# Tears of Potentiality, Love of Liquid Rupture

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The present essay collects the singular plurality of love, its countless forms and expressions in the figure of the tear, where love weeps and breaks at once. In this equivocation, the tear signifies the possibility of all relation, in which love operates as pure potentiality. Arranged in two parts and a coda the essay examines the genealogy of an ongoing theoretical exclusion of the potential of love from politics. It argues that love in its singular plurality must be placed at the heart of every revolutionary and emancipatory project in the service of difference. Accordingly it turns to Elizabeth Smart's writing, where the twofold figure of the tear sets the stakes of love into relief, demonstrating the debt love incurs in the unfolding of its immense potential, which makes possible an incessant recreation of the world. Language finds here the means to relate the experience of rupture and liquidation of the self, an experience violent and creative in equal measure. The essay closes with the summative significance of love's potentiality as the force that sets into motion a task that surpasses itself, a cause for which its infinite power is bound to prove insufficient yet evermore indispensible.

**Introduction**

Among the countless crises of the twentieth century, the fading of love as a decisive category in the production of ethico-political meaning has been among the least considered. The forgetting of love was forgotten. The present essay offers itself up to the recent acceleration of the recovery of the potential of love. In its text love emerges not merely as the original or continuing condition of philosophy (Badiou 2012, 3), but as the identity of thought itself (Nancy 1993, 85). Thinking through love and as love is thus summoned to animate every future emancipatory undertaking in the service of difference.

The essay begins with a confrontation of three eminent gestures in the genealogy of the exclusion of love from politics. Wollstonecraft, Arendt and Badiou are examined as representatives of radical political and feminist projects, which, in their distinct ways of dis/joining desire and love, sought to exclude the latter from politics, privileging certain forms over others. This privileging and exclusion is seen as resting on the Platonic division of the human soul and a corresponding division of the political body, under the rule of *logos*. Instead of casting doubt on the division itself, this genealogy will reinstate evermore forcefully the reign of *logos* over affect and desire. This section proposes then not a mere reversal of this hierarchy, but the political inclusion of the voice of desire as an irreducible element of the singular plurality of love. Drawing on Jean-Luc Nancy's thinking of love across all its tropes, figures and forms as well as on Michael Hardt's forays into exploring the political potential of love, the first part of the essay goes on to show *the inalienable theoretical and ethico-political significance of love as always-already dispersed*.

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The second part of the essay turns to Elizabeth Smart's seminal *By the Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*, a work in which the voice of love, a voice infused with desire, assumes an exemplary intensity and eloquence to evince an experience of radical difference. Literature is not mobilized as a depository of figures of "instruction and orientation in affairs of the heart" (Luhmann 1986, 11; 32), ready-to-hand for less eloquent lovers (Toye 2010, 46), or for analysts from Freud to Lacan and beyond. (Clemens 2010, 28) Rather, literature is here the place where the truth of love is tested and attested in language. Accordingly, this section proceeds through a stylistic withdrawal, in order to let this unique articulation of the experience of love resound with maximal force. Echoing at times Smart's voice, this section attempts to *present* rather than *re*present its diction. The reader is thus invited to witness in Smart's literary testimony the immense task of love, the infinite pain and the infinite elation, which initiate an economy of meaning, resting on an indebtedness of guilt and gratitude, on a debt which cannot be repaid. The sign under which the section and in turn the whole of the essay is placed, is that of the *tear*. *Smart's prose weeps and ruptures at once, presenting the liquid potential of love to give birth to a new world*.

The coda recuperates the failure that lies at the heart of love as its truest potentiality. In the failure to repay the debt of love, the barriers of language and politics, of thought and love crumble, clearing the way to the most productive commerce. The economy that is set in motion, a quasi-transcendental economy that needs to be constantly supplemented, presents us with an impossible yet necessary task *which* enables *the sharing of an ever-new world*.

**I. The Politics of Shattered Love**

The persistent resilience to think the conjunction of love and politics finds one of its most polemic expressions in Arendt's dismissal: "[love] is not only apolitical but antipolitical, perhaps the most powerful of all antipolitical human forces" (242).[1] This rejection belongs to a genealogy that makes love the locus of the private eclipse of reason: the apolitical condition of women's political bondage (Lowe 2014). Love is dismissed as a form of "conservatism or even a denial of politics, not to mention an aura of naïveté, sentimentality and religiosity" (Toye 2010, 40), associated with the realm of women, the home, the private, the apolitical and the 'not serious' (Williamson 1986). Love in this sense becomes at once madly irrational and submissively vestal.

