

## FRIENDSHIP

*Johnny Golding*

‘He says indifferently and alike –  
how are you, friend?’

(Walt Whitman, 1881)<sup>1</sup>

### horse sense

TO GRASP WHAT IS at stake one must be prepared to accept three propositions: First, that friendship is neither a gift bestowed nor an object of contemplation. Quite the reverse, friendship entails an economy of logic and gift exchange built of a wholly different order, imbued, as we shall see below, with a certain kind of attunement (-listening), a certain kind of reaching out (-event); a certain kind of response (-ability), a certain kind of respect (-fullness), and a certain kind of play (-time), all diffractively generated without a single string attached. It is strictly born from the senses, and more than that, from a kind of exquisite, erotic, inhabited logic of the senses. Second, that this logic of the senses is in and of itself both radically heterogeneous and wildly singular – an all-in-one instant – where ‘instant’ names a durational moment, whose duration is itself the thick, sensuous embodiment of energy, of quietude, of flow, exchange and intensity. In this sense, too, friendship sidesteps the proverbial issue of betrayal (as in the lament ‘O my friends, there are no friends’) and offers up instead something more delicate, more delicious and indeed infinitely more durable.<sup>2</sup> Third, that it (friendship) knows no bounds, though, paradoxically, this pluralised ‘it’ only exists as an entangled encounter of embodied exchange. For this is a profound, supple, being-with-together whose togetherness (belonging) is itself simultaneously emboldened by the equally profound simplicity of its ability to enable the subjective/gerund’s ‘just be’/‘just being’ of aloneness as a treasured, solitary intra-independence.

This entangled encounter finds particularly strong resonance with the field of animal studies. For the move away from an anthropocentric agency of Self:Other expresses a queer economy of sorts, one that enables a kind of ‘together-apartness’ in each other’s company without, in so being ‘apart-together’, becoming an all-exclusive, cannibalising, co-dependent unity of One. Nor does this entangled encounter trade in exclusion, with familiar collateral damage consequences summarised by the words ‘uninvited’, ‘untouchable’, ‘excommunicated’, ‘illegal’ or ‘Other’. Instead this is a being/belonging suppleness (of encounter) that ‘enables’. It is never granted nor received. It simply ‘is’. It requires nothing of identity politics, selfhood, social agency,



though its very expression enables and indeed solidifies all this and more. At its core is an ability to harness a particular type of raw energy, a raw sexual presence, even joy – an athleticism, respect, trust, odd form of mastery and slowness of time, one that not only goes beyond the traditional (and anthropomorphically bound) tropes of ‘fraternity’, but beyond the linguistic turn itself, with all the trappings of ‘subject’ and ‘object’, the becoming-x’s or transcendental why’s of the world, now thrown to one side. In so doing, a form of consciousness and indeed a (somewhat) new form of communication is enabled, one that speaks a wholly different language game; one that is embodied in the brea(d)th and fractal singularities that today go under such headings as quantum entanglements, ana-materialisms, incompletenesses and undecidabilities.<sup>3</sup>

One could say at the outset, then, that friendship is a kind of sticky belonging, a cohesive, raw ‘blood poetics’ whose very re-cognise-ability, whose very response-ability, is best expressed at the moment of its strange-cohesive together-apartness of encounter, mired in the senses, multiversal in its duration and relationally, expressively ‘alive’ in its being-with/apart. In this context, too, friendship manages also (and consequently) to maintain a shelf-life quite beyond the immediacy of its encountering. Not unlike the star, it can be observed, felt, shared, relived a billion light-years after the very encounter from which it was birthed has gone to black, vacuumed against that event horizon we might wish to call, at its most direct point: extinguished.

Friendship’s economy of encounter sidesteps the familiar debt/gift exchange that metaphysics exacts from both its friends and enemies, not to mention from those sentient beings designated as Other. Instead, it generates a strangely emboldened, shared knowing, one that can be called a *suspended attunement* (or aliveness) *to otherness*, an aliveness without recourse to old-fashioned forms of master/slave power imbalances or splits between ‘self’ and the infamous capital ‘O’ Other. Suspended attunement to otherness does not (because it cannot) privilege an unknown being in any shape or form as either self or (an) Other or anything else yet to come. Nor does it mean to imply some kind of free-fall relativism or mid-flight bungee-jump hang, generating an ‘in between’ or transitioning state of affairs. Leastwise is it romantic, though its irruptions may launch over a thousand delicious plateaus. Friendship requires a wholly different logic, an ‘inhabited’ or ‘embodied’ logic of senses, emotions, libidinal economies, calculations, empathies and intentions, closer to the Rousseau *pitié* (compassion/self-love), the Socratic *parrhēsia* (truth) and its reinvention by Michel Foucault in his *Courage of Truth*, as *epimeleia* (the technologies of care).<sup>4</sup>

All this (and more) I learned from a wildly playful and sometimes dangerous horse, whose fire-eyed, split-down-the-middle-brown-white face earned him the name *Manhattan*, corrupted from the Ojibwe *Madweijwan*: the ‘*heard-flowing*’ of where the two rivers meet. Manhattan and I were not just friends; we were the very *best* of friends. It is to him – to this semi-feral buddy, this intelligent prankster of a mustang – that this chapter is dedicated.

