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Others in the Making of Selves

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Others in the Making of Selves

The Self has received renewed attention across disciplines in recent years. Scholars have analyzed, psychoanalyzed, discovered, named, and narrated a plethora of selves. There are dialogic selves (Bakhtin 1981; Fand 1999), playing selves (Melucci 1996), redemptive selves (McAdams 2006), emotionally managed selves (Hochschild 1983), muscled selves (Sparkes et al. 2005), mediated selves (Sawrey 2005), saturated selves (Gergen 1991), extended selves (Eakin 2004), night and day selves (Fand 1999), embodied selves (Sacks 1985), ad infinitum. [For a good overview of more Selves than you can shake a stick at, see Holstein & Gubrium (2000).]

Even within a single individual a multiplicity of subjectivities can and, it is frequently advocated, should co-exist. A complex society exists within the individual. Hence, any sense of privacy we cling to can only be a figment of false consciousness; with multiple selves, we are never alone. Enjoying one's own company is akin to standing in the middle of Grand Central Station. An apparent monologue is no less than a colloquium. Even the most private self-masturbatory act becomes an orgy.

In this rush to propagate and pander to Selves, the Other has been overlooked. As frequently occurs, those at the forefront of fame and fortune neglect to acknowledge those along the way who helped them become who they are today. Ironically so, because it is difficult, if not impossible, for a Self to exist without an Other.[1] As sociologist Peter Berger asserts (1963:98-9), "identity is socially bestowed, socially sustained, and socially transformed….taking the role of the other is decisive for the formation of the self." One way or another, "the Other" plays a major role in how the self is formulated, enlivened, and embodied in life and in academic discourse.

This paper traverses the diverse roles assigned to the Other in various academic treatises on the Self. I do not offer a typology or exhaustive catalog of roles that the Other might play, but rather I show how the Other has been variously construed by unpacking the roles and responsibilities assigned

to the Other in some influential texts of various disciplines and current research on the Self or Other over the past few decades. Neither do I attempt to advocate for a particular formulation of the Other, nor promote a specific version of the Other as especially useful or empirically viable. I am more interested in exploring the power and agency of the Other, and in discussing how the various dimensions and functions of the Other are consequential for interesting, important narratives about the social self. I suggest questions to guide future explorations into the abyss of the Other.

An Assortment of Others

Unfortunately, I am not the first to attempt to map out the narrative terrain of Others. In 1985 R. S. Perinbanayagam presented various social theorists' conceptions of the Other in his book *Signifying Acts: Structure and Meaning in Everyday Life*. Basically, they comprise three Others: the Generalized Other, the Meiotic Other (my language), and the Significant Other. I will address three additional Others—the Unconscious Other, the Marginalized Other, and the Nonhuman Other--that I find in a broader and more recent literature. Although I group them into six main Others, the borders of these types are somewhat arbitrary, porous, and nondiscrete, as interaction and intersection exist among them. Two characteristics that distinguish one Other from another are whether the Other exists within or outside the Self and whether the Other is an individual or aggregate entity. The Unconscious Other and the Generalized Other both are constructed from symbolic material outside the individual but ultimately take up residence within the Self. The Meiotic Self is the self divided; there may be multiple divisions but each Meiotic Self is usually presented as singly constituted. The Significant Other, an individual, and the Marginalized Other, often a status group or member of it, reside outside the Self but play supporting roles in relation to any particular Self, which may also be an individual or status group, such as men, Whites, and Americans. The Nonhuman Other may be individual, an aggregate of individuals or the product of human behavior, all of which reside outside the Self.

The Unconscious Other.

The Unconscious Other derives from psychoanalytic literature, particularly that of Jacques Lacan, who regrettably disguised his meaning of the "Other" in the verbal garments of at least five different conceptual costumes, the Unconscious being the main or encompassing one (Lemaire 1977; Socor 1997). Even devoted disciples of Lacan appear uncertain of the Other's identity. Catherine Clement (1983), a student of Lacan's, argues that the Other is the embodiment of the Unconscious, the Phallic Law, the Father, and functions as the repository of language and culture; she argues that these are all found in the same "location" within the Self. On the other hand, psychoanalytical scholar Wendy Hollway (1993) posits that the Lacanian Other is the Mother.

In much psychoanalytic thought, the development of the Self and its Unconscious is correlated with the inauguration of the psychic drives of Desire, Lack, and Absence. These motivating states are precipitated by the bodily, and later the emotional, separation from the Mother, which create a lifelong unsatisfied Desire for reunion. Specifically, one of Lacan's multiple Others is the signifier of the Mother, or more precisely, the signifier of unlimited enjoyment of and union with the mother's body, known as "jouissance" in Lacan's theory. Lacan placed a slash or bar through his symbol for Mother-Other to indicate the prohibition of unlimited access to and enjoyment of the mother (Glowinski et al. 2001). In both Freud and Lacan, the source of prohibition is the father, and fear of his jealous wrath results in the infamous castration complex.

Freud argues that without the castration complex one cannot fully experience sexual desire, as it is only the prohibition of the incestual object (mom) that forces one to seek enjoyment in a nonincestual object. It is this Lack of the primordial Mother that inaugurates Desire and drives the subject to search elsewhere for what it lacks (Glowinski et al 2001). From then on, according to Lacan, all human desire is the desire of the Other (Lacan 1977[1959]: 58); that is, the first object of desire is to be recognized--needed, loved, admired, valued, acknowledged--by the Other (Bracher 1995).

While Freud first posited the Unconscious as a repository of the images, sounds and emotions available to and repressed by the child during the first six months or so of its life, Lacan introduced language as a central factor in the formation of the Unconscious (Peters 1993). The child moves from an imaginary to a symbolic register with the acquisition of language through interaction with Others.

The role of language in the formation of the Unconscious is not unrelated to the initiation of Desire through the castration complex just described. Lacan's addition of language and symbolization presupposes that all systems of representation are based on Absence, echoing the primal loss of the mother (Siegal 1999). Humans must use words, signifiers, to communicate. By definition, the signifier is never the signified thing itself, so there results an incongruence, a dissatisfying lack or absence of the thing itself. Language, like the prohibitive castration complex, separates the subject from the full enjoyment of union with the primordial Other. Language, then, becomes a fence, a moat, between the Conscious and the Unconscious.