Wollstonecraft's is a crucial contribution in this tradition. Love amounts here to an 'animal appetite' (144), an 'ignoble desire' (103) and a 'common passion' (96) that supplants every 'nobler passion' and inculcates servility (103). It constitutes a source of evil that must give way to the 'serious affection' of friendship, which is founded on principle (145). This demarcation of love rests firstly on the reduction of love to one of its countless forms, a form that we might designate with an unavoidable broad stroke as desire and secondly, on metaphysical suppositions, shaped in the 18th century into a discourse on faculties, but returning, ultimately, to Plato. Thus, the division of the soul in the *Republic* into the reasoning (*logistikon*), the spirited (*thymoeides*) and the desiring (*epithymçtikon*) parts (Plato 2013, 420a-445e)[2] and the corresponding figure of a charioteer (reason) reining a white (the spirited part) and a black horse (the desiring part) in the *Phaedrus* (Plato 1989a, 246a–254e), lay out for the first time the topology upon which Wollstonecraft's appetite for love (the desiring part), the serious affection of friendship (the spirited part) and a principle of equality (the reasoning part) can be mapped.

The Platonic correspondence of the tripartite division of the soul to a tripartite political division of classes, which designates reason as the psycho-political principle of all virtue, is assumed and recast by Wollstonecraft, in order to transform the hierarchic harmony of unequal political and gender roles into an emancipated equality, where the oppression of the lower psycho-political forces has been vanquished. The same contours allow Arendt to lay out in *The Human Condition* the figures of man as *animal laborans* (144-153), *homo faber* (153-159), and as *socio-political animal* (22-28), in order to warn against the capitalist reduction of political reason and practice into the two lowest forms of mere sustenance through the satisfaction of the most basic needs and desires and the production of forms of culture that remain captive to a pre-political logic. In this genealogy, the Platonic pursuit of a harmonious hierarchy does not give way to a reappraisal of its lowest elements; rather, the perception of a clash of irreconcilable forces seeks to elevate the woman and the citizen from the logic of mere desire and production. Instead of being abandoned, the Platonic primacy of reason is reinforced vis-à-vis the lowest (appetite, lust) and the lower (honor, friendship) desires and the corresponding forms of production and culture. In turn, these forms pose a recurring contradiction, since they cannot be merely discarded, neither can they however be allowed into the pure space of political reason.

It is therefore no accident that Arendt, who knew all too well love's "unequaled power of self-revelation," its "unequaled clarity of vision for the disclosure of *who*," (242) was nonetheless led to exclude this power on grounds of love's affective blindness with regard to the *what* of a person or an idea. In search for the essence (*what*) at the heart of existence (*who*), *logos*, at the hands of Arendt consciously abandoned the internal contradiction of the two, banishing with a single stroke the singular plurality of love in the irreducible fullness of its expression, to secure the sanity and sanitization of its political articulation.

Explicitly in the case of case of Wollstonecraft and tacitly in the case of Arendt, the true adversary under the guise of love is its affective potential. It is the effects of this potential that seem to obstruct political emancipation and, notwithstanding the countless divergences, renunciations and polemics, both projects are built on a Platonic groundplan. On the antipode, from Deleuze and Guattari to Vaneigem and beyond, French thought sought the antidote precisely at the source of the poison: if desire can be used for the perpetuation of oppression both in the private and in the political sphere,[3] more than resistance can and must be expected already at the level of pleasure and pain. Desire came to be thus the originative power of revolution. This thread, with all its frustrated and fulfilled hopes, must be deferred. The minimum present necessity is the liberation of desire from the silence to which Platonism has assigned it, from the assumption of its incessant expressions as little more than noise.

We must thus avoid assuming the sensing non-sense of desire as empty and nugatory. For even if pleasure and its corollary desire are always on the verge of a withdrawal and incommunicability, always ready to be assumed as an exclusive prerogative of subjectivity, their economy is irreducible to mere consumption. If an exchange of desire and pleasure is at all possible, it assumes that one partner is aware of something about the pleasure s/he gives to the other and not least something about the desire to be desired. The more pleasure one seeks and the more one desires to be desired, the more familiar one must become with the other's desire (Luhmann 1986, 28). An invisible hand administers this erotic economy, not merely transacting, but indicating the possibility of an intimate knowledge.