### learning how to listen

Required first and foremost is an inhabited, wearable relation to plurality. This is a deeply post-Newtonian move which accepts, and indeed cherishes, the fact that two or more objects can, often do, and in this case (the case of listening) must, occupy the



same place at the same time without dominating or annihilating either object. In so accepting this kind of non-layering dimensional plurality, involved also is a deeply post-dialectic move. This is closer to a logic of *techne*, a 'technology' as Foucault would later name it, one that sidesteps the abyssal logics of a thesis/anti-thesis transcendence (quasi or otherwise), with its attending excluded middles, castrated Lacks, and overrated Phalluses.<sup>5</sup> There is no sublation, no synthesis, no *Telos*, no ground or goal. At best, there is a kind of synaesthetic intensity, a tremble, one could say, that 'tunes in' to each other's multidimensional, ever-spreading half-circles of curiosity, empathy, attraction, even fear without, in so doing, passing judgement. This is a kind of multi-tonal, multi-coloured, multi-sensory present tense in-difference to each other's being here, now; a kind of suspended, groundless awareness, which, in being without ground enables an openness to the unexpected: a listening-tremble that takes note without knowing (the why). This non-verbal 'gut-feeling' embodied cognition enables, in its why-lessness, an oddly territorialised, shared present, a kind of transportable 'safe-house' erected at the very moment of suspended awareness. Differently stated, one could say that this form of listening offers, paradoxically, unconditional sanctuary, irrespective of motive, moral standing, commitment or drive. Kierkegaard names this unconditional paradoxical non-judgemental sanctuary: faith.<sup>6</sup> Devoid of its religious trappings, we might better understand it as an ecology of accompanying, a kind of non-judgemental 'being-with': the unconditional heard-flowing-openness where the two rivers meet.

I first saw Manhattan whilst speeding in a black two-seater sports car over an open four-lane super-highway in that part of the country where diamond shaped deer signs gently dot the landscape, forewarning, in muted colours of mustard and black, imminent death or destruction to one or more mobile parties should their paths cross. He was a beautiful beast, though the hapless rider he was dragging across the four lanes probably thought less of his beauty at that exact moment. With one foot slipped through the stirrup, the other flapping in the wind, it was a minor miracle that both horse and rider made it across without serious injury. So when a large hand-painted sign suddenly appeared at the side of the road boasting a daunting 15,000 hectares of unspoiled Crown land with undulating hills, forests, secret coves and natural fences over which one could sail at a trot, a canter or full throttle gallop; when splashed across that battered sign, the words 'fantastic western trail-ride for all you weary travellers young and old – no experience necessary!' came into focus, the tiny nerve endings at the base of my pineal gland did a little dance of recognition. The promise of Paradise beckoned to me across the asphalt spits like the proverbial Sirens' songs to unblocked ears. I was a member of that tribe, so when the exit appeared, I took it.

As it turns out, Paradise reveals itself in a variety of forms. A pock-marked, lazily winding, thin slice of a road eventually opened onto what could only be described as a kind of soup kitchen for homeless horses, twenty-six to be exact. Twenty-seven if one counted Manhattan who had sprung into view from a completely different entrance, sweaty and snorting, with a screaming, angry rider in tow. Mud splodges everywhere, rusted corrugated roofs atop MDF stables, all in varying states of disrepair. Spotted in the middle distance were a half-acre of paddocks, with barbed wire fencing replacing wooden railings that had been chewed into oblivion. A goat, several dogs, and a couple of cats were doing hospital rounds, making certain the few sentient beings still



locked in their stalls due to illness or injury were now on their way to recovery. An Annie-get-your-gun lookalike, fashioned in checked shirt, tasselled deer jacket, rodeo chaps and filthy dirty boots, in one seamless movement marched over to Manhattan, grabbed the reins, told him in no uncertain terms 'Quit it!', helped the furious, humiliated, well-heeled young-ish woman off the saddle, and flatly announced: 'Manhattan's a dangerous horse – with those he don't like', narrowing her eyes beadily at the rider, who was in turn shouting lawsuits and closures. Without missing a beat, Doppelganger Annie looked directly at me and, just as matter-of-factly, demanded: 'Do you like the look of this horse? I charge very reasonable stable rates and you can have him for the cost of his feed. Otherwise he will be carted off to a glue factory.' The white of Manhattan's rebellious eye against the black of his wild mane gave him a certain unstable look at the best of times. It was fair to say, though, that perhaps the urban punk-blonde hair framed against thick black-eyeliner lids and a leather-clad body gave off a similar impression. Certainly, at that very moment, we acknowledged a familiar something about each other – a hunger, an impatience, a flicker of fear, a raw compassion, a not fitting in, a flight from boredom – whatever it was (perhaps all these and more), it could safely be said that here emerged a tangle of unexpected gut recognition, a strangely satiating tremble, a glitching sting, as trembles of this nature so often do, right at the base of one's throat and chest. An affirmation of sorts, a 'yes-saying' if ever there was one.

Thus, albeit tentatively and completely by surprise, began our fifteen-year friendship.

### holding counsel (the gift)

The very kernel of a sentient encounter – this dimensionally plural, inhabited, here and now 'yes-saying' of attunement – surfs the flight-lines of proximity and distance without, in so surfing, bifurcating those trembled and entangled waves into classical tropes of dominance and submission (or, to attend to canonical divisions, intellect as rationality v nature as sense). This listening-encounter, whose philosophical grammar instead enables one to re-think thinking as a more practical-prosaic *techné* rather than an activity-game of two halves, invigorates everything it touches with both an indifference to the 'out there' whilst, instantaneously making room for it. This 'making room' simultaneously acknowledges an immediate and intimate sharing of space with and amongst those beings with whom the encounter will have drawn into its mix.

