

epilogue

CONFRONTING EXPOSURE, OR A PSYCHO-ETHICAL RESPONSE TO OPENNESS

This book was to pick up the study of religion where *Terror and Triumph: The Nature of Black Religion* ends. To be precise, I intended it as an extension of *Terror and Triumph's* theory of relational centralism applied to a wider range of cultural production.¹ Through that approach I meant to urge scholarly understanding of the relationship between religion and culture beyond exploration of dominant theological symbols embedded in culture, beyond the assumption that religion must constitute a *unique* mode of thought or experience, and beyond a narrow range of cultural resources. It was intended to bring greater depth and richness to the study of religion and to understandings of culture—its origins, impact, and longevity—as well as the “things” populating cultural worlds.²

This book was to frame cultural “assemblies” in a manner consistent with what I labeled my theory of religion (i.e., religion as the quest for complex subjectivity—a process of meaning making). The rationale was simple: the relationship between religion and cultural production, for example, has been a source of much fruitful discussion. In recent years important books have effectively shifted attention to the connection (making more readily recognizable appropriate subfields) between cultural production and religion. In part this has involved an underlying rationale that the religious is where you find it, so to speak. In other words, the religious is embedded and encoded in

the cultural workings of human life. And while these books are vital, my volume was to provide a more expansive investigation than is offered in many of them in that it would not assume a framing of the religious determined and defined in terms of institutional forms, doctrines, or theological vocabulary of particular traditions.

Prequel: From Complex Subjectivity to Religion as a Technology

I soon realized the project I intended to write required a theoretical step I had not yet made.³ *Terror and Triumph* outlined a response to particular modalities of dread resulting from effort to fix black bodies. It is not a theory of religion; rather, it is a theory of ethical formulation—a psycho-ethical response to what religion exposes in relationship to certain modalities of disregard. Time to reflect on *Terror and Triumph* and what it proposed, sparked in part by conversation with colleagues, students, and friends, brought me to a realization: While *Terror and Triumph* maintains a sense of the religious as a means of “doing” something against the belittling of collective and individual markers of humanity, this sensibility and ethical frame did not constitute a theory of religion. I needed, then, to go behind *Terror and Triumph*’s ethical impulse. And so the book could not be as initially outlined; it had to be a prequel—the theory of religion *Terror and Triumph* assumed. That book, *Terror and Triumph*, in a way, worked backward—and in the process assumed what I now make explicit.⁴

As argued throughout these pages, religion as a technology, in relationship to strategies such as art, exposes naming-things and thing-things as porous—open and thereby allowing interplay. This realization flies in the face of normative theological narratives of wholeness or fixity made possible through “true” boundaries. And as was discussed in part 3, certain populations of naming-things are discursively warped and culturally marked off so as to maintain the illusion of being closed off. Still, such efforts fall short, and as one might imagine, this realization is not without its trauma—a type of destabilization that does not go unaddressed. This claim highlights the materiality of this fixing in terms of an effort to render vertical, to draw from Bakhtin, things’ relationship to other things.

While it is a mislabeling of religion to call it a response to this situation of openness, its work does promote responses. That is to say, porousness is tackled in a variety of ways: hide the problematic (rituals of affirmation); cover the problematic through moral and ethical pronouncements; embrace the

problematic as theologically necessary; ignore the problematic as a matter of blind faith. Much of what is produced in light of these possibilities involves an effort to fill the openings, to stabilize boundaries, and to assert the integrity and distinctiveness of things. All of this, as should be clear at this point, I find problematic.

In the final pages of this volume, I propose an alternate psycho-ethical (or affective-active) response to the openness of things illustrated through a Camusian moralist sensibility and a caustic framing of absurdity as, perhaps, an artistic rendition of the catchphrase “Shit happens.”⁵ Camus’s stating of the case regarding the “absurd man” offers applicable insight. “For the absurd man,” he reflects, “it is not a matter of explaining and solving, but of experiencing and describing.”⁶ Even more to the point, he reflects directly on art and the absurd: “The absurd work requires an artist conscious of these limitations and an art in which the concrete signifies nothing more than itself. It cannot be the end, the meaning, and the consolation of a life.”⁷ The nature and meaning of the absurd, and its connection to religion as a technology, as I want to understand and employ it involves to some degree a sense of limitations and possibilities. But this is not the agape love-driven “impossible possibility” of neoorthodox thinkers, such as Reinhold Niebuhr, resolved through divine intervention—for example, God filling the gaps as the human languishes between history and eternity, between her capacities and the restraints of her nature.⁸ Such thinking promotes a theory (and practice) of religion very different from what I work to theorize and follow in this book.