It is this constant yearning for what is not there, this enduring sense of incompleteness and separation that, according to Socor (1997: 184), stimulates awareness of the Self. Desire, "the experiential affirmation of absence," gives birth to the I, and one may imagine…that the first utterance of I is more closely characterized as 'I desire'." In this psychoanalytical shell game, Lacan's "I desire; therefore, I am" replaces the Cartesian "I think; therefore, I am."

The Unconscious becomes the repository for forbidden desires and signifiers, which become inaccessible to the volitional Self. In a sense then, the Self represents what is there and the Unconscious represents what is not there, what is absent, what is lacking. Socor (1997:7) suggests that the Unconscious Other is the "absent made present;" "[T]he Other speaks this absence which (unconsciously) controls us….The Other is the absent guest at the table of consciousness." Therefore, one of Lacan's famous dicta is that the "unconscious is the discourse of the Other."

The Generalized Other

The Generalized Other is the sociological counterpart to psychology's Unconscious Other. Analogous to Freud's superego in his Holy Trinity of the id, ego and superego, social psychologist G.H. Mead's ([1934] 1964) concept of the Generalized Other is the repository of societal norms. According to Perinbanayagam (1985) interpretation, the Generalized Other is the social-psychological form of the abstraction that sociologists and anthropologists call 'social structure.' Like Lacan's Unconscious Other, the Generalized Other is formed through social interaction and therefore reflects historical and cultural maleability; it is not inherent within the individual. "The organized community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self may be called 'the generalized other.' The attitude of the generalized other is the attitude of the whole community" (1964: 218).

Mead uses the concept of a game to illustrate. In a game, the individual must understand and enact the roles of all others involved in the game and comprehend the rules that condition the various roles (Mead [1934] 1964). These roles-organized-by-rules coalesce into a symbolic unity, the Generalized Other, mirroring the values and attitudes of a particular society, which becomes internalized into what Mead refers to as the "Me" (as opposed to the "I") part of the Self. Thus, the Generalized Other embeds society within the individual Self, acting as a normative template, guide, and constraint on the Self.

Unlike the singular Unconscious Other, an individual may have multiple Generalized Others because the individual can hold membership in multiple "societies," such as an organization, a status group, family, tribe or nation, each having its own attitudes, values and expected behaviors. These Generalized Others may conflict with one another, and the Self must negotiate among them.

The Significant Other.

This is perhaps the simplest and most straightforward Other of those proffered here, and it is most frequently addressed in the literature on "relational Selves" or "dialogic Selves." There can be as many Significant Others as, but not more than, there are embodied individuals. The Significant Other

is, for lack of a better term, a "real" person, possibly a family member, partner, friend, therapist, or any number of people with whom a Self comes into contact. Various terminologies have been employed in the literature to distinguish the degrees of significance Significant Others carry in relationship to a Self. Perinbanayagam (2000) designates "Interactional" and "Significant" Others in any particular instance of social interaction. The former is the person with whom one happens to be interacting, so essentially this person may be an insignificant other. Perinbanayagam reserves the term Significant Other for those who may or may not be physically present in the interaction, but who nevertheless play a significant role in a Self's life and can influence the Self from afar. In an analysis of autobiographies, literary scholar Paul Eakin's (1990:86) equivalent of Perinbanayagam's Significant Other is called the "proximate other." Eakin says the "most common form of the relational life [is] the self's story viewed through the lens of its relation with some key other person, sometimes a sibling, friend, or lover, but most often a parent—we might call such an individual the *proximate other* to signify the intimate tie to the relational autobiographer."

It follows then that the Significant Other is often approached as one Self in a dyadic relationship with another Self, where one Self is the focus and the other is, at least temporarily, playing a supportive role. Philosopher Martin Buber's ([1923] 1958) formulation of I and Thou, a largely egalitarian and mutual relationship that he placed in opposition to the I-It relationship, which was one of subject-object, is illustrative of this. Buber thought the individual, as a fundamentally relational being, has an innate yearning for connection with others. Buber's presumption that social interaction constitutes a necessary condition for the development of a whole person is, as you may recall, not unlike Lacan and Mead above. In all three, it is the developing child's dyadic interplay with familial Significant Others that precipitates the emergence of a soul (Buber), an Unconscious (Lacan), and a Meiotic Self (Mead). However, it is the symbolic interaction with multiple Significant Others, a community of Others, sometimes referred to as a "primary group" (Cooley 1962), that gives rise to Mead's Generalized Other.

The Meiotic Self.

In Mead's formulation of a very socially-founded Self, the Self is composed of an "I," the active, creative aspect of the Self that responds to the "Me," the part of the Self that eventually internalizes the Generalized Other(s) and represents the self-image people form as they see themselves reflected in the actions and reactions of others toward them. The Self cannot come into being without this division, that is, without the objectification of the Self, the attempt to view oneself from the standpoint of others. The Me and the I then carry on a spiraling dialogue—the Me reflecting the Generalized Other and the I creatively responding—through which the individual's choices and behaviors are conditioned but not determined.

This concept of the splitting of the Self is an essential element of most psychoanalytical thought as well (Socor 1997). Lacan, for instance, proposed a "mirror stage" of development, a pre-linguistic phase in which the infant becomes capable of a self-reflective stance; it is the transition from experiencing one's "self" as fragmented, partial, and segmented, to being able to view one's self as an integral object (Weiner & Rosenwald 1993). According to such thought, the meiotic process occurs, in a psychologically healthy individual, during early childhood without much effort on the part of the individual. I refer to this initial, mostly involuntary, division of the self into two essential parts as the basal Meiotic Self. However, a number of scholars acknowledge the Self's ability to divide into *multiple* selves. One could legitimately argue that the voices of these Selves are merely the voices of the Generalized Others and the Significant Others pertinent to a particular Self, but in the literature they are treated as their own entities. I divide these potential divisions into three types: reflexivity, mind-body split, and a self-protective split.