A delicate, discursive bridge over which communication intensities are exchanged either on purpose or by accident or by some combination thereof, this 'making room' encounter forms a strangely durable environ of privacy, of community, of exclusion, of intimacy, of embodiment and exchange all in one go. A 'connection' able to invigorate without prying, able to acknowledge without judgement, able to call fellow travellers to its atmosphere without, in so calling, setting in motion any particular way forward or back. A dwelling or clearing, call it what one may, this multiple-singularity encounter enables a kind of ecology of space to take shape, to take speed, pace, step, stride, run; even take leap, often without moving an inch. In this way, the attuned beings of encounter can (and do) begin their thaw of identity politics; can and do begin to disrobe identity itself – sidestepping the proper-noun etiquette of universal, object-oriented concepts, in favour of more mellifluous, ephemeral, improper, fuzzy



logic attractors: the subjunctive's infinitely redrawn anti-infinitive '-be', the gerund's ergonomic nod to vitality and movement '-ing', the adjective's paradoxically fuzzy but pin-pointing '-ish'.<sup>7</sup>

In this context, a second technology of friendship can now be explored. Born of and by attunement, a kind of narrative, slice of life wellness shelter of sorts, a dwelling-house spa without the black and white bureaucratic interferences of identity code enforcers, the story (one could say, 'our story') now emerges in its minor key.<sup>8</sup> Making a nod towards Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's restaging of the grand narrative, one could say that the listening-encounter enables a loosely structured narrative to take place, a slice or minor form of a story, whose 'telling' captures the strange radical mattering of a not-quite-here, not-quite-not-here (but here and there, nevertheless) differently embodied *viva voce*. The ability to mould this strangely materialised multi-dimensional embodied-disembodied live voice, at once a 'telling' and a 'calling', whilst simultaneously being a 'listening-encounter', forms, in its telling, calling and listening an intensive fabric of a pluralised now, of a life, shared.

This impersonal-personal sharing of life's creative genealogy/ies, Walter Benjamin singles out as the dying art of story making.<sup>9</sup> This is an art that was and remains an underappreciated but critically important way to communicate (or perhaps just commune) with the out-there/in-there/out-side/in-side/no-side/otherwise-side, elsewhere 'bridge' in all its fuzziness and complexity, dizzying dimensionalities, fire, boredom and debris – and to do so without need for interpretation, metrics or explanation. Story-making as the triangulated ability to grasp the listening-encounter, to be grasped by it and to pass it on; story-making as an informal cartography of how one comes to know, invent or discover what one can be or become; story-making as the *ecce homo* of everyday life; story-making, as Benjamin would so prosaically observe, as an exquisite elixir to life itself.<sup>10</sup> For a story might offer a moral, a good feeling, an unfettered placeholder for a daydream not yet dreamt; it might offer a way to forget the immediate or, quite the reverse, might allow one to plunge into the centre of it all, right into the centre of some miserable black-hole internal cry of despair. It might have a 'good ending' or no ending of which to speak. But whatever else this slice of connection, this so-called listening encounter might or might not offer, in order to hear it, a different ear would be required: one that is 'itself' a communal, heterogeneous, fractalised plurality; an ear whose very multiplicity involves, indeed requires, a relational logic of sense quite distinct from that born of zero-sum games. A kind of well-beingness adventure-ear, this listening-encounter, this mani-fold ear; one that can be named, as Jean-Luc Nancy so eloquently put it: 'the event of being singular plural'.<sup>11</sup>

One finds that with the event of being singular plural, there is no totalising 'whole' per se. No need to divide the pie into fragments or fractions; no need to focus on receiver or sender. At best, it is a call for the ear(s) to be lent or bent or just 'be'. For this kind of hearing has nothing to do with the need to exchange information and even less to do with a need for 'action-point' solutions, so often the love child of corporate-managed grand narratives and cognitive behaviour therapy. Instead, this listening-calling-telling slice of life bridge-making 'enables': it enables a certain multiple-singularity of the 'being-with now' to take place and even take its rightful place; it enables the generating of shared counsel, with its purposeless generosity stoked by the immediacy of caring indifference. Holding counsel, in its turn, enables a certain mindfulness to



emerge, one that sidesteps reason without being unreasonable, one that sidesteps logic without being illogical. One could say that this is nothing more nor less than gift-giving at its best: at its most quiet, most gentle level, a pleasure gift, a magic garden gift, a telling/sharing/hearing secret bridge-building gift that, at the very moment of 'gifting', at the very moment of 'counsel', enables one to 'just be' communally alone together. Foucault named this gifting of the communal alone together 'just be' (-ing) as an aspect of *epimelia heatou*, the shared technology of caring.<sup>12</sup> Walter Benjamin simply called it: wisdom, the ability to weave counsel into the fabric of real life.<sup>13</sup>

### adventure (sharing the secret)

There are many ways to weave counsel into the fabric of life. Manhattan was particularly adept at it, indeed legendary, as I would come to learn, and not just through my own association with him, but by speaking with the Elders living on a nearby 'First Nations Reserve', the blandly inhumane appellation of forced relocation 'homelands' for Ojibwe, Cree and other indigenous peoples.<sup>14</sup> For being the prankster that he was, Manhattan often figured out ways to leap over his waist-high stall in the dead of night and roam the landscape at will, looking for the infinite whatever, spurred on by varying degrees of curiosity and a stubborn itch to be free. This meant that our morning approaches to greet each other frequently took place in the fields and, just as regularly, would entail vain attempts on my part to catch him using a loose halter in one hand and the lure of a carrot or apple in the other. I came to learn that when Manhattan had managed to have one of those wild roam-the-countryside nights, he was particularly difficult to catch the next morning and no amount of running towards him, away from him or alongside with or without treats, would work. Until ready to be caught, this towards, away and alongside often became one of our more common rituals, a game, in and of itself. Trembles on his flanks, pricked forward ears, a shaking of the mane and snorting of the fresh hard early morning air as he bolted round the fields meant he was having a whale of a time at my expense, enjoying, to the max, his version of just horsing around. In fact, it would not be wrong to say that the nature of our being-with-together always entailed some kind of 'horseplay' with no real agenda or goal to hand other than a loose agreement to explore the time-space continuum, searching for the whatever, wherever it would take us.