Wishing to be selfish—and in proportion to that wish—one is compelled to selflessness. In turn, seeking the other's desire one discovers that the ecstasy of pleasure, while the

throes of pain rend the other asunder, open and vulnerable to the inspecting gaze (87). In the sharing of desire one becomes a well of knowledge, the pleasure machine operates as information machine. Through its plenitude of signs, pleasure, insofar as it is commanded by a demand of reciprocity, makes of desire a phenomenon of communicating the incommunicable, sharing the innermost.

This is no more than a preliminary demarcation of the expressive potential of desire, which the second part of the essay revisits, in and through the writing of Smart. Significantly, in this sharing of meaning that opens a commerce of the innermost, Lacan's fundamental provocation: "there is no sexual relation," where pleasure operates as the limit of separation, rather than the threshold of a connection, begins to tremble. Badiou is ready to assume the Lacanian dissociation (2003; 2012,19-20), in order to remedy it in turn through the supplement of love, which is called to afford the potentiality of a relation, where such a relation is essentially and unavoidably lacking. This is a fundamental moment for Badiou, who is thus able to find in love the ground of an absolute truth, one of the five conditions of the economy of meaning that supports thought, something desire leading to the absent sexual relation could never yield.

The due examination of Badiou's elaborate revision of the Lacanian diction in *The Scene of Two* exceeds the essay's scope. It is at this juncture however that Badiou is able to compromise in the name of love a theorizing of the personal that involves maximal affect, while claiming fidelity to the possibility of discovering in its event an absolute truth. In effect, Badiou's *explicit* Platonism assumes in the case of love a particularly insidious form. While he does not wish to denounce the erotic couple for the sake of the love of an idea, ascetic love or the love for the dead, he proscribes in erotic love desire as extraneous to the relation, which begins from the originary severance of the male and the female perspectives,[4] a foundational dissociation and absence which becomes the vantage point of the relation of love. Accordingly, for Badiou, it is lovers, rather than friends, or parents and children who find in love the possibility of overcoming their affective insular singularities.

This privileging of the couple, coupled in turn with a canonic Platonist-Lacanian censure of desire, becomes the origin of experiencing the world 'point by point' through a creative difference (2012, 56), reserving with a single gesture this experience of difference exclusively for the couple. Love becomes thus once more apolitical and asocial, as art is called to attest (79). Badiou is caught up in the infinite tension of love. Love, beginning with romanticism, is linked to revolution from the nineteenth century onwards (97), presenting the most powerful challenge to an identitarian political logic and its neutralizing forces (98). Indeed, love's most concise definition is: 'minimal communism' (90). And yet, Badiou reduces a politics of love to a 'meaningless expression' (57). The most ostensible pretext for this circumscription is that politics is not the minimal space of love (57), but the expanse dominated by the figure of the enemy (59). Badiou gives in readily to the Schmittean logic of founding politics on enmity coupled with hatred (71).

There is however a deeper, structural reason for the political exclusion of this erotic love purged of desire. Love and politics along with art and science constitute for Badiou the four conditions or truth procedures on which philosophy rests (Badiou 2008). These conditions must at all cost remain separate from philosophy, lest a 'suture' occurs in which philosophy 'delegates' its function to one of its procedures (Badiou 1999, 61). This constitutes the perennial failure of philosophy: "Analytic philosophy sutures itself to the scientific procedure; Marxism sutures philosophy to its political condition; Romanticism

sutures philosophy to its artistic condition; and so on." (Clemens, 34) Accordingly, Badiou's project rests on the immunization of philosophy against love, which is meant to be the former's condition; in turn, it rests on the immunization of politics against love, and in general, of one condition against an other; and finally, on the immunization of love against desire, of a condition of truth against the noise of non-sense.

In the face of this rigorous demarcation Che Guevara seems to be confusing precisely what "should never be confused," (Badiou 2012, 71) when he writes: "At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that a true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love" (Guevara, 2005). Michel Hardt, beginning like Badiou from an understanding of love as difference (677-678), attempts to recuperate this revolutionary love in order to exit the narcissistic politics of identity by following its operation at both "the most intimate and widest social levels" (680). Hardt utilizes thus a fleeting comment of Marx to seek in love that transformative power that will ground a new theoretical and political ideal (678, 680). Where Marx sees in love the ancient principle of 'like for like' Hardt attempts to discover the power that Marx reserves exclusively for money, "the power that brings together impossibilities and forces contradictions to embrace" (Marx 1975, 379). Here Hardt finds himself anew at one with Badiou who, recalling Claudel, enounces: "Strictly speaking, love isn't a possibility, but rather the overcoming of something that might appear to be impossible" (Badiou2012, 68).