Religion as I have theorized it actually ends where their “hope against hope” begins. That is to say, religion as a technology—a method or what might be called a technique of exposure—affords perspective or at best recognition of circumstances along the lines of what Camus labels “lucidity” or awareness. Hope, I argue, involves not simple recognition of circumstances but also—and this is an important distinction—reflection on more appropriate arrangements of circumstances.⁹ In this way, hope involves “vertical” thinking that frames and privileges particular outcomes as not simply plausible but possible through proper orientation and a defined posture—submissive to the Divine and defiant toward the world.

The Deception of Closure

Even when seeking to do otherwise, as in the case of Yates discussed in chapter 2, many of the dominant narratives regarding openness cast it as a problem to solve. In fact, it is depicted as a problem that can be solved through

a range of prescribed patterns of thinking and doing that tend to pull away from the world and the more “unpleasant” realities and functions of life in the world. However, moralism points out the fictive nature of such psycho-ethical responses.¹⁰ Collision between naming-things and other things does not entail a firm epistemological structuring of being. And more to the point, such structuring is not my interest here, nor does Camus offer it to readers. Rather, interplay points to unanswered questions—tension between naming-things and other things. This is not a mode of transgression of boundaries because the boundaries are a fiction to begin with. Offered by moralism simply is recognition of porousness and a naming of ongoing penetration or presence of things in each other, or, as I have referenced through the book, in Camus’s terminology, “their presence together.” Anything else might be a deception.

Herein, psycho-ethical response as “rebellion, without claiming to solve everything, can at least confront its problems.”¹¹ To continue thinking with Camus, this is not to end absurdity as a marker of openness, nor to control openness, but rather it is a process of “holding” things close. Over against this process, the effort to end absurdity and thereby close things off vis-à-vis “unity” is a futile attempt to banish the angst caused by the threat of the unknown. It is futile in that complexity in the form of contradiction is a defining element of absurdity.¹² While Camus makes this assertion concerning the nature of absurdity as a “rule of life” marked by contradiction within a philosophical discussion of murder and suicide, I think the general epistemological point extends beyond that particular context.¹³ Think in terms of his reflections on Sisyphus published just a little earlier than his reflections on the “rebel.” In both the case of the former and the nameless latter figure, absurdity is characterized by effort but a lack of resolution—a denial of assertion or “unity.” Regarding Sisyphus, he writes, “the lucidity that was to constitute his torture [the awareness of his eternal plight] at the same time crowns his victory.”¹⁴ There is no transcendence, not even the pretense of transcendence—that is, as a closing off of that which is porous and penetrated.

This thinking is a substantial difference in that normalizing narratives—such as theological systems of tradition—work to enhance distinction by painting it as having a transcendent quality. Take, for example, the story of Job from the Hebrew Bible. This is a narrative about the relationship of naming-things to thing-things along a negative loop. Thing-things—whether created by naming-things or not—impinge upon Job and damage his existential and ontological sense of bodied integrity. Whether the loss of his children (naming-things) when the house—a thing—collapses on them, or the loss of

wealth captured by possession of things, or the betrayal of his naming-thing through illness, this story centers on the destruction or contamination of things as a marker of existential and ontological separation.

Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead.¹⁵

But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.¹⁶

The resolution to the narrative of Job, to the extent there is one, centers on naming-thing epistemological uncertainty as acquiescence to divine prerogative. Such surrender is matched by existential renewal to the extent theological dissonance is eased through availability of other things—such as new wealth. Anchoring resolution in this case is the proper ordering of naming-things, thing-things, and the cosmic “THING” called God. Camus seems aware of this deception, and the notion of ongoing rebellion speaks to this. Bodied naming-things crave a unity that does not exist, and so the illusion of the unity must be created and protected. Camus points to a determined lucidity regarding our existence, while the rest are details we construct.¹⁷