Without putting too fine a point on it, then, a third technology of friendship can now be glimpsed: this is no less than the promise of play (whilst engaging in play); the promise of adventure, big or small, whilst journeying together with no necessary or exacting purpose in mind. Moreover, it could be said that these 'whatever' playtime-adventures as often as not served as grist for communal self-invention stories, a kind of joint mindless-mindfulness holding of counsel in a minor but collective key. A suspended need for possessive individualism, while enabling instead a loosely drawn 'us' to take place – and doing so without losing the sensual self in the process; without losing, that is to say, the laughter self, the smelly self, the out of breath self, the troubled self, the 'I don't give a damn' self. All the selves flitting in and out of this 'us' playtime adventure, forming in its wake, a kind of sturdy intensity, a heterogeneous multidimensional intensity, one that enabled memories and/or inventions of selves to make room for more stories, deeper stories, 'infinite whatever stories', now folding in



on themselves to create the baselines for this non-totalising 'us' of friendship. Playtime adventures often included daring the other to inhabit the (im)possible manners and intentions of a scout or explorer; to be or become the reckless renegade or poet or some combination thereof, and doing so whilst cantering amidst some unknown set of pines, or waterfalls or streams, uphill and down, in a single direction for hours at a go. On one occasion a silver-backed coyote steered our run through heather fields, making certain we did not go near her young; on another, a brown bear with a foul disposition and a putrid body odour of rotting meat to match ambled across our path, sparking fear and, as it would happen, the rather misguided decision by Manhattan and I to stop dead in our tracks, turn right around, and against all the advice books on the matter, flee.

Every now and then we would take a few fine provisions of, say, honey, peanut butter, carrots, a skinful of water and a bottle of wine, and, after riding for a few hours, find a good spot to settle – whereupon Manhattan would drop down, fold himself onto his legs, and I would read aloud to the both of us, leaning my back against his flank and using the long grass as our communal lounge. Sometimes we would invite Decca the Doberman-Collie cross to join our escapades, though because of her unfortunate penchant for chasing porcupines (with the end result being a face full of quills), invitations to her were kept to a minimum. A relaxed energy flow of pleasure, a quiet joy of just 'being-with' together, attuned to an atmosphere thick with the sound buzz of unidentifiable insects or the throaty *kee-eeee-arr* utterance from soaring red-hawk birds of prey, a soundscape often punctured with a padded crack by an unknown sentient being scrambling over fallen branches and moss-puckered decay; well, it was during one of those madly picturesque slice-of-time semi-silent communication adventures that our friendship was, quite unexpectedly, tested to its limit and, quite possibly, tested beyond that limit.

I would like to say that it is this test that demarcates the fourth technology of friendship. It is the test called: trust. This is not just any old trust; this is not a trust born from mastery or authority or, dare it be said, formal education per se. It is a trust that can only emerge on the playing fields themselves – on the playing fields of a being-with togetherness so described; of, that is to say, a two-way energy flow of attunement, adventure and the logics of sense.

Although mid-November, when the temperatures in that part of the world often dipped far below zero, the day had started rather brisk but sunny and not overly cold, somewhere in the upper teens Celsius. But from the moment we found our clearing, from the moment we started to arrange ourselves in the usual way, it was apparent something was afoot. An odd, restless shudder ran down Manhattan's spine as soon as I had dismounted; a hard, disturbed pawing on the ground with the right forward hoof; a refusal to relax. From first glance I could notice nothing else out of the ordinary; no bears, no coyotes, no nothing, not even the local illegal hunters with their pot-shot orange hats and beer belly stupidities. The weather was beginning to turn mean, so perhaps Manhattan was quite rightly expressing his doubts about the length of time we would have to relax. But then I spotted something in the middle distance, something I realised Manhattan had already known was there: a makeshift grave, fairly recently dug, with, as it would happen, a torn pair of briefs and shirt stuffed under a nearby bush. About six months previously, there had been a number of posters dotted along the perimeter of the wood concerning a missing young woman feared to have



been abducted, probably sexually assaulted and, as nothing had come to light in the months that followed, feared to have been murdered. And here was a makeshift grave. And here were telltale signs of something quite seriously out of place. To make matters worse, I was not exactly certain where we were, having ridden, as per usual, for a few hours in some vague direction of the sun's movements without taking any real note of the journey. And now this friendly sun had been replaced by chilling rain, and now this gentle clearing had been replaced with fears of gruesome tragedy, and now lightning bolts began shooting down from the heavens as though Thor himself took hold of our world and, taking great aim at any moving object in an open field, dared us to proceed.

Remounting, my initial thought was to camouflage amongst the shrubs until the worst of the storm passed, but as we might be stuck for hours in ever worsening conditions, Manhattan's irritable demeanour suggested a second option: outrun the lightning bolts and trust him to get us home. After all, I had witnessed his remarkable track record on motorways, with an equally remarkable sense of direction. Leaning low on his neck and holding fast to his wild mane, Manhattan and I took flight. 'Get us home, my friend,' I body-spoke to him. And that is precisely what he did, albeit not quite the 'home' I had in mind. For while we outraced the lightning with the agility of a springbok, we made it all the way to Curve Lake 35, the Ojibwe's land reserve, fourteen kilometres north of where I thought we were meant to be.