If politics wishes to harness this potential to counter its reduction to mere techno-bureaucratic administration of power, where not even hate or the figure of the enemy have a place, love must infect the political structures that attempt to exclude it. A polity that has no place for love other than the regulation of the matrimonial contract is led to exclude and contain the most productive of its forces. It can do so only by means of the highest violence, even if the exercise of this violence remains, or rather, is made, invisible. Against such violence, the potentiality of love, in all its disconcerting, eruptive contingency "slice[s] diagonally through the most powerful oppositions and radical separations" to effectuate the meeting and production of difference (Badiou 2012, 29-30).

Philosophy and politics must be infected with love. Love must be infected with desire. All the while, one must practice the generosity and responsibility "not to choose between loves, not to privilege, not to hierarchize, not to exclude" (Nancy 1993, 83). To welcome thus the political promise and peril of every love: "charity and pleasure, emotion and pornography, the neighbor and the infant, the love of lovers and the love of God, fraternal love and the love of art, the kiss, passion, friendship" (83), along with all those potentialities that are yet to be imagined, yet to be explored. Only the "indefinite abundance of all possible loves, and an abandonment to their dissemination, indeed to the disorder of these explosions" (83), can be the condition of future politics.

For love must be contested in its fullness, in its inexhaustible plenitude that defies taxonomies. On the one hand, it is extremely important to have gained the epistemic space for the word, to have wrested love from its reduction to countless other tropes: care, labour, trust, benevolence, solidarity, romance and so on (Toye 2010, 42; Jónasdóttir 2014, 11). On the other, love in its essential fragmentation provides the very means of its translation, gives itself over to be translated, sets into motion the economy of its semantics, which no final signifier can arrest. If "the foundation of all love in our life is the same" (hooks 2001, 136), this is not because of a stable essence, a substance of love that can be given, in advance or even ultimately, in a definition. Love is reticent and withdraws from all definition even as it gives itself to an incessant translation and an inexhaustible

commerce. Politics and thought must thus enter a dis-course across the fragments, the shards of love; to this dis-course of rupture, literature affords the most generous passage. We seek not sutures but tears.

**II. The Writing of the Tear. Infinite Debt, Liquidation, Rupture**

*Of tears and tears*: in the taciturn homograph, within the space of four, five perhaps letters, the eloquence of love relates a story of pure potentiality in the trope of pain; with Elizabeth Smart's hand it writes a book of cumulating tears. Its title already exposes everything: *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down And Wept*. Smart's work of autobiography does not attempt to hide behind the ellipsis of its majestic poetic prose. Her words labor rather to reveal, to unveil the naked body of the truth of love, as they belabor an audacious love of truth. If "the parchment philosopher has no traffic with the night,[5] and no conception of the price of love" (Smart 1986, 34), only someone who is placed in the infinite debt of love, someone unable to indemnify this debt ("No there is no defense for love, and tears will only increase the crime," 62), can speak with a lament, write with an incision.

This love of truth is ready to give everything in order to repay its debt, to be forgiven, pardoned and absolved, in order that is, to offer the truth of love. ("All that blood was spilled to make me a philosopher," 95). Yet this thoughtful giving does not give itself in accordance with the frontal pictorial canon of *nudaveritas*, but rather obliquely, transversally, along Badiou's diagonal perforation. This is the meaning of the ellipsis incessantly recompensed in Smart's work through hyperbolic beauty, at once a rhetoric and a topology of love. Obliquely then must Smart ask for pardon, for being a woman, a woman in love, a woman in love with a married man and even, a woman in love who is writing (of) her illicit love. Accordingly, she must ask for forgiveness hyperbolically, since the final exponent of her infinite debt is the very ellipsis of a writing the first exponent of which is its femininity.