Camus and Openness

The psycho-ethical impulse in the book of Job is controlled if not neutralized through contentment with “life without appeal” despite whether such a life is actually possible or not. (If nothing else, this psycho-ethical response is a soft and muted assumption.) In what Job is granted there is appeal—but the appeal is to the subject's subjectivity over against the object and the abject between them. This is to suggest there is “ground” so to speak upon which to stand distinct. It is to attempt resolution through surrender of “one of the terms of the opposition”—in this case a surrender of some subjectivity for the sake of the subject. Yet contrary to this, Camus seeks revolt, not aspiration. Abjection speaks, I argue, to the residue of aspiration. “That revolt is the certainty of a crushing fate, without the resignation that ought to accompany it.”¹⁸ Such thinking asserts, at least softly, a comfort with porous

things presented to the world. Hence, it is a mode of naming by naming-things without the fallback of wishing for more stability and boundaries held with true integrity. With abjection, vulnerability is a negative, a threat. But for Camus, vulnerability speaks to our existential condition and relationship to the world—a world that impinges and enters us, that we impinge upon and enter. Still, this interplay does not manifest answers to our questions of existence posed by this arrangement of things. The narratives we often tell ourselves in the context of this silence constitute an effort to fortify ourselves. However energetic the telling, they, to a large degree, are pointless in that these narratives produce nothing that did not exist without them.

I see in this perception of the naming-thing's interplay with thing-things something of what Camus notes as the "triumph of the carnal" without grand "consolation" to be found or created.¹⁹ Differentiation is at the end fictional, which leaves lines of "distinction" porous and always compromised. Hence, there is art.

This is the reason for art; if differentiation, meaning, subjectivity, and other tropes for wholeness were possible, the world would be "clear, art would not exist."²⁰ To explicate what I have in mind, I return to W. E. B. Du Bois, Nella Larsen, Richard Wright, and Orlando Patterson.

The Value of Openness

While absurdity and the challenge of the open-bodied naming-thing perverted with boundaries of social difference (e.g., race) informs *The Souls of Black Folk*, it is presented graphically much later in *Dusk of Dawn*, where Du Bois writes:

It is as though one, looking out from a dark cave in a side of an impending mountain, sees the world passing and speaks to it; speaks courteously and persuasively, showing them how these entombed souls are hindered in their natural movement, expression, and development; and how their loosening from prison would be a matter not simply of courtesy, sympathy, and help to them, but aid to all the world. One talks on evenly and logically in this way, but notices that the passing throng does not even turn its head, or if it does, glances curiously and walks on.²¹

For Richard Wright, it is not a cave but rather the underworld, the sewer. Still, the sentiment is the same. In the short story "The Man Who Lived Underground," the sewer is where the protagonist finds himself after a confrontation with the police reinforces his status as problem thing.²² From the sewer, he sees but is not seen; he discovers and observes the behavior of those

who live above him; and in the process he recognizes the futility of their endeavors and the pervasive misery that marks their lives. Du Bois notes the cave as a tomb, and Fred Daniels, the protagonist in Wright's story, sees and feels death around him—from the baby floating by, to the work of the funeral parlor, the dead animals in the butcher shop, and the suicide of the security guard. What humans seek, they cannot have. This is evident for Daniels as he watches people in a type of church worship service also familiar to Du Bois (and Nella Larsen for that matter). Observing them was painful, more penetrating than the ache of his body because he knew what they refused to acknowledge. "A deeper pain," Wright narrates, "induced by the sight of those black people groveling and begging for something they could never get churned in him."²³ There is no comfort, no assurances offered.

Lucidity, like other conceptual maps offered in *Souls*, is doubled. In addition to lucidity regarding the workings of the world in general, Du Bois also alludes to lucidity in terms of a type of clairvoyance allowing African Americans to see both their context and that of whites. The latter is a deep observation. The most telling presentation of this lucidity is in "The Souls of White Folk," an essay in *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil* (1920). There he writes, "I see these souls undressed and from the back and side. I see the working of their entrails. I know their thoughts and they know that I know. . . . And yet as they preach and strut and shout and threaten, crouching as they clutch at rags of facts and fancies to hid their nakedness, they go twisting, flying by my tired eyes and I see them ever striped—ugly, human."²⁴ Rejection of a source of appeal deconstructs the workings of the "religion of whiteness" and exposes its human inner workings.²⁵ A theodical formulation of collective life advantaging whiteness is replaced with an anthropodicy of fragility. Du Bois concludes, "We looked at him clearly, with world-old eyes, and saw simply a human thing weak and pitiable and cruel, even as we are and were. These super-men and world-mastering demi-gods listened, however, to no low tongues of ours, even when we pointed silently to their feet of clay."²⁶