This is how I learned just how well-loved and legendary was my friend Manhattan. For no one was surprised to see him; no one was surprised to learn that he had led me to that grim burial plot and would in time lead the police back to it; no one was surprised that he would choose to save our lives against the brutal storm and would do so by outpacing the gods.

### radical *pitié* (superpositional empathy)

In 1755, Jean-Jacques Rousseau famously answered the question 'what is the origin of inequality?' with the acid retort: private property and people ignorant enough to believe in its civilising potential.<sup>15</sup> He argued that this acceptance/belief was based on an even more simplistic view of 'human nature': the conflation of a now common-sense notion that self-preservation should be equated, *ipso facto*, with the ability (read: success) or lesser ability (read: failure) simply to acquire, and then consumptively to amass anything lying to hand or beyond. Starting with shelter and basic foodstuffs for oneself and/or one's nearest and dearest, but quickly encompassing all that could be had via bartering, selling, inheritance, warfare, gambling, hoarding, outright thievery or a combination thereof, Rousseau argued that this form of self-preservation was only a thinly disguised nastiness of self-interested greed. As he put it, this nastiness was nothing less than a so-called new intelligence, a philosophy born via cold calculation and cunning reason, which in the name of civilisation, snuffed out the breath of life itself; snuffed out, that is to say, non-judgemental compassionate empathy, or, in a word, *pitié*.

Were it even true that *pitié* is no more than a feeling, which puts us in the place of the sufferer . . . this truth would have no other consequence than to confirm my argument. Compassion must, in fact, be the stronger, the more the animal beholding any kind of distress identifies himself with the animal that suffers. Now, it is





plain that such identification must have been much more perfect in a state of nature than it is in a state of reason. . . . It is reason which turns man's mind back upon itself, and divides him from everything that could disturb or afflict him. It is philosophy that isolates him, and bids him say, at sight of the misfortunes of others: 'Perish if you will, I am secure.' . . . A murder may with impunity be committed under his window; he has only to put his hands to his ears and argue a little with himself, to prevent nature, which is shocked within him, from identifying itself with the unfortunate sufferer.<sup>16</sup>

Book II of the *Discourses on Inequality* subsequently develops the argument, indeed plea, to reconnect with this non-judgemental *pitié*, which he further develops beyond the complex ability to see, hear, voice, feel, witness the suffering of others. Distinct from its English counterpart 'pity', with its Dickensian undertones of a 'this-could-not-happen-to-me' superiority and a rush to infantilise the sufferer, Rousseau's *pitié* requires a return to frontline compassion. This is a particular form of truth-telling, a particular form of witnessing, that requires in this return, a different self, a sensuous self; a self quite aware of pain and distress; a self quite aware of the cruelty of the wound, any wound. This is a self, argues Rousseau, quite divorced from the logics of privatisation, accumulation, captains of industry, and war. Not quite the resurrection of a 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you', this is a form of self-love (*amour propre*) forged out of one's gut decision not to turn away, precisely because one knows, viscerally, what the other is going through and, in that knowing, that embodied/bodily knowing, refusing to forget.

To say this slightly differently, *pitié* – the 'putting oneself in the sufferer's shoes' – is not only a non-judgemental act of empathy and compassion; it is the refuelling, the re-remembering of one's own self-respect, one's own self-esteem. This double-bind, reflexive move holds out the promise to create and maintain a community rooted in a certain type of kindness and generosity of spirit, one which has been for far too long, antagonistically, indeed, brutally undervalued and repressed via various property-accumulation/self-preservation 'civilising' techniques, as remarked above.<sup>17</sup> In Rousseau's conceptual treasure chest, this move was, of course, premised on classical liberalism, which, albeit foregrounding crucial principles such as the separation of Church and State or the importance of change as the basis of society, did so by also accepting the anthropocentric conclusion that society was itself comprised of a collection of autonomous individuals who had mythically come together whilst in that nascent state (of nature). In so coming together, an agreement to leave the state of nature via the (equally mythical) social covenant was now somehow raised and secured in the name of a new social contract. This contract, which promised so much and delivered so little, established instead the kind of deeply uncivilised civil society that we have to this day. 'Man is born free,' Rousseau famously lamented, 'and everywhere he is in chains.'<sup>18</sup>

Given this unrelenting state of affairs, a collective form of *pitié* could only arise given the rather unlikely probability that each individual might somehow throw off their chains, engage this double-binding embodied knowledge of *amour propre* and do so *en masse*. A probability so low that perhaps this is why many before Rousseau, and so many more since, have voiced that erstwhile cry, 'O my Friends, there are no friends.'



But what if it could be otherwise; what if, without having to invoke a homogeneous and rather starry-eyed version of a state of nature, we could approach this by resituating the very notion of *pitié* without its attendant (mythical) reverse moves to an elsewhere over-the-rainbow dwelling ‘outside’ the social? What if we could enable a kind of *amour propre* emerging from some ‘where’ or some ‘thing’ quite different than a personal 1–2–1 sighting of the sufferer within a proscribed boundary, be it natural, outside the social or in our dreams? Here one must take pause to reconsider, particularly in light of the four technologies of friendship thus far developed.