Many scholars of the self refer to the first type of split-self as a "condition of reflexivity," or as Mead (1964) would say, the ability to take oneself as an object. Roger Bromley (2000) defines reflexivity as the ability to relate to oneself externally and to recover that continuously "othered" self. Linde (1993) argues that without the property of reflexivity a self is not a fully functioning social self.

The Self should be able to, in a sense, stand aside and ask itself "How am I doing?" as an observer of its own life. Assuming that people desire a good self, or one that is perceived as good by others, Linde (1993:121) suggests that "reflexivity requires the narrator to separate him- or herself from the protagonist of his or her narrative in order to observe, reflect upon, and correct the self that is being created." This is not unlike the self-therapy that most people do when they assume a self-observatory role to discuss (within themselves or aloud while driving in the car) the costs and benefits of a potential decision or to rehash an experience to achieve a sensible account.

Whereas a reflexive Self is a daily occurrence among healthy Selves, some splits feel more imposed upon the Self by life's traumas or employed reluctantly by the Self as a mechanism to cope with trauma. Various life disruptions can lead to the experience of oneself as "the Other." This can be a mind-body or spirit-flesh division or one in which the Self essentially amputates a part of itself for protective purposes. For instance, upon the occurrence of a physical disruption, such as disability or ill health, people often experience the body as an "Other," a stranger to one's Self. As if in dissent, the body refuses to move in synchronization with one's mental commands or with effortless ease. With such incongruity, the unity of body and Self can no longer be taken for granted. Or, occasionally the company of certain individuals or situations compels us to divide the Self as a protective strategy. Sennett & Cobb (1972), for instance, discuss how an alienated worker might "divide" him- or herself so that only part of his/her Self is subjected to humiliation; only one part is "othered." "Dividing the self defends against the pain a person would otherwise feel, if he had to submit the whole of himself to a society which makes his position a vulnerable and anxiety-laden one" (1972:208). Similarly, in the film *A Thousand Acres*, based on Jane Smiley's 1991 book of the same name, a story about incest, the eldest daughter recounts that each time her father came to her in the night, she separated her Self from her body so that he was only raping a soulless shell. As medical anthropologist Gay Becker (1997) has noted, deep discomfort, even agony, can accompany such compulsory partition of the Self.

The Marginalized Other

The Marginalized Other (my terminology) is the Other whose identification and utilization is of most recent currency. Whereas the Generalized Other and Significant Other were generally conceived as having similar structures and qualities as the Self (indeed because they bestow some of their own content to the Self), the Marginalized Other is mostly about difference or ambiguity of one degree or another. Usually the difference has a negative connotation, but sometimes a romanticized one, such as in Elliot Gaines' (2005) exploration of the notion of India as an "exotic other," one that seems to exhibit exciting and fascinating, but still unusual, qualities.

At one end of this difference continuum is the person or group that represents a standard deviation from the mean or that lacks sufficient clout or legitimacy to warrant being named specifically, as in "Christians, Jews and others," or "apples, bananas, and other fruit." The named groups represent the center (or the Self), while the unnamed reside at the cultural, sometimes also the societal, periphery. Sometimes the Marginalized Other reflects an ambiguous status, when it is not clear what its status is or in which extant category it should reside. For instance, Maria Root (1999) speaks of bi- or multiracial persons as Others because they don't fit into presumably discrete racial categories.

At the other end, the Marginalized Other is frequently constructed as the binary opposite of the Center. As the Self constructs itself, it seeks to distinguish itself from others; in so doing, it essentially constructs the Other with the remnants or undesirable elements of cultural material. In Berglund's (1994) words, Marginalized Others are "those persons negatively constructed in the dominant symbolic order." Hence, essentially the Other embodies the slough of the dominant center's character. They become dummy variables, so to speak; that is, women are the "not-males," people of color the "non-Whites," and immigrants the "not-Americans." Literary theorist Terry Eagleton (1983: 132) thus writes:

> Woman is the opposite, the "other" of man; she is non-man, defective man, assigned a chiefly negative value in relation to the male first principle. But equally

> man is what he is only by virtue of ceaselessly shutting out his other or opposite, defining himself in antithesis to it, and his whole identity is therefore caught up and put at risk in the very gesture by which he seeks to assert his unique, autonomous existence.

Ghassan Hage (2005) similarly discusses the Lebanese Maronites' othering of the Druze religious minority. Hage describes the process of othering the Druze in such a way that it conjures the psychoanalytic image of the creation of the repressed Unconscious (the not-Conscious).

> [The Maronites] start thinking of wretched people, hewers of wood, etc. That is, they invoke and collapse the other into the very class images that they have banished from their definition of themselves and their white people. Likewise with skin colour: one systematically represses the whiteness of the other and the non-whiteness within the self to end up with a white self and a non-white other….This also shows how, through this selective aestheticiszation, racialized thought manages to create a sense of absolute difference between self and other (p. 202).

In this sense, individuals and groups are "othered," (a verb connoting objectification and powerlessness of Others). They are defined in such a way that they are pushed to, or just beyond, the perimeters of cultural spaces, where they reside on the subordinate side of power dyads. If they are particularly unlucky, they may be doubly or trebly othered (Zaborowska, 1995); that is, if they are, perhaps, women of color, or Muslim and disabled, or—heaven forbid--an aged, lesbian cult member. The subordinate and unclear status of these Others buttresses the dominant place of the Self and Center in a culture's common sense (Nelson 2001).

The Nonhuman Other

Nonhuman Others is a very recent idea, at least to the extent that it is garnering any utility, and it remains a largely undeveloped concept relative to the other Others. Generally, what is meant by this term "nonhuman others" are nonhuman animals. The (non-natural science) literature on the social

aspect of animals is growing rapidly, but it is also quickly shifting to a literature of the Self. While some scholars are attempting to define animals as "subjective Others" (Irvine 2004) or "nonverbal Others" (Sanders & Arluke 1993), other scholars (Alger & Alger 1997) are more interested in establishing a Self for animals.

