where the instructor can honestly say to their students, 'I do not know the answer to this question. Can you kindly share your insights with me?' At that moment, the instructor becomes a student. The instructor experiences all that defines that positionality of being a student. If they are to learn from that experience, they must be ready to trust those who bear the gift of knowledge to them. In this case, the gift-bearers are the students-turned-instructors. Again, such a space is not defined solely by mental knowledge. The entire historicities of the bodies occupying that space become media for knowledge production and transference. I make a bold claim here when I say that in such a space, clarity is not the *telos*. In fact, *telos* is a wrong word. The focus is on the experience – a continuum that has a sacrality within thenowness of all that plays out in such a space. In that space, learning becomes a shared ritual of storytelling. The limit of the claim to knowledge ends for each person when they utter the last word in their respective stories. But since such utterance is embodied and defined by the revealed and the concealed historicities of each person in that space, all persons become both actors and recipients of knowledge production and transference. As I have argued in a work of mine, while reflecting on what happens to me as an instructor teaching comparative theology to millennials in a globalized classroom, "I am called to embrace the moments of grace midwived by the divine through the insights of the students. I am drawn to enter a territory where I am not the landlord but simply a guest who must embrace fully the hospitality that comes from the other. The students' insights invite me to critically evaluate my own biases as a theologian.

¹² Cynthia L. Nakashima, "An Invisible Monster: The Creation and Denial of Mixed-Race People in America," in *Racially Mixed People in America*, ed. Maria P. P. Root, 162 – 178 (Newbury Park, California: Sage, 1992), 163.

They call me to learn a new language, one that fosters growth and transformation."¹³

James Snead offers a credible analysis of the hermeneutic limitations that play out among persons from different cultural contexts who engage a text. He uses the work of a Nigerian author, Amos Tutuola to make his point. Tutuola writes the following in his work, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*: "When I saw that there was no palm-wine for me again, and nobody could tap it for me, then I thought within myself that old people were saying that the whole people who had died in this world, did not go to heaven directly, but they were living in one place somewhere in this world. ... One fine morning, I took all my native juju and also my father's juju with me and I left my father's hometown to find out whereabouts was my tapster who had died."¹⁴ Snead argues that "in his astute and humorous mixing of African and European reference points – such as linking 'juju' with that all too English cliché 'one fine morning' – Tutuola both plays with and against the expectations of African and European readers."¹⁵ In other words, for both readers, the African and the European, there arises a sudden stop on the pathway of literary comprehension. This sudden stop allows for the curiosity to want to know more. This curiosity makes for the possibility for a hermeneutic community to be formed among the readers. This is the same reality operating in a diverse community of learners who take seriously the demands of a globalized classroom. Through the media of diverse experiences new epistemological horizons open up when each person in that classroom shares their perspectives and all that shapes their contexts, while being open to the inquiring questions of their colleagues in that ritual space of learning. Stating the above insight differently, I appropriate the example given by Paulo Freire who said, "every revolution, which transforms a concrete situation of oppression by establishing the process of liberation, must confront this phenomenon. Many of the oppressed who directly or indirectly participate in revolution intend – conditioned by the myths of the old order – to make it their private revolution. The shadow of their former oppressor is still cast over

¹³ SimonMary A. Ahiokhai, "Recognizing the Place of African Traditional Religions in the Comparative Theological Discourse. Mediating Classroom Encounters through Storytelling," in *Comparative Theology in the Millennial Classroom. Hybrid Identities, Negotiated Boundaries*, eds. Mara Brecht and Reid B. Locklin, 164 – 176 (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 174.

¹⁴ Amos Tutuola, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (New York: Grove, 1980), 9.

¹⁵ James Snead, "European Pedigrees/African Contagions: Nationality, Narrative, and Community in Tutuola, Achebe, and Reed," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha, 231 – 249 (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 240.

them.”¹⁶ In other words, the tools of one’s liberation cannot be those which were used to bring about their subjugation. True learning means a journey into the space of the unfamiliar. It is a space that allows for creative imagination because one is not held down by habits of the past that limit one’s perspectives.

What are some key qualities needed for trust and authentic encounters to exist in diverse community of scholars? First, we must embracing the practice of suspension of judgment or what the ancient Stoics called *epoche*. This practice becomes even more relevant today as institutions become more culturally diverse through their members. A good example may help express the need for this practice. In the United States of America, when engaged in a conversation, it is expected that both parties look at each other in the eyes as one speaks to the other. This gesture is considered a mark of respect. For Nigerians, such a gesture is considered rude. Consequently, a Nigerian, when speaking to someone in authority will make all the effort in the world to avoid eye contact. Encountering a Nigerian student in the classroom without knowledge of their cultural context may lead one to reach the wrong conclusions about them.

Diversity forces all to accept the realization that all knowledge is contextually created and mediated. Consequently, all knowledge is open to critique when removed from their contextual origins. Within the discipline of theology, James H. Cone offered a similar insight. He contended that “because theology is limited by the place and time of its creation, it is important for theology to evaluate itself critically, identifying its strengths and weaknesses, so that it can build upon the former and, as much as possible, avoid the latter. If theology does not become self-critical, it will definitely lose its Christian identity by becoming nothing but an academic reflection of the self-interest of those who do it.”¹⁷

To build trust, institutions of learning cannot but center cultural humility in all its members’ interactions. Does this mean that their members cannot enter into transformative dialogue with each other? I do not think so. However, all dialogue, all critique, all labeling of each other ought to come from a place of charity and generosity knowing fully well that what they define each other to be comes from how each of

¹⁶ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), 46.