For if one releases from their conceptual and practical arsenal the anthropocentric notion of the ‘individual’ per se and the zero-sum property game to which that individual has for so long been consigned; if one begins to weave together the approaches to being (as sentient or otherwise) a ‘becoming-with’ process in a so-called ‘minor key’, forged at/in/through the moment of listening-hearing-telling adventure-encounters; if, that is to say, the very ‘ground’ on which social agency is made manifest, is no longer – if ever it was – reduced to the infamous ‘State of Nature vs. Civil Society’ linear time-space positionalities; if the very meaning of life itself is closer to a ‘becoming-x’ forged on de-territorialised playing fields of attuned encounters, then, apart from many other consequences, be they practical, political, mathematical, economic, aesthetic or theoretical, a very different notion of social agency and, alongside it, a rather different form of empathy, compassion, indeed ‘self-love’ emerges. This is one born out of a nomadic, de-territorialised event – an event that is ‘itself’ a ‘multiple singularity’ emerging from and reconstituted over and over again by the pluralised intra-action of entangled encounter. This being-with encounter, this multiple-singularity intensity, able to be reconfigured in the ‘here and now’ irrespective of proximity or distance, irrespective, that is to say, of a common, territorialised location, is both enabling and at the same time, an ethical proposition. To use Karen Barad’s phrasing, it generates a ‘response-ability’, the ability to respond, to be accountable; it enables the ethical to take shape, to take place, to make the leap.<sup>19</sup>

Naming this ethical agency ‘agential realism’, Barad puts it thus:

With each intra-action, the manifold of entangled relations is reconfigured. And so consequentiality, responsibility, and accountability take on entirely new valences. There are no singular causes. And there are no individual agents of change. Responsibility is not ours alone. And yet our responsibility is greater than it would be if it were ours alone. Responsibility entails an ongoing responsiveness to the entanglements of self and other, here and there, now and then.<sup>20</sup>

I want to call this being-with encounter and the ethical response-abilities it enables a ‘radical matter’: a radical matter imbued with the logics of sense, no longer paralleling the propositions and deductions of a Newtonian physics; no longer repeating *ad nauseum* the conceptual/political inadequacies of bounded-territorialised bodies or states; no longer demarcating the human being from any other being, sentient or otherwise. Perhaps one could push the logic even further and say that radical matter bears a family resemblance, as it were, to Roger Penrose’s reconsideration of Niels Bohr’s ‘spooky action at a distance’, the throwaway remark by Albert Einstein in 1927 dismissing what until then was unproven: that entanglement can and does occur faster than the speed of light, irrespective of its ‘where’.<sup>21</sup> This far-reaching



simultaneous positionality is 'superpositionality', writ both tiny-tiny and grandiose in an instant. Perhaps one could make the leap, then, that radical matter is no more (nor less) than a super-positional event, the instantaneous entanglement exchange of information faster than the speed of light, where proximity and distance no longer impede the enactment of entangled response-ability. A quantum encounter of the wild science kind, if ever there was one.

With this shift to a radical mattering, let us return to the possibility of *pitié*, now eased away from the individuated 'natural' agency to which Rousseau had given it, and resituated instead via the nomadic 'groundless grounds' of a superpositional encounter/event. At the very least, one could say that its 'double-bind' *amour propre* re-emerges as non-individuated, non-localised response-ability. One could say, further, that this is a heterogeneic, fractalised response-ability, a simultaneously ruptured/entangled non-localised emergence of the 'whatever-x'. One could say even further that this 'whatever-x' folds back on itself (on its multiple 'itself') to create in that (mani-) fold moment, reiterative de-territorialised intensities, paradoxical instantaneous, surface intensities, which, in their superpositional entanglement 'enable'. Of the many things enabled is the event of sensuous *amour propre*, a moment of self-to-self generosity, a renewed sense of being, a mark of respect. It is a collaborative, multidimensional empathy neither 'given' nor 'received' by individual beings per se, but productive and enabling nevertheless; an *epemelia heatou*, whose exchange/circulation economy produces the generosity of respect, not only without losing the love of self in the process, but by strengthening it. I want to call this: radical *pitié*, the fifth technology of friendship.

Now picture a moonless winter evening, where the provenance of light emanates more from the deep-snow-encrusted ground rather than the sky itself. Now picture the bewitching hour of midnight, strewn with twenty-seven horses, some with and some without riders, their breaths white cold against the frozen air. Here we were, a somewhat motley crew of sentient beings, whose friendships had long ago crossed the blood-brain barrier. Midnight snow runs were of course the most thrilling, moonless ones; all the more so, perhaps, because they were the most dangerous. We would assemble at the farthest northern trail, torches strapped to helmets for those wearing one. Everywhere the crunch-squelch rhythm of hooves slicing the thick atmosphere of a profoundly invigorating silence, with undulating lanterns blinking as walking geared up to the trot, then a quick shift into canter and then, in a fit of moonless madness, to high-voltage galloping. Those without riders would sometimes lead the way. And this is precisely how we came upon a gelding lying in the middle of a field, who, judging by the no longer free-flowing blood which at some point had shot out from an horrifically torn leg, meant that he must have lain there dying and then dead for at least a few hours or more.

And then the extraordinary happened. As the riders silently moved away, the riderless horses remained. Out of the blackened horizon from points unknown, a few other mustangs joined the group, now numbering around twenty. In what seemed to go on for quite some time, they kept encircling their fallen comrade, and once forming that circle, stood stock still. Paying their respects to him and each other, it was then all over, dispersing as silently as they had come.