However, the possibility of nonhuman others has been attended to in the past as well. In Buber's (1957) I-Thou relationship, two of the possible Thous are abstract symbolic systems, such as books and art, and nature. One could argue that the former is the product of humans and, therefore, does not count as a Nonhuman Other, but nature would embody animals, plants, and perhaps inanimate (though often formerly animate) objects, such as soil, rock, or water. According to Buber, nature and symbolic systems are Thous in the sense that Selves are capable of receiving confirmation through them. This gives rise to the possibility that inanimate nonnatural objects, such as toys, might be Others as well. As will be discussed below, the Wilson ball in the film "The Castaway" (or the inflatable Bianca in the film "Lars and the Real Girl") would fall into this category.

Issues of Power: Territorial Boundaries and Agency & Resistance

The necessity of the Others' existence for the development of a healthy Self bestows on Others an inherent, though frequently unrecognized and unrealized, power. Although virtually any reference to Self and Other privileges the Self over the Other, early conceptions of the Other found in G.H. Mead, Alfred Schutz, and Charles Cooley, for instance, painted Others that were largely benevolently agentic[2]; after all, these Others were often familial or friendly Significant Others (primary groups) and distillations of group attitudes (Generalized Others) that reflected a neat Durkheimian consensus that acted as guides to emerging Selves. While such conceptions were not ignorant of conflicts between and within Selves and Others, many of these conceptions seemed to gloss over the internecine struggles that can occur in the formulation of Self and Other. Today those struggles have risen to the forefront with the focus on Marginalized Others.

Positioning theory (Harre & Moghaddam 2003) in psychology recognizes that the status of any particular Other may be situationally relative and is conferred by the Self through numerous strategies, such as address and naming (Perinbanayagam 2000), distribution of resources, and the creation of standards and rules. But, ultimately, the ongoing creation of Selves and Others, and their continuous interplay, is inevitably about power and influence. It is a tussle over the content and quality of Selves and Others and over position—not only in regard to who's on top of a hierarchy or who gets to be the protagonist, but also over cultural territory, where lines are drawn in cultural sands, fences make good neighbors, and borders serve as both battlegrounds and locations for liaisons.

Borders & Boundaries

To preface the discussion about agency and power, one must discuss boundaries and borders, as they are inherent to one degree or another in the relationship of Self and Other. To do so, we must return to psychoanalytic literature, in which the subject separates physically, psychologically, and eternally from the mother. In doing so, ego-boundaries are formed. While most psychoanalytic literature recognizes the necessary relational role of Others in the development of the Self, psychic health is assumed to be accompanied by some degree of separateness from others; in a healthy individual the boundaries between "Self" and "Other" should be carefully circumscribed.

Boundaries are most often discussed in the context of Significant Others and Marginalized Others. Women, for instance, are frequently said to exhibit ill-defined, porous ego boundaries. Psychoanalyst Nancy Chodorow (1978) explains that the female's separation from the mother is characterized by greater ambivalence and confusion over ego boundaries than is the parallel process for males. From this, it is then often concluded that women tend to have more trouble maintaining healthy ego boundaries; they become too easily embedded in others' lives and identities. Their own needs get lost in the needs of others. Although speaking without reference to gender, sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1983) describes the "other-directed" *false* self, the altruist, as the person who is overly concerned with the needs of others. When overdeveloped, this false, altruistic self oversteps its

boundaries, bonding its *true* self to the group's welfare [italics mine].[3] Occasionally, this ability to penetrate boundaries is comprehended as a positive quality, even in women, as it is argued, for instance, that because of their porous boundaries women can incorporate Otherness more easily than can men.

Despite the supposition that boundaries between Self and Others are essential to healthy personality development and perhaps to social relationships, some scholars recognize that the Desire of the Other simultaneously wars with these erected boundaries. Buber ([1923] 1958), Joas (1998), and others assert that the Self seeks fusion--sexually, spiritually—with Others and can only experience that fusion by transgressing the boundaries of the Self. According to Italian sociologist Alberto Melucci (1996), the apparent differences between Self and Other, which are constructed and delineated by discrete borders, entice and seduce us to cross over. Yet the Self fears the loss of identity that might accompany the penetration of borders.

> [E]ncountering another always entails putting into question something of ourselves and of our uniqueness and venturing into an unknown land only to discover what we lack: exposing oneself to otherness implies a challenge to one's self-sufficiency and the recognition that the other is different precisely because s/he possesses what we do not have… (pp. 101-2)

The lingo of boundaries often converts to "margins" and "peripheries" when discussing subordinate Marginalized Others or to "borders" when Marginalized Others are afforded (or assume) increased power and agency. Most of the time, residing on or beyond the border of mainstream society is a precarious, peripheral position. For instance, Lisa Park (2005) describes the border location of Asian Americans, who as a "model minority" ride the border between the White Americans at the Center and "bad minorities" in the outlying cultural territory. Park says,

> Asian Americans find themselves standing on a "fault line," vulnerable to the slightest quake or change in social boundaries between 'us' and 'them.' Their social role as a

> mythical model minority requires that they continuously exhibit their patriotism or their deservingness of social citizenship through consumptive displays. Otherwise, they may fall into the "bad" immigrant category and experience even greater limitations on their social citizenship claims (p. 12).

However, it has also been argued that such a border position provides, perhaps as a consolation prize (as with the meek who eventually inherit the earth), some double-edged characteristics that can be construed as forms of power for Marginalized Others. In this case, being "othered" supposedly supplies Marginalized Others with keen insight and cultural knowledge unavailable to the Center. Surviving in and successfully negotiating the Self's or Center's world requires Marginalized Others to make intelligence-gathering forays across the border, thus rendering them more familiar with and skilled in negotiating both domains. The Center, on the other hand, can maintain its dominance even while lacking such knowledge, that is, while lacking understanding of the Other, the capability of seeing oneself as the Other, and the illumination that that capability would afford (Becker 1997).