Certainly, it is not a literary matter, even if, or rather because, it is a matter of literature. Torn between ellipsis and hyperbole, Smart composes a text that withdraws and overpowers at once, in order to expose the heart of her love, the heart of her heart, a heart in agony, which can be equally unloving, cruel: "But it is not for her [the woman sanctified in matrimony, that] my heart opens and breaks: I die again and again only for myself. For her moving image prevents even my cry to him for help. For even if he loves me, he is in her arms" (Smart 1986, 86).

Love consumes her. Her whole being "refers to love, seeks love, and grows to the extent that it finds love and can fulfill itself as love" (Luhmann 1986, 30), appearing blind to other tears, deaf to other cries: "Why should even ten centuries of the world's woe lessen the fact that I love?" (Smart 1986, 80).[6] Thus, it departs from the world it offends. ("Where are we going then? Anywhere to be together and alone. Such a wish offends all people who have less love in their pockets," 63). There is perhaps no better attestation than Heaps' essay (Heaps 1994), that those offended do not necessarily lack understanding—among them we retroject Arendt, Wollstonecraft and today Badiou. Heaps follows Cixous and Moiin recognizing Smart's "struggle to undermine the dominant phallogocentric logic, split open the closure of the binary opposition and revel in the pleasures of open-ended textuality" (Moi 1994, 108). Moreover, she recognizes the text's fidelity to a non-essentializing writing of the woman and its opening into both masculine and feminine tropes of sexuality. She even recognizes after Sullivan, Smart's

biographer, the workings of a 'revolutionary ethics of love' (Sullivan 1992, 93). All this however, is insufficient to redeem a 'feminist adulterer' (McMullen 1978, 78). The "price tag of this particular inscription of feminine *jouissance"* is too high, "the annihilation of another woman's pleasure and the infliction of pain," exposes a heart that seeks a lie in the guise of truth; a truth for which 'feminism' has no place. Not only the happiness of an other woman, but the whole world is suspended.

Importantly, not only the apparent contradiction of this love, but of all love is thereby at stake. Beginning here however, contradiction unveils its truth. First, the primacy that love claims for itself, the primacy of the heart, still follows the ethics of following, still pronounces the Levinasean, 'after you' (Levinas 1985, 89). Smart thus discovers the greatest advance in the law of following. Smart, like every lover, defers to the other, and yet the other is not *any* other. It is at first the beloved and it is love. Certainly, the two, the love and the beloved, are far from the same, yet even when they appear on the verge of an irresolvable tension, remain *other* to the one who loves.[7] Smart however,[8] is not interested in an Augustinian *amareamabam*, she doesn't love to love, doesn't desire to desire. ("I am lonely. I cannot be a female saint. I want the one I want. He is the one I picked out from the world. I picked him out in cold deliberation. But the passion was not cold. It kindled me. It kindled the world." Smart 1986, 97). There is nothing abstract in Smart's love, but the singularity of this love that defers to the chosen other, opens to the infinite plurality of a world infested with enmity. ("But the noise of my inside seas, the dazzle of this cataclysmic birth of love in me, cannot hear clearly what he says. […] I cannot hear beneath his subtle words the beginning of the world's antagonism: the hatred of the mediocre for all miracles," 41).[9]

This love attempts to recreate and redeem the world. ("We can include the world in our love, and no irritations can disrupt it, not even envy," 41). The possibility of a new world pledges its excess. ("I can repopulate all the world. I can bring forth new worlds in underground shelters while the bombs are dropping above; I can do it in lifeboats as the ship goes down; I can do it in prisons without the guard's permission;" 65). The birth that ensues from love is not first and foremost that of a child, but that of a world. ("Everything you touch is born […] all the world solicits me with joy," 40). In this act of creation inscribed in the infinite debt of love, even the adversary is redeemed. ("But I love her and her silence is propaganda for sainthood," 18). Still Smart, who was even able at first to "renounce him for only her peace of mind," (18) soon realizes: "I am possessed by love and have no options" (39).

Overcome, love enters into an economy, which will keep it forever captive. Neither out of lack of care and consideration and an absence of love for any other beyond the beloved other, nor out of a deficit of logic, but out of the very logic of love, a logic that invites us unceasingly to thought, that invites us to the impossible possibility of a new world.