'Friendship as a way of life', Foucault would say.<sup>22</sup> But perhaps it is more accurate to say: Friendship as life.



## Notes

1. Walt Whitman, 'Book IX: Song of the Answerer', in his *Leaves of Grass*, ed. Jim Manis, Electronic Classic Series (Hazelton: Pennsylvania State University, 2007–13 [1855, 1856, 1881]), p. 200.
2. This is a well-known lament, attributed by Montaigne (1588) to Aristotle (though the phrase has never been found in Aristotle's work). See Michel de Montaigne, *Of Friendship* (1588), John Florio, trans. (1603) (Monadnock Valley Press, 2017). Available at <<http://monadnock.net/>> (accessed 28 August 2017). Of course, for Montaigne, this was more a comment used to underscore how a friend could turn as easily as not into a bitter enemy. As is well known, Derrida re-launches the phrase over the course of his book *Politics of Friendship*, in part to develop via constellation/configuration the paradoxical nature of apostrophe (and its reverse catastrophe, as in 'Enemies, there are no enemies') as foundational to the very notion of the political. See in particular Jacques Derrida, 'Loving in Friendship: Perhaps – the Noun and the Adverb', in *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Verso Press, 2005), pp. 26–48. My development of friendship will take it in a somewhat different direction than the one(s) explored by Derrida.
3. This will be developed further, but clear influences include Karen Barad's diffractive/agenial realism in her *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and The Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2007); Donna Haraway's explosive tentacular thinking in *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2016); and Isabelle Stengers's sensuous attunement to Gaia in 'Gaia, the Urgency to Think (and Feel)', given at *Os Mil Nomes de Gaia, do Antropoceno à Idade da Terra*, Colóquio Internacional, Departamento do Filosofia PUC-Rio and PPGAS do Museu Nacional – UFRJ, 15–19 September 2014, Rio de Janeiro, <<https://osmilnomesdegaia.eco.br/2014/11/25/finalmente-os-textos-dos-palestrantes-o/>> (accessed 28 August 2017). Important also but developed later in the chapter, Jean-Luc Nancy's 'being-with' in his *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Gilles Deleuze's re-workings of athleticism, encounter and the logics of sense in his *The Logic of Sense*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas, trans. Charles Stivale (London: The Athlone Press, 1999 [1969]); and, with Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. and foreword by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005 [1980]). See also: Heidegger's *Ereignis* (event – of belonging together/apart) in *The Event*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press [1940–41]) and his *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York and London: Harper & Row, 1969 [1957]). Important also to the larger arguments around social agency but not developed here: Jean-Francois Lyotard's erotically charged pagan theatrics, in his *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993 [1974]) alongside Kurt Gödel's work on incompleteness/undecidability in his *On Formally Undecidable Propositions in 'Principia Mathematica' and Related Systems* (New York: Dover Press, 1962 [1931]).
4. For the development of *parrhēsia* via the Socratic move, see Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth (The Government of Self and Others, II), Lectures at the Collège De France 1983–84*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008/2011), Lectures 1–3, pp. 1–56. Although no recorded writing by Socrates on *parrhēsia* is known, initial discussions regarding *parrhēsia* as part of the Socratic development of courage can be found in Plato, *Laches* [380 BCE], trans. Benjamin Jowett (The Project Gutenberg EBook, 2013 [1892]). With respect to Rousseau's *pitié*, a more detailed exploration of will be developed further in the chapter relying in the main on Jean-Jacques



- Rousseau, *On the Origin of Inequality*, trans. G. D. H. Cole (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Everyman Library, 2010 [1923] [1755]). Rousseau's development of *pitié* can also be found in his *Essai sur l'origine des langues* (Paris: Gallimard, Folio: 1990).
5. 'Technology' is used here to denote the logic of *techne*, a discursive logic of making, grasping, inventing that requires in that making, a self-to-self 'plural' relation. Cf. Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: Lectures at Vermont University, 1982*, ed. Luther H. Martin, Huck Utman and Patrick H. Hutton (Cambridge, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988 [1982]).
  6. 'Modern philosophy', writes Kierkegaard, 'has permitted itself without further ado to substitute in place of 'faith' the immediate. . . . In that way faith comes into rather simple company along with feeling, mood, idiosyncrasy, vapors, etc. . . . [On the contrary] Before faith there goes a movement of infinity, and only then, *necopinare*, by virtue of the absurd, faith enters the scene . . . but only after it is done, only when the individual has evacuated himself [sic] in the infinite, only then is the point attained where faith can break forth.' Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton, 1941 [1843]), p. 50.
  7. Here one walks carefully with and amongst the thinking 'otherwise' of concept via entangled encounters of 'iterability' and 'event' as developed, albeit differently, in the seminal works of Deleuze, Deleuze and Guattari, and Derrida. For the development of concept away from its traditional forms, see in particular the 'becoming-animal' as developed in Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan, *Theory and History of Literature*, vol. 30 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986 [1975]) and their *A Thousand Plateaus*. See also Deleuze's *Logic of Sense* and his *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press 1994) and his *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Verso, 1994); alongside Jacques Derrida's 'Différance', in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (London/Chicago: Harvester Press, 1982 [1972]), pp. 1–28; *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1997 [1967]), pp. 74–94; and Derrida's 'Signature, Event, Context', in *Limited, Inc.*, trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988 [1972]), pp. 1–24.
  8. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan, foreword by Réda Bensmaï (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986 [1975]), pp. 16–27.
  9. Walter Benjamin, 'The Story Teller: Reflections on the Work of Nicolai Leskov', in Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2007 [1955]), pp. 83–110.
  10. Benjamin, 'The Story Teller', p. 86. See also Friedrich Nietzsche's remarkable 'Why I Am So Wise' and 'Why I Write Such Good Books', in his iconic *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979 [1888]), pp. 8–20 and 39–47.
  11. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert E. Richardson and Anne E. O'Bryne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000 [1996]), especially pp. 26ff. See also Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mann (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007 [2002]), especially 'How Music Listens to Itself', pp. 63–8.
  12. The wider implications of Foucault's *epimelia heateou* will be developed in the final section of this chapter. But see Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures of the Collège de France*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005 [2001; 1981–2]), especially the first Lecture, '6 January 1982: The First Hour', pp. 1–19.
  13. 'All this points to the nature of every real story,' Benjamin observes. 'It contains openly or covertly something useful. The usefulness may, in one case, consist in a moral; in another,