Because of their contrast (difference) and their sashaying back and forth across cultural borders, Marginalized Others create "boundary moments," which are, as defined by Stephen Knadler (2002: xvii), "moments of disruption when people become conscious of their membership in a…group because of their experience of rejection or counteridentification by a member of another group." Michael Holquist (1999: 101) argues that "the mind is structured so that the world is always perceived according to contrast." Nothing can be perceived except against the perspective of something else; there is no figure without a background. It is only in those moments of contrasting disruption that we see who we "really" are, that we see the nuances of our identity, as when one holds a "white" paint chip against a piece of white paper, only to discover the "white" paint chip is actually a pale shade of blue.

On the other hand, because racial ethnic minority groups and women must be experienced in both worlds, it is occasionally argued that they themselves are divided, possessing a double

consciousness, which can have negative or positive consequences for themselves or others. W.E.B. Du Bois ([1903] 1979), in *The Souls of Black Folk*, argued that the African American had no true self-consciousness.

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,--an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (p. 3).

Brownley & Kimmich (1999) argue that women autobiographers are likewise double voiced, because they view themselves in two dramatically different ways—first through the eyes of society as the stereotypical feminine object but then also in ways that conflict with the constraining stereotype. Being doubly conscious or doubly voiced (read also: forked tongue) can lead to a double life, which may include an element of duplicity manifested in various forms. Prime examples would be Black people passing for whites, literally, or as "oreos" and women deceiving men, particularly in the arena of orgasms (Forrester 1997).

Agentic Others

The most agentic Other is the Significant Other, which plays a strong and creative role in a Self's initial and continuous identity formation. At minimum, the Self's identity is a collaborative, relational effort with Significant Others. Paul Eakin (1990:63) suggests that we learn how to be a certain kind of person in conversation with others; that is, identity formation is socially and discursively transacted. Likewise, sociologist Erving Goffman ([1956] 1967:84-85) argued that a person's constituent personal and social identities cannot be realized in isolation:

> Rather the individual must rely on others to complete the picture of him of which he himself is allowed to paint only certain parts….While it may be true that the

individual has a unique self all his own, evidence of that possession is thoroughly a product of joint ceremonial labor.

In a person's earliest developmental stage, the Significant Other plays a pivotal role, both in the formation of the Self and in the formation of that Self's Others. Without the verbal and nonverbal interaction between Significant Others, particularly parents, and a child, the Generalized Other and the basal Meiotic Self would not form. As the circle of Significant Others expands in the life of a Self, the Generalized Other is formed and wends its way into the Me. Finally, the number and content of our multiple Selves are constrained and shaped by what "closely enmeshed others accord" (Goffman 1971:367).

While the Significant Other is usually viewed as using its agency benevolently, it clearly has the potential to exercise varying levels of control over the Self's creation. As Jenkins (2000) points out, we know who we are because Others *tell* us. Narrative scholar Randall (1995) says Others story us. The stories Others tell about us, which Randall calls "outside-in stories," help to create the social climate in which our lives are lived and to determine the range of options and opportunities by which our lives are bound. In fact, a Significant Other can speak on behalf of the Self. This is most obvious in the case of children, who are still developing their own selves, their own voices, and have little control over their environment. As Steedman (quoted in Eakin 1990) asserts, "children are always episodes in someone else's narrative." Glowinski et al. (2001) suggests that even the infant's cry is interpreted by Significant Others as speech, as when the parent responds to the infant's cry with the explanation "Oh, he wants his diaper changed." Cahill (1998) takes the parents' identity-conferring role one step back, acknowledging that even prior to birth, parents, abetted by ultrasound technology and genetic tests, labor in the production of their offsprings' identities. For instance, parents of an active fetus might jumpstart their child's identity with statements such as "He's already a strong kicker." In return, family and friends may find evidence of the parents' announced identity in the infant's later conduct and treat him or her accordingly.

In some cases, Significant Others may seize the opportunity to control an adult's identity when s/he lacks the means to control his/her own identity. Cahill (1998) and Holstein & Gubrium (2000) proffer examples of the strong role Significant Others play in the production of Selves for disabled people or persons with Alzheimer's Disease. One might refer to the recent case of Terry Schiavo, a wife comatose for 13 years. Although her autopsy revealed her to be brain dead, Schiavo's parents and brother had successfully created a vital public persona on her behalf. One might consider who Terry Schiavo would have been if a less interested party had been responsible for her care. In these latter cases, the person contributes little of his/her own labor to the creation of its Self. It is this ability of some Others that begs the question "Who is the Other here?" Is the Self just a vessel for the Other in these cases?

In essence then, the relationship between the Self and Significant Other can become a battlefield over who gets to be Self and Other in each dyadic relational instance and over the content of the identity each Self will be allowed to have. It is this element of interpersonal struggle, which can be subtle or overt, that is often missing when scholars describe the process of narrating or making a Self. For instance, "Self A" may have a particular image of his or her Self, while Significant Others B through E have different images of that person or at least Self A suspects that they do. Self A needs their feedback to try to assess which, if any, of those Selves are "really" hers, but directly asking for the feedback is risky and appears self-absorbed. Frequently, even if asked, Others withhold their feedback from Self A, though they may freely tell other bystanders what they think of Self A. Perhaps it is not their intent to keep Self A incomplete; maybe they intend only to protect themselves in some way, but the outcome is that their withholding makes Self A's self-creation more uncertain. Illustrative of this function is Crooks, the black farmhand in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men ([1937] 1979).* As the only Black farmhand, Crooks [who is described (p.299) as a man who "had reduced himself to nothing. There was no personality, no ego….,"] resides in a separate shack, isolated from the white farmhands. Lennie, the mentally retarded protagonist who has accidentally killed two

people, suggests to Crooks that he come live with Lennie and his brother George when they finally buy the farm they've been saving for. Crooks thinks such a living arrangement might resolve the lack of certainty about his self-perceptions that accompanies his isolation. He states this in considerably less postmodern jargon:

> A guy sets alone out here at night, maybe readin' books or thinkin', an' he got nothing to tell him what's so an' what ain't so. Maybe if he sees somethin', he don't know whether it's right or not. He can't turn to some other guy and ast him if he sees it too. He can't tell. He got nothing to measure by. I seen things out here. I wasn't drunk. I don't know if I was asleep. If some guy was with me, he could tell me I was asleep, an' then it would be all right (p. 292).