Nella Larsen's central character in the novel *Quicksand*, Helga Crane, consistent with a moralist posture toward the trauma of effort to close off openness through coding of gender and race, finds strength in the awareness of the absurd. "Never could she," Larsen acknowledges to the reader, "recall the shames and often the absolute horrors of the black man's existence in America without the quickening of her heart's beating and a sensation of disturbing nausea. It was too awful. The sense of dread of it was almost a tangible thing in her throat."²⁷ Nausea for Larsen does not connote merely a

biological discomfort, but rather there are larger considerations tied to metaphysics. Crane names the absurd. I want to frame this naming in terms of Camus, who understands a similarity between Jean-Paul Sartre's sense of nausea and what he, Camus, means by absurdity. Think of Crane's response to others and herself in light of Camus's framing. He writes, "This discomfort in the face of man's own inhumanity, this incalculable tumble before the image of what we are, this 'nausea' as a writer of today calls it, is also the absurd."²⁸ There is no grand unity capable of providing meaning within a cold world. "The cruel, unrelieved suffering had beaten down her protective wall of artificial faith in the infinite wisdom, in the mercy, of God," writes Larsen. "For had she not called in her agony on Him? And he had not heard. Why? Because, she knew now, He wasn't there. Didn't exist."²⁹ But what is sacrificed in order to pretend an answer when none is given by the world, when there is no God to aid the inquiry?

Crane is open and lucid to life marked only by confrontation and a "No!" to her circumstances—that is, societal efforts to close and fix her. This is her situation—her entanglement in a cultural climate of contempt presenting a world that is foreign, hostile, violent, death dealing. In her words, "only scorn, resentment and hate remained—and ridicule. Life wasn't a miracle, a wonder. It was, for Negroes at least, only a great disappointment. Something to be gotten through as best one could. No one was interested in them or helped them. God! Bah!"³⁰ Her family, her community, and her country offer Crane rest, not resolution—no sustainable respite from the threat of death. "We see," writes Kristin Lattany, "that America is not a glamour queen but a grisly skeleton, her only product death . . . her only lessons how to kill and how to die."³¹ Nonetheless, for Larsen through Crane (and Du Bois before her) the ever-present threat of death does not stimulate a sense of melancholy. Instead, death is simply a dimension of what it is to live within the context of the cultural climate of the post-Civil War United States. All this Du Bois captures with the question "How does it feel to be a problem?" and Larsen with a proclamation—"God! Bah!"³²

Deeply aware of the manner in which the physical can betray—things, including our bodies, can forsake us, and life can entail a challenging quality—Du Bois, Wright, and Larsen respond to (but cannot undo) the threat of death. Du Bois, particularly in terms of double-consciousness, can tend to romanticize this body—highlighting its "dogged strength" over against the destructive qualities of the cultural climate. Still, he recognizes with nineteenth-century religious leader the Reverend Alexander Crummell and Burghardt, his son, the fragility of embodied bodies.³³ The body, a compromised form, is subject

to death—the final moment of interplay as the naming-thing is dissolved and returned to the world as “food” for other things—and the problem soul never loses sight of this. Awareness of circumstances in the world helps to avoid what Daniels laments as he views—unobserved by them—people in a movie theater. Watching them laugh at the screen, he recognizes they are unaware of the manner in which they mock themselves—“shouting and yelling at the animated shadows of themselves.”³⁴ To the extent they lack awareness, they are “children, sleeping in their living and awake in their dying.”³⁵ All Daniels encounters as well as the items he steals offer life no meaning. In his hands, money becomes wallpaper, watches wall ornaments, and diamonds floor covering in his hole below the surface. Life, death, and the material trail between them do not constitute a relationship to the world, certainly not one offering resolution or final comfort.³⁶ While not exactly “sleeping in [her] living and awake in [her] dying,” Crane does wrestle with metaphysical and existential dilemmas posed by the intertwined structures of being and not being.³⁷ That is to say, both Crane and Daniels, like Du Bois, are sensitive to physical demise (“sleeping in their living”) as well as metaphysical death (“awake in their dying”)—or ontological irrelevance—tied to the cultural climate guiding the historical moment.