in some practical advice; in a third, in a proverb or maxim. In every case the storyteller is a man [sic] who has counsel for his [sic] readers. But if today “having counsel” is beginning to have an old-fashioned ring, this is because the communicability of experience is decreasing. Counsel woven into the fabric of real life is wisdom. The value of information does not survive the moment in which it is new. It lives only at that moment; it has to surrender to it completely and explain itself to it without losing any time. A story is different.’ Benjamin, ‘The Story Teller’, pp. 86–7.

14. In 1876, under what would become known as *The Indian Act: An Act Respecting Indians*, Canada’s 614 First Nations bands were forced onto specific demarcated ‘homelands’ or ‘reserves’ in what today has come to be known as ‘First Nation Reserves’. This brutal, racially motivated, legally sanctioned cultural/economic apartheid was subsequently brought into South African State law in the early twentieth century, eventually by the 1960s evolving into ‘homelands’ of racial segregation. With the armed insurrection and subsequent overthrowing of apartheid in the mid-1990s in South Africa, the homelands policies were denounced and dismantled. This has not been the case in North America, where to this day ‘reservations’ remain as (often) brutally enforced secured perimeters, with excessive infant mortality rates, serious sexual assaults and the usual statistics found in damningly preventable poverty-stricken environments. For an excellent summary see Mark Aquash, *First Nations in Canada: Decolonization and Self-Determination*, University of British Columbia 19:3, pp. 1–16. Available at <<http://ineducation.ca/ineducation/article/view/142/617>> (accessed 28 August 2016).
15. Rousseau writes: ‘The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying *This is mine*, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not any one have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows, “Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.”’ Rousseau, *On the Origin of Inequality*, p. 183.
16. Rousseau, ‘Book II’, *On the Origin of Inequality*, p. 184. But see also Rousseau’s general remarks on *pitié* in his *Essai sur l’origine des langues*, where he writes:

La pitié bien que naturelle au cœur de l’homme resterait éternellement inactive sans l’imagination qui la met en jeu. . . . Comment imaginerai-je des maux dont je n’ai nulle idée ? Comment souffrirai-je en voyant souffrir un autre si je ne sais même pas qu’il souffre, si j’ignore ce qu’il y a de commun entre lui et moi ? Celui qui n’a jamais réfléchi ne peut être ni clément ni juste ni pitoyable; il ne peut pas non plus être méchant et vindicatif. Celui qui n’imagine rien ne sent que lui-même; il est seul au milieu du genre humain. (*Pitié*, although natural in the heart of man, would remain eternally inactive without the imagination that puts it into play. How can I imagine evils of which I have no idea? How will I suffer if I see another suffer if I do not even know that he is suffering, if I do not know what is in common between him and me? He who has never reflected cannot be merciful, neither righteous nor pitiable; Nor can he be wicked and vindictive. He who imagines nothing feels only himself; He is alone in the midst of the human race.)’ (p. 92)

17. Rousseau, ‘Book II’, *On the Origin of Inequality*, pp. 180–1.
18. Rousseau, ‘Book I’, *The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right*, p. 35.
19. For the development of ‘deterritorialised nomadism’ see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000 [1972]), and in particular its preface by Michel Foucault, ‘Preface: Towards a Non-Fascist Life’, pp. xi–xiv. For the



development of agential realism, response-ability/responsibility and ethics, see in particular Karen Barad, 'Entangled Beginnings: The Science and Ethics of Mattering', in her *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, pp. 26–38.

20. Barad, 'Ontology, Intra-activity, Ethics', in *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, pp. 394–5.
21. See Albert Einstein, Boris Podolsky and Nathan Rosen, 'Can Quantum Mechanical Description of Physical Reality Be Considered Complete?' *Physical Review* 47 (1935), pp. 777–80, where 'spooky at a distance' is first discussed. For more recent debates where 'spooky at a distance' is reworked as 'quantum information' with the further hypothesis that information travels both forward and backward in time, see Roger Penrose, *The Road to Reality: A Complete Guide to the Laws of the Universe* (New York: Vintage Press, 2016); Huw Price and Richard Corry, *Causation, Physics and the Constitution of Reality: Russell's Republic Revisited* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); and George Musser, *Spooky Action at a Distance: The Phenomenon That Reimagines Space and Time – and What it Means for Black Holes, the Big Bang and Theories of Everything* (New York: Scientific American/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015).
22. The phrase is usually attributed to the interview given by Michel Foucault, and entitled 'Friendship as a Way of Life', in *Gai Pied*, interview by R. de Ceccaty, J. Danet and J. Le Bitoux, trans. John Johnston, April 1981. More of a declaration in this interview, Foucault's *Courage of Truth* and *Care of the Self* provide a much stronger discussion.