Occasionally, Others tell Self A what they think of him/her, and Self A may find the revelation shocking, and then a battle ensues. Person A must convince them that they are wrong, must persuade them to let her out of that particular identity box. A similar power struggle can occur among the Meiotic Selves, particularly when the division of the basal Self into multiple Selves is imposed by external exigencies. As McAdams (1993:115) asserts, the splitting of the self is occasionally a discordant one, as when one is afraid to let one set of his acquaintances know him as he is elsewhere. When there are multiple, particularly contradictory images, of a Self, one is left wondering which are the "real" or "faux" selves, much the way women feel in a clothing store's dressing room, where multiple mirrors and unnatural lighting show the uneven terrain of one's aging body from every angle. Like circus mirrors, some of the reflections reflect a taller self, a stockier self, or so on. One leaves the mirrored room wondering which image is the one closest to "reality." Then the struggle is to suppress the undesirable Other(s) within the Self. Or as discussed earlier, when the body becomes the Self's Other, the flesh and spirit resort to fisticuffs to determine which will have more agency.

Convolutions of Victimhood and Agency

Power is conventionally conceived as control that derives from physical or mental strength, aggressiveness, or a disproportionate share of resources. However, weakness and passivity can occasionally achieve the same ends. For instance, in the earlier discussion of mind-body splits where a weakened body is viewed as an Other by its Self, the body, in its weakened condition, ends up by default exercising quite a bit of control and constraint over the frustrated Self. And many a spouse will attest to the fact that a passive or lethargic Significant Other can, with no use of force, redistribute the bulk of unwanted household labor to the Self. So an Other does not need to be in an authoritative position to achieve control of a Self; even victims can control through sympathy or guilt.

In fact, Others are sometimes othered in partial or contradictory ways. While I am mostly discussing Othering as a cultural process, Others can be marginalized structurally as well. That is, often cultural othering frequently results in structural othering, by which I mean they have less access to society's resources, as evidenced in lower rates of education, lower incomes, less control over most institutions. When individuals or groups are only (by only I don't mean to imply that it is less damaging) culturally othered, they may be able to muster those structural resources and use them to resist their othering or use them to create a situation in which they become the Self/Center in relation to an Other. For instance, Jews have historically been a group that has been victim to cultural othering, through negative stereotyping and genocide. However, compared to many other racial-ethnic groups, they have to a lesser degree exhibited structural othering. As an ethnic group, they have one of the highest median incomes and highest rates of education. These resources have better enabled them to survive their Othered status and utilize that status to create a relatively powerful political State.

The agency attributed to various Others frequently exhibits such contrary qualities and ranges on a continuum from subtle and subversive to overt and imposing. The Unconscious Other is frequently portrayed as inaccessible and repressed. According to Lacan, the Unconscious is successfully "fenced off" by language, the Self's defense against the Unconscious (Benstock 1999 or

1988). Buttressing this image, Gerald Peters (1998) portrays the Unconscious Other as a helpless pathetic character, likening it to "a silent and suspended self trapped behind all language, one that sheds tears never seen, one that cries to be let out but is never heard." However, other portrayals depict the Unconscious as imparting discord and agitation as it reminds the Self of its lack of unity (Hunsaker 1999). This Unconscious exercises its power in a frightening, surreptitious manner, by locating holes in the Self's fortress-like symbolic structure and ferreting its way through. Clement (1983:232) describes the Unconscious as a trickster who makes us say what we don't mean, manifested as [Freudian] slips of the tongue. "When you use the wrong word, when you say a word other than the one you meant to say, it's not really you who is speaking. You are spoken….You are just a conduit for that which has decided to escape from within at all costs."

Similarly, the Marginalized Other's agency fluctuates from a powerless victim to aggressive and furtive. As its name implies, the Marginalized Other is commonly portrayed as peripheral, subordinate, inferior, oppressed and powerless. This victim-object is created by Centers who "othered" it. While many scholars clearly distinguish between the Center and Marginalized Other, the oppressor and the oppressed, many poststructuralists argue that the Other has agency only insofar as it participates in its own denigration (Punday 2003). For instance, according to de Beauvoir (1971): "When man makes of woman the O*ther*, he may then expect her to manifest deep-seated tendencies toward complicity. Thus woman may fail to lay claim to the status of subject because she lacks definite resources, because she feels the necessary bond that ties her to man regardless of reciprocity, and because she is often very well pleased with her role as the *Other* (xxxiii)." Although de Beauvoir thought women were different from other oppressed groups because of their widespread internalization of negative myths about women, the same internalization of self-hatred has been attributed to racial and religious minority groups as well.

However, in a number of aspects, Marginalized Others supposedly wield powers similar to the Unconscious. For instance, psychologist Wendy Hollway (1993) argues that men's desire for the

Other/Mother, which they fear because it induces vulnerability, gives women unrecognized power. Hollway argues that men hold ambiguous feelings toward vaginal sex. In the vagina men feel engulfed in the love of the Other/Mother, but such inundation simultaneously reminds them of the power women exert over them. Benstock (1999) argues that Marginalized Others who occupy positions of internal exclusion within society—women, blacks, Jews, homosexuals, and others who exist at the margins of society—puncture the Self's defense (as does the Unconcious), attempting to defeat its fencing off network. The penetrating gaze of these Others threatens the Self, reminding the Self of its own internal split, which in turn explains the Self's need to dismiss or repress the Others. Similarly, Anoop Nayak (2005) defines racialization as the application of imagined racial "essences" to others. The process of racialization, however, affects the identity not only of those who are subjected to its power but also those who racialize Others. According to Nayak, these Others return to trouble the Self in unconscious fantasies and unspoken desires. As an act of projection, racialization involves spinning a psychic web of fear, envy, and desire, which binds the bodies of racialized others in a silver threat of white anxiety. At the very least, because Marginalized Others rarely forget their position as an Other, to the extent that they continue to remind the Self/Center of that fact, they become a thorn in the flesh of the Self/Center.