Traditional framings of religion as “something” worth speaking and doing, and its theological probing of the world, for Larsen through Crane, Wright through Daniels, and for Du Bois through at least the story of John, offer nothing final. Theological arguments do not wrestle meaning from a silent world and do not offer a way to close off naming-things from the world. Instead, religion as a “*something*” prompts what Wright calls “eternity anxiety.” The secret to existence, despite the efforts of the religious folks encountered, is not found in the workings of relationship to a cosmic *something*. John, facing those in his church, knows this, and the religious leadership of even a cultural giant like Crummell fares no better.³⁸

One might think of the situation this way: the wish against wishes found in some spirituals—at least as they have come to us—is quickly countered by the response of the blues. Both speak a word regarding relationship—connection between questioning humans—that acknowledges the individual but in association with others also confronting (and confronted by) the world. This, one could say, is small and cold comfort.³⁹ Life is drowned in suffering, and it is marked by interplay—at times uncomfortable but always unavoidable.⁴⁰ Crane, who is slowly dying as she gives life to child after child, Wright’s hunger unfulfilled in a hostile world, and Camus’s championing of the absurdist elucidate Du Bois’s diagnosis discussed in chapter 8.

Embracing Openness

In Camus's narration, as Sisyphus prepares to continue his unending task of rolling his stone as punishment from the Greek gods, he reaches a point at which the stone is rolling down the hill and he is turning to follow it so as to undertake his task yet again. He knows the labor ahead of him and its perpetual nature, but this does not break him; rather, this awareness is his resolve and fixes his posture toward the cultural climate marking his existential situation. Sisyphus's stance and the posture called the problem soul are similar. He has his gods to challenge through his persistence, although this does nothing to change his lot; he gains no quarter in the process. The lucidity, the awareness of his condition and the nature of his relationship to what is beyond him, speaks the problem. It is his posture toward the world. In the telling, both Camus and Du Bois are sure.

This posture is not limited to the challenge of socially coded open-bodied naming-things within a given geography, as some might read my attention to the contextual arrangements of openness in the United States. Mindful of this, I end with some attention to Orlando Patterson's *The Children of Sisyphus*.⁴¹ With this novel, one gets Camusian moralism tied to grotesque realism through the travails of the various characters—residents of the “Dungle,” which is an area of Jamaica marked by refuge and open-bodied naming-things exposed to and exposed by waste out of which they crave life. In a word, something of this book has the energy, the presence, of the carnivalistic impulse described by Bakhtin. The situation for these garbage dwellers is horizontal—no time or resource for vertical thought and endeavors. They are grounded in the filth the city would like to deny. They are marked out by a degrading quality that pulls nutrition and vitality from relationship to despised thing-things of the world.

As one of the garbage men responsible for bringing city waste to the Dungle reflects, they were “creatures” that “weren't human. If anyone told him that they were human like himself he would tell them that they lied.”⁴² This was not because he, as a bodied naming-thing, was not open, because he was—all are. No, he reacted to the values embedded in life with trash and needed to distance himself in order to maintain the illusion that he, as a naming-thing, was private and not exposed publicly to the piled waste of life. Shit ties together the people of the Dungle and the land. The naming-thing to thing-thing, naming-thing to naming-thing, and thing-thing to thing-thing connections are constituted by social engineering and cultural placement

of shit out of sight. Yet something of the interplay was intriguing; it pulled at him:

When he had almost reached the road the garbage-man, under some strange impulse, looked back at the scene he had just left. Something about it frightened him. There was, he imagined, a freakish infernal beauty in the oddly graceful way the mounds of filth undulated towards the unseen shore, in the way the sea murmured and sighed and lashed the shore at intervals with the breaking crack of a crocodile's tail, in the way the crystal blueness of the frightfully near horizon rose sheet behind the debris as if in flight from the menace of the sea.⁴³

Bodied naming-things are open and troublingly so. They are penetrated by their surroundings, consumed by and consuming of the waste around them.