Love appears thus as the origin of thought and the condition of all relation—the lover, the outside of love, the self, as it opens, at the highest price, the innermost to the world, the world to the innermost. It does this through a tear. Literature allows us to think what still and always remains inexhaustibly unthought in this operation of love. It allows us to explore the potential of the question: "If theories of pain are central to this project, what, then, is pain? And how exactly does pain relate to love?" (Toye 2010, 43). It allows us to do so, without resorting to the widespread and counter-effective conviction that "whatever pain achieves, it achieves in part through its unshareability, and it ensures this unshareability through its resistance to language" (Scarry 1985, 4). In literature we

witness the radical significance of the language of love, welling up from its revelatory sense of thought and non-sense of pleasure and pain.

Expressed thus in and through love, the self first discovers in itself the abyss and "the infinite cost of what is infinitely withdrawn: the incommensurability of the other. As a result, the commandment of this love lays out this incommensurability for what it is: access to the inaccessible" (Nancy 2000, 80). Literature constitutes the most courageous expression of this discovery as the "ordeal of love puts the univocity of language and its referential and communicative power to the test" (Kristeva 1987, 2). "Literary experience stands revealed as an essentially amorous experience, unstabilizing the same through its identification with the other" (279). The cause of this faltering is the very vertigo of love—"vertigo of identity, vertigo of words: love, for the individual, is that sudden revelation, that irremediable cataclysm, of which one speaks only *after the fact*. Under its sway, one does not speak *of*. One simply has the impression of speaking at last, for the first time, for real" (3).

Love makes one speak for the first time, for the first time one speaks as *other*. The identification of the self and the other takes place not as self-expansion and colonization, but rather as vertigo over the abyss of selfhood. The only remaining response to this rupture is becoming-fluid, one might say, liquid:[10] the self dissolves into otherness. Tears are the most articulate trope of this dissolution. In the words of Barthes reiterating Schubert's *Praise of Tears*: "Words, what are they? One tear will say more than all of them." (Barthes 1990, 182). Yet language persists and writes; writes, at its limit, with nothing other than tears. In this tearful, tearing writing, the dissolved self becomes its experience.

Ever since the speech of Aristophanes in the *Symposium* (Plato 1991, 189c-193e), the idea of love as the redemptive quest of two torn beings towards an originary essential unity recurs in the occidental canon with inexhaustible force. In medieval Christianity this quest assumes the form of a mystical union, reaching ultimately in Bataille, through Nietzsche's Dionysian revelry, an irrepressible desire for continuity, which dissolves the limits of discontinuous existence not unto God or Being, but unto nothingness: "love can bend our bodies and prompt the sharpest torment. Love, as we can observe day in day out, is not a long, quiet river. We can never forget the quite frightening number of loves that lead to suicide or murder" (Bataile 2012, 88). *Eros* and *thanatos* appear as two sides of a defaced coin circulating in a singular, infinitely indebted economy.

The reverse operation is equally possible. In the pain and pleasure of dissolution one re-collects the lost self. *Lego*, the Latin root of col-lection, shares in the same etymon as the Greek *logos*, which we might hear with Heidegger in its verbal form *alegô* and correspondingly think of the *algos*, the pain, which becomes a rupture that unites without suturing, a lesion that holds together in a mutual tension, a difference that col-lects to the innermost (305-6). Or again repeat with Nancy the words of Elie Wiesel: "Love is a series of scars. 'No heart is as whole as a broken heart,' said the celebrated Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav" (Nancy 1993, 91). Thus, as the pain soars and Smart writes: "But what except morphine can weave bearable nets around the tiger shark that tears my mind to shreds, seeking escape on every possible side?" (103), we know she desires her dissolution at any price. Her advice: "Girls in love, be harlots, it hurts less" (108), is steeped in irony, an irony that would accept anything before abolishing the pain of its ruptured identity.

The writing of pain is a writing of tears in both modulations. Tears rupture and liquidate the self. The body becomes the scene of this dissolution. For Heaps "bodies of water are Cixousian metaphors for the feminine libidinal economy," but Cixous is drawing on a

deeper potentiality. Barthes writes of Werther: "By releasing his tears without constraint, he follows the orders of the amorous body, which is a body in liquid expansion, a bathed body: to weep together, to flow together" (180).[11] The economy of tears is a prerogative neither of the lover,[12] nor of the woman as such. It constitutes no contradiction that Cixous inscribes Genet in this liquid libidinal economy; but the fact that the tears of Greek or seventeenth century theater audiences have dried up (Barthes, 181), testifies to the transformation and confinement of liquid potentialities to the sphere of women. The disparaged tears of a woman reclaim liquid femininity and masculinity at once.