¹⁷ James H. Cone, *For My People. Black Theology and the Black Church* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 79.

them has been conditioned to interact with the world. To understand the meaning of transformative dialogue, I turn to Freire. In his work, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, Freire writes the following:

Dialogue does not depend on the content [of a text] which is to be seen problematically. Everything can be presented problematically. The role of the educator is not to “fill” the educatee with “knowledge,” technical or otherwise. It is rather to attempt to move towards a new way of thinking in both educator and educatee, through the dialogical relationships between both. The flow is in both directions. The best student ... is not one who memorizes formulae but one who is aware of the reason for them. For students, the more simply and docilely they receive the contents with which their teachers “fill” them in the name of knowledge, the less they are able to think and the more they become merely repetitive. The best philosophy student is not one who discourses, ‘*ipsis verbis*,’ on the philosophy of Plato, Marx, or Kant but one who thinks critically about their ideas and takes the risk of thinking too.¹⁸

Second, the embrace of vulnerability is key to building trust. This cuts in both ways. Students have to be taught how to be vulnerable. To do this more effectively, educators also have to demonstrate to them what vulnerability entails. Educators will not always get things right. And that is okay. What matters is that when they realize their mistakes, they make the necessary amends to ensure that they grow from such experiences. When mistakes become a pattern of operating as a community, the end result is lack of trust.

Encounter as a pedagogical tool allows for one to embrace the truth that knowledge production is a communal project. Who instructors include on their syllabi in reading materials, how they structure the topics they cover in their lectures, and how they set the tone for their classes speak to their priorities and biases. It is okay to begin one’s classes by informing students of one’s biases and invite students to help one to critique those biases. Embracing such a model allows for students with different perspectives to see themselves as important agents and members of a community of scholars tasked with the responsibility of knowledge production.

¹⁸ Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*(London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 109.

Third, transparency is key to building a culture of trust in a scholarly community that prioritizes encounters. Transparency means allowing everyone to know what the stakes are and having an open door policy where all can feel heard and are invited to the table. Transparency is not a one way traffic. It involves everyone taking upon themselves the duty of being vulnerable and open to all the encounters. Transparency involves an ethical responsibility of looking out for others and checking to ensure that no one is left out. In fact, transparency is about shedding light on all the crevices of erasure.

Conclusion

Again, encounter, in a diverse community, means that all persons ought to learn new skills of communicating. It does not mean that others ought to assimilate into one's world. A colleague of mine at my current institution once shared the following question with me, one I hope to address here, since it will help unpack the demands of encounter: "What is the difference between an immigrant and a colonizer, and (if there is one) how do you tell the difference?" A colonizer comes to the other not to encounter but to hold captive all that define their holistic humanity. A colonizer rejects difference because identity is always identity for them and nothing more. Albert Memmi offers a portrait of the colonizer in the following words:

The laws establishing his exorbitant rights and the obligations of the colonized are conceived by him... It is impossible for him not to be aware of the constant illegitimacy of his status. It is, moreover, in a way, a double illegitimacy. A foreigner, having come to a land by the accidents of history, he has succeeded not merely in creating a place for himself but also in taking away that of the inhabitant, granting himself astounding privileges to the detriment of those rightfully entitled to them. And this is not by virtue of local laws, which in a certain way legitimize this inequality by tradition, but by upsetting the established rules and substituting his own. He thus appears doubly unjust. He is a privileged being and an illegitimately privileged one; that is, a usurper.¹⁹

On the other hand, an immigrant identity and experiences are shaped by factors that are themselves ambivalent, as noted by Sandro

¹⁹ Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized. Expanded Edition. Introduction by Jean-Paul Sartre. Afterwords by Susan Gilson Miller* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 8 – 9.

Mezzadra in a work titled, "The Right to Escape."²⁰ Some of these factors, argues Asad Haider, include the need to "escape from poverty and persecution, to discover new geographies, and to speak in new languages. The desire of the immigrant is a world with no borders, a world with no detention, a world in which humans move freely and welcome every stranger. It is the recognition that it is possible to think, speak, and live otherwise."²¹ The dream of the immigrant is to upend the limits of conditional hospitality. To shed further light on this point on the limits of conditional hospitality, I turn to Jacques Derrida who said that is where the question of hospitality begins: must we ask the foreigner to understand us, to speak our language, in all the senses of the term, in all its possible extensions, before being able and so as to be able to welcome him into our country? If he was already speaking our language, with all that that implies, if we already shared everything that is shared with a language, would the foreigner still be a foreigner and could we speak of asylum or hospitality in regard to him?"²² If a diverse community of scholars wants to take seriously the demands of diversity, inclusion, and retention, all its members ought to become both foreigners and hosts to each other. Embracing these two identity markers allows for rich rituals of encounter, trust-building, and effecting a rich ritual of knowledge production to prevail in diverse communities of learning.

²⁰ See Sandro Mezzadra, "The Right to Escape," *Ephemera*, vol. 4, no. 3 (2004): 267 – 275.

²¹ Asad Haider, *Mistaken Identity. Race and Class in the Age of Trump* (London and Brooklyn, New York: Verso, 2018), 103 – 104.

²² Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality. Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000), 15, 17.

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