Resistance

The Unconscious Other's propensity to dig its way through the defensive language network, the Significant Other's ability to create identity material for or withhold it from the Self, or the body's occasional revolt against the Self's control could be interpreted as forms of resistance to subordination, to a lifeless role. However, more salient of late has been the resistance of Marginalized Others, who traditionally have held a clearly more peripheral role.

As mentioned earlier, by definition, Marginalized Others are subordinate others. However, in recent years they have been accorded the possibility of agency sufficient to resist their marginalization and/or to counter the dominant Center. Throughout history, Marginalized Others have resisted their

subordination by telling jokes about or mimicking the dominant group (Wasson 1994), grumbling to one another, or composing and singing satirical or political songs about their oppressors (Linde 1993). But aside from momentarily lightening the burden of powerlessness, these tactics rarely transform the position of the Marginalized Other.

More decisively, Marginalized Others resist and confront othering by developing a tolerance for contradictions (Bromley 2000, Rosaldo 1989) or by using the material from which they were constructed to mount a campaign to privilege the characteristics of the Others. For instance, Stone (2002) argues that the marginalized position is not simply one of deprivation, but additionally is an entryway to realms of knowledge and feeling that the dominant culture hides or denies. Stone quotes author Toni Morrison who wrote that her marginalized position as a black person and as a woman gave her "access to a range of emotions and perceptions that were unavailable to people who were neither" (p. 71).

According to narrative scholar Zaborowska (1995), this bicultural, in-between identity "may be the only kind capable of engaging in intercultural dialogue and of remaking the host culture." Although Lentin (2004) writes that Irish migrant women remain as "barbarian[s] beyond the pale of civilization, forever consigned to play the role of the ontological, political, economic and cultural other," she also argues that their stories are not only the product of negation and damage but also of resistance and survival.

Such a vantage point is increasingly being shared in written narratives and memoirs, such as through the Personal Narratives Group (1989) headquartered in Minnesota. PNG supports this strategy based on the belief that "nondominant social groups (women in general, racially or ethnically oppressed people, lower-class people, lesbians) are often particularly effective sources of counterhegemonic insight because they expose the dominant ideology as particularist rather than universal, and because they reveal the reality of a life that defies or contradicts the rules." Fand (1999) claims that Others have the power to change the very language and social structures that constituted

them in the first place, so that, for instance, women formed from patriarchal influences may nevertheless expose the contradictions embedded in patriarchal discourse and institutions and create a new dynamic between power "centers" and their "margins."

To illustrate, Marginalized Others are often created as opposites of Selves, for instance, men as rational, women as emotional. Literary scholar Helen Buss (2002) argues that in choosing to write an autobiography, women must enter the discourse of man. In seeking cultural authority, they must portray an individualist selfhood attuned to personal achievement, when they really wish to tell a story characterized by absence, silence, vulnerability, immanence, interpenetration, one that is nonlogocentric, unpredictable, and childish. By Lacanian definition, many of these attributes are the very ones suppressed by the male child to enter the world of the adult, to leave the imaginary realm for the symbolic. Similarly, literary scholar Paul Eakin (1990) mentions that in the study of autobiographical writing, women's and men's autobiographical styles are distinguished by binary characteristics: women's as collective, relational, and nonlinear and discontinuous, while men's style is individualistic, autonomous, and linear. Ironically, these same dichotomies frequently are used to distinguish racial minority values and orientations from those of White Europeans. That is, racial-ethnic minorities are often said to be oriented to the collective over the individual, to nonlinear over linear thinking, to interdependence over independence (Stone 1988, for instance).

However, in the past decade or so, Russian philosopher Mikhail Bahktin's work on cultural and literary theory has risen to the forefront in literary analysis. His concepts of "dialogism" and "heteroglossia" are particularly utilized in discussions of Others, as Bahktin argues that the representation of multiple voices is essential to authenticity. Fand (1999) describes Bahktin's concept of dialogism as privileging female characteristics over male. That is, Bahktin's dialogism emphasizes relating and negotiating (rather than isolating and polarizing positions), responding to concrete particulars (rather than to abstract principles), and intuitive thinking (rather than linear thinking). Although such strategies continue to propagate problematic dualisms, by turning these dualisms on

their head, Marginalized Others, in a backhanded way, argue that women and people of color are deeper and more layered than men and Whites, whose characteristics are by implication unilayered and egocentric.

One final way of resisting Otherhood is to transform an Other into a Self. This is currently happening in the literature on animal-human relationships. Generally, animals, if addressed at all, have been treated as groups, or perhaps as individual pets, subordinate and marginal to humans. At best they have been viewed, as mentioned above, as Nonhuman Others. Work by Alger & Alger (1997), Irvine (2004), and Sanders & Arluke (1993) has argued that animals are at least "subjective Others" and perhaps have Selves. To achieve this end, these scholars do away with the linguistic foundation of the Self that is found in Lacan and Mead and instead use a more emotive, senses-based Self,[4] arguing that what is minimally needed for a Self are four facets (which they derive from psychologist William James' [1890] work): a sense of agency (self-willed or self-controlled action), a sense of coherence (that is, a sense of being a physical whole), a sense of affectivity (feelings), and a sense of self-history (memory).[5]

Current and Future Research

Little empirical research incorporates the concepts of the Other. Partial explanation for this absence lies in the fact that the conceptions are often difficult, if not impossible, to measure. For instance, being that the Unconscious Other is, as its name implies, unconscious, it is an Other that is merely speculative. The Self has no ability to access the Unconscious, let alone measure it. Like a god, its existence can't be proven. Nevertheless, the *belief* that it might exist may exert measurable influence on social behavior. That is, an individual may avoid inebriation or a drug-induced high for fear that such a state may weaken the Self's defenses and his or her repressed thoughts and emotions may embarrassingly leak out, bequeathing to other people more information about him/her than s/he has about her/himself. To what extent does belief in the Unconscious Other succeed in controlling or

motivating behavior and what types of behaviors are more susceptible to this belief? These may be more fruitful questions for future research.