Smart writes with tears. In the vertigo of love she seeks the impossible language: "every tear is wept and lies staining its falling place. I am without words. I am without thoughts. But quia amore langueo. I am dying for love. This is the language of love" (109). And: "O the language of love. The uninterpreted. The inarticulate. Amore. Amore. Amore" (110). And again: "It is the language of love, which nobody understands. It is the first cry of my never-to-be-born child" (112). This language might be incomprehensible to those without love, those exacting the immediate remuneration of the debt of love, but the world already knows the truth of this debt: "The mourning doves mercilessly coo my sentence in the woods. They are the hangmen pronouncing my sentence in the suitable language of love" (23).

In the tears that tear the self, salvation and perdition well up in equal measure. On the one hand tears become streams that pour into a sea of suffering: "But the sea that floods is love, and it gushes out of me like an arterial wound. I am drowning in it" (104). And: "By the Pacific I wander like Dido, hearing such a passion of tears in the breaking waves, that I wonder why the whole world isn't weeping inconsolably" (94). On the other, this liquidation "invade[s] his every orifice" (40), engulfs everything. The roar of the "inside seas" (41) smothers the noise of the world, while an other world is under construction, a world beginning from the experience of the other. "An intense fusion turns the world to water," while "the overflow drenches all […] implements of trivial intercourse" (39). This arrest of language attests a profusion of significance. Everything becomes "a symbol of love. Even the precise geometry of this hand, when I gaze at it, dissolves me into water and I flow away in a flood of love. […] Not all the poisonous tides of the blood I have spilt can influence these tidals of love" (39).

This excessive liquidation is nothing but the articulation of love. Excess becomes the measure of behavior (Luhmann 1986, 67), indeed the very measure of love. Of course, "such exuberance can be interlaced with melancholy, with depressions and suicidal impulses […] but such a disequilibrium belongs to that economy which marks me with its aberration and, so to speak, with its intolerable luxury" (Barthes 1990, 85-6). This luxury indebts the lover forever; for even if all is lost, the indelible memory of an overpowering plenitude (Smart 1986, 57) cannot be requited.

The excess of love operates in an economy of tears that dissolves the lover into the other, into the world and even into the adversary. Smart knows of the tears she is responsible for: "it is her tears he feels trickling over his breast each night" (85). Despite or rather because of her pain, she cries in atonement, summoning the angels to "weep for her whose devastated love runs into all the oceans of the world" (35). The exclusive logic of desire (either me or her) becomes the inclusive logic of love (me and him and her and the world), the two logics balancing tenaciously at the two sides of a singular slash ('/'). The tear signifies the intensity of a tension that thoughts or acts won't resolve. To undertake the writing of this tear is an impossible task, at once excessive and insufficient: a necessary task.

**III. Coda: Potentialities**

"My darling, my darling, lie down with us now for you also are earth whom nothing but love can sow" (Smart 1986, 24). In all its intensity Smart's work constitutes a loving invitation, a con-fession, at once exposing and sharing the most intimate—what has been precluded from the economy of signs. Smart's work invites us, readers and lovers, to share the unsharable.

It is as such a potentiality in the full sense of the term handed down from Aristotle, but perhaps nothing casts better light upon the meaning of this word at present, than a story of Anna Akhmatova, whose writing is throughout one of tears, the story that opens elliptically Agamben's *On Potentiality*. Akhmatova would join for months the crowds outside a Leningrad prison, trying to hear news of her son, who Stalinism deemed a political enemy. One day a woman recognizing her pleaded: "*Can you* speak of this?" After a moment of silence Akhmatova replied: "Yes, *I can*." (177, my emphasis) *Requiem*, the collection of poetry born out of this utterance of love is a work of potentiality. It is not a matter of skill, even if a lesser poet would have certainly failed: a lesser poet would be unable to utter the promise to express the inexpressible, the promise to fail. This promise that recognizes the limit of every power is the truth of potentiality.

Promising to fail, one enters an economy of debt, the economy of love. Writing begins in the recognition of the failure, the impotency of writing to cause and procure the love of the other, to compensate and sublimate the tear of love. Writing assumes the power of its potentiality from this originary impotence. It is not a matter of consummation. If Smart could persuade Barker, the man whose writing made her fall in love, whom she pursued until he was hers, and whose hand guided hers into this devastating writing, if Smart could through the writing that ensued make Barker into the man that would erase the tear as though it had never existed, this writing would be bereft of meaning. Indeed, it could have never existed. *By Grand Central Station* is completed before the first of four children of Smart and Barker and yet it is the offspring of an originary failure, a failure it cannot redeem.