The world, as Bakhtin might observe, is defined by bodied presence and activities. There is no distinction to be made in that life, or better yet, the circumstances of life, are horizontal. The grotesque reigns for those with grotesque bodies—those who are constructed within the troubled and troubling world of the Americas. As I have remarked numerous times in this book, the marginalized are often projected as shit.⁴⁴ One gets a sense of this in what Dinah encounters after she has departed from the Dungle to live with her new man. In a scene as she is leaving their room to clean the chamber pot, Patterson writes, “In a moment she felt as if they had stripped her of all her being and was tearing it to pieces, searching into every last crevice of it, as if it was the muck the garbage-cart deposited at the Dungle.”⁴⁵

Like Sisyphus, residents of the Dungle struggle to move. Sisyphus was punished to struggle eternally, but the shit of the Dungle held the residents bound. For instance, Dinah wanted to exit the Dungle even if it meant cruelly leaving her son behind just as Helga Crane, from Larsen's *Quicksand*, wanted to leave the preacher's house—and in so doing free herself from the pull of the children consuming her, forget the hateful neighbors, and push beyond the circumstances that destroyed her. In either case, unlike Sisyphus, we cannot even imagine them happy, because certain grotesque bodies are so heavily coded with social trappings that the pull on them eventually kills them, or at least compromises them severely.⁴⁶ Dinah is pulled back into the Dungle and lives there until her death; for Crane, the naming-thing/thing-thing interplay when coded by race, gender, class, and spirituality create obligation and connections that shape and determine a psycho-ethical loop of terror. Crane plans her move away from the interplay of other naming-things—children—who

impinge upon her. However, as Larsen writes, “hardly had she left her bed and become able to walk again without pain, hardly had the children returned from the homes of the neighbors, when she began to have her fifth child.”⁴⁷

To attempt closure of these bodies is to render them stable and workable within the larger framework of social logic. This is the case with Dinah’s purification—when she is bathed and her body anointed with oil—or when the purifying blood of a pigeon is poured on her and it “was like a razor gliding through her flesh. For one long, excruciating moment she was sure that it was her own blood that flowed.”⁴⁸ In more charismatic traditions, the role of religious ritual is not to close off the body, but rather to restrict its openness and its receptivity to divine presence only. That is to say—“in the world but not of it”—cosmic forces penetrate the open-bodied naming-thing, and through this penetration safeguard it from impact by other forces. It becomes a new bodied thing by means of which its material nature and connection to the world is downplayed by a new cosmic state of being—“behold old things have passed away, all things become as new” or “put on the full armor of God.”⁴⁹ This armor, however, serves only to block the body, to hide it and deny it—and in so doing to deny the supple nature of life.

This does not mean within the Dungle that open-bodied naming-things necessarily surrender to the absurdities of life coded by social signifiers that attempt to fix bodies and reduce openness. Some in the Dungle turn to Rastafarianism, but even this more humanistic tradition begs the question of life’s parameters and prospects: Is there life without appeal, and how does one live it? For those in the Dungle, yes, life is possible, but it is a life of justified punishment until God says otherwise. This is the delusion of a distinct future. It is a redemptive suffering formulation premised on a life in/on/of shit. Obeah here in the Dungle, as in Christianity in Wright and Larsen, is projected as a means by which to close off the body—to end its openness—through cosmic strategies of disappearance entailed by a particular ritualization of naming-thing/thing-thing interplay. In this case, site-specific dirt “out of place” and out of its original “time” shift nature and meaning—or close the naming-thing to objects and assumed technologies of contact. But, like Christianity, it fails in this regard. The question is this: What is made of that radical openness?

For Wright, Larsen, Patterson, and Camus, it is a life of struggle, but lucidity prevents the assumption that there is merited suffering—for example, painful attempts at closure—premised on a cosmic logic. According to these four, there is no grand unity around which such logic can rest. Perpetual

struggle to remain open is the victory. The celebration and perseverance of degraded life, to borrow again from Bakhtin, is this moralist impulse.

These texts taken together and read through moralism offer a moral-ethical response to openness. The response is lucidity—awareness of circumstance and resistance to effort to close off the body. “To perceive the truth of existence,” a character in *The Children of Sisyphus* announces, “is to perceive an unutterable tragedy.”⁵⁰ But it is a tragedy only if one assumes bodied naming-things should be sheltered from impingement, as if well-being is premised on wholeness and completeness.