This is its power as the ground of a new world, its "sui generis transformative power" (Jónasdóttir 2014, 14). "There are murders and suicides prompted by love. In fact, at its own level, love is not necessarily any more peaceful than revolutionary politics. A truth is not something that is constructed in a garden of roses" (Badiou 2012, 61). The violence of love is even stronger than desire (Bataille 2012, 19) and the danger it constitutes is a tear from which either a sea of tears or a flood of creation may gush forth; or perhaps, both. This love, strong as death (Smart 1986, 44), perseveres inexhaustibly despite the danger and even the pain: "But faint as hope and definite as death, my possible phoenix of love is as bright as a totem-pole, in the morning, on the sky, breathing like a workman setting out on the job" (36). Love is the indefatigable builder of worlds.

The world begins at the liquidation of the subject, at the commerce of desire and pleasure, of friendship and care, of self and the other. "For the lover, the beloved makes the world transparent," making appear "full and limitless being unconfined within the trammels of separate personalities, continuity of being, glimpsed as a deliverance through the person of the beloved" (Bataille 2012, 21). Agamben reading the *Nichomachean Ethics* repeats the diction that for Bataille is entwined with desire, this time with regard to friendship: "Being itself is divided here, it is nonidentical to itself, and so the I and the friend are the two faces, or the two poles of this con-division or sharing." (Agamben 2009, 34) And then: "Friendship is the desubjectification at the very heart of that most

intimate sensation of the self." (35) In the singular plurality of all its tropes love constitutes the sharing of being between an *indivisible two*.[13] It does so as an originary tear.

The liquid rupture of the writing of love is an open invitation to the most creative failure, the most luxurious debt, the most collected dissolution. It is an invitation to exhaust the inexhaustible.

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## Notes

[1]Arendt "belittl[ed] Rahel [Varnhagen's] efforts to find personal liberation through romantic love," not because she "never questioned the sexual politics of love" (Jones 2010, 70), but because such politics constitutes for Arendt, as for Badiou, a fundamental impossibility.

[2] All references to Plato are given in standard Stephanus pagination.

[3]Horvat's *The Radicality of Love*, is an eclectic recent study on the possibilities of exploiting desire both for revolutionary and for oppressive ends.

[4] The pronounced heteronormativity of this account remains an open question.

[5] From *The Dark Night of the Soul* of John of the Cross, recollecting the shards of lost a unity with God to Céline's *Journey to the End of the Night*, where war and illness, the two 'infinities of nightmare' have shattered the world beyond reconciliation, night is the Cartesian non-space, the coordinates of which are despair and rupture.

[6] The background of this claim, the dramatic time of the text, is the Second World War.

[7] The relation of the two constitutes the elemental structure of love, but none of its three elements is completely reducible to the other two. The mystical union reaching back to medieval theology is precisely the attempt to identify without remainder, not two but three elements. God constitutes the third, the relation of love itself.

[8] The speaking subject of the text is much more than a fictional internal narrator. Here as everywhere we assume a coincidence of the anonymous characters of the book with the eponymous lives reflected in its pages. The constitutive distance Luhmann recognizes in the writing on love which allows the writer to know "in advance the way things should really be," (Luhmann, 1986, 42), is here obliterated. Smart is twice over Madame Bovary.

[9] The common theme of the enmity of the world is compounded by the arrest of the illicit couple at the Arizona border for 'immorality' under the Mann Act, a federal sex-trafficking law, which forbade the crossing of state borders with the intention of committing adultery. The revision of such laws certainly does not amount to the resolution of what constitutes an essential ethico-political antagonism between the part and the whole.

[10] Something enigmatic remains in the relative infrequency of the *vapor* metaphor and metamorphosis.

[11] As Barthes notes (180), it remains unclear whether these are the tears of the lover or the romantic, the tears of life or literature. The very distinction dissolves.

[12] Barthes reminds us of the maternal tears in Mallarmé: "Mother, weep // While I think," 99.

[13] Polyamory does not contradict this *two*: in every singular relation there is the plurality of the *other*, an other who might be *as such*, plural.

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