One example of research that puts a twist on Lacan's Unconscious Other is social psychologist Phillip Shon's (2002) discussion of mass murder by young white youth, as in the 1999 Columbine murders. Shon adopts Bracher's (1995) terminology, which defines Lacan's Other as the Self's "internalized ultimate authority." Shon then suggests that these youth desire the Desire of the Other. However, in this case the Other has been externalized; the U.S. government & country become the Other, the ultimate authority, whom the youth hope desires them. In today's multicultural society, these white youth think this authority now desires minorities, as evidenced in enforcement of preference laws, such as affirmative action, hate crimes statues, gender equity, etc. It is the classic Cain and Abel story; the jealous youth kill the Other's object of desire.

Some sociological research has included the Generalized Other. Himsel & Goldberg (2003), for instance, studied marital satisfaction in regard to household division of labor. They found that satisfaction with the distribution of household labor varied according to which reference wives and husbands chose for comparison. Wives tended to compare their situation to their peers', while husbands frequently compared chore distribution to their mothers' situations. When husbands compared themselves to their wives, they often acknowledged that their wives assumed a greater share of family work. However, Himsel & Goldberg also found that a number of men, particularly those in dual-earner marriages, invoked for comparison not a real person but rather a Generalized Other, a putative typical dad, who performed less family work than they did. These husbands described an image of a Generalized Other whose meager contributions to family work enhanced their own relative involvement. Similarly, Gager's (1998) study on father involvement—although it did not apply the term "Generalized Other"--found that dads often generated an image of a "do-nothing dad" to whom they would favorably compare.

Scott's (2004) study on shyness uses both the Generalized Other and what I have called the Meiotic Self. Scott understands shyness as a dialogue between the I and the Me of Mead's social self (what I have termed the basal Meiotic Self). She distinguishes between embarrassment, which is a reaction of acute self-consciousness about a faux pas that has already occurred, and shyness, which is anticipatory anxiety about imagined or expected blunders. According to Scott, shyness is caused by monitoring one's own action compared to a generalized image of what she calls the "competent other," an estimation of how socially skilled others are in a particular social situation.

The Generalized Other was conceived by Mead as an organized community or social group that gives rise to a communal attitude about aspects of common social activity. This communal attitude must be taken up by the Self in order to fully develop. In doing so, the community exercises social control over the conduct of its individuals. Mead's concept seems to assume that the Self takes up these social attitudes "correctly;" that is, there is little room for Mead's Self to create a Generalized Other that is conducive to the Self's desires. Yet the above described research suggests that individuals may tweak the Generalized Other to fit their needs and that the individual may rely on faulty information to concoct a Generalized Other. In both cases, the Generalized Other is a dynamic Other that may change over the course of one's lifetime, reflecting shifting social structures and cultural mores.

This leads to potential research questions: Where did the fathers obtain the information that comprised their Generalized Other? From friends/peers who *say* they do less (but perhaps do more and don't want to admit it)? Do these fathers seek out other husbands who do less in order to make themselves look better? Hypothetically, if a Self perceives that the general attitude about extramarital affairs, let's say, is conservative but then hears a news report that extramarital affairs are increasing or finds that several friends are partaking in such affairs, does such information about what the Generalized Other is doing or thinking allow the Self to now consider what he/she might not have

considered and how long would that time-lag be? How do persons choose among competing Generalized Others?

Wiener & Rosenwald's (1993) work on diaries incorporates the concept of multiples selves (which I sorted under Meiotic Self). The authors point out that diarists may keep several diaries reflecting different selves, multiple selves, which can then confront one another. Thus, the diary performs a "mirror" function, making Self into an Other or observing oneself as an object.

> By writing about oneself in the diary one creates a picture of the self as a whole. One may also become aware of the self as divided into subject and object, the experiencer and the observer of experience. Beyond the transitional object function of the diary, which serves to help the self differentiate from others, this mirror function of the diary helps to distinguish not only the 'me' from the 'not-me'; it also embodies the division between 'I, the subject' and 'me, the object' of reflection. (p. 44)

Similarly, Brendan Stone's (2006) analysis of the diaries of two psychotic patients, shows that the diary functioned as the Other that aided the patient in rebuilding its shattered Self, to regain a voice that had been stolen, to reclaim an identity by dialoging with its Other.

Such research could go further in asking what circumstances are more likely to produce, or what types of people are more likely to adopt, a strategy of multiple selves. Sennett & Cobb's writing (mentioned above) suggests that situations of alienation (in their case, workplace situations) may either impose or cause a Self to adopt a strategy of self-othering, but one can easily imagine other alienating experiences (see, for example, Rayson's (1999) work on Japanese-American women's experience in wartime relocation centers, where she says their "split identity" was exacerbated), such as where one is situated in the midst of a new Generalized Other or in cases of rape or domestic abuse, where dividing, or separating from, the Self would be a logical coping mechanism.

In regard to the Self as composed of mind and body, future research opportunities abound. Pregnancy and paralysis have always existed as situations that have the potential to alienate body from

mind, but the aging of the babyboomers, increased organ transplants (most recently the face) and proliferating war injuries all provide a plethora of situations where the Self may feel othered by its body. Cases of amnesia provide instances where bodily dysfunctions or traumas obliterate a Self, require Significant Others to put Humpty-Dumpty's Self back together again, but also paradoxically potentially provide opportunities to construct new Selves.

The Other that has garnered a fair amount of research is the Significant Other. Some of that research has focused on how professionals can play the role of Significant Other for various types of "clients." For instance, Miller (1996) approaches the research interviewer as the Significant Other; in this case, Miller himself was the Interviewer/Other. Miller visualized the interviewer as playing the "Thou" as in Buber's I and Thou. He found that many of the respondents interviewed just wished to be heard out, to be listened to and understood by an attentive other. However, he also concluded that the Self and Other in this relationship are mutually acting as Others for one another. The interviewer or therapist who intends to be the Other, acting as a sounding board for a Self, may find, perhaps unwittingly, that s/he is gradually being changed by the other person. Similarly, Hurvitz's (1979) work on family therapy argued that in order to be effective, therapists needed to become significant others to their clients.

Another set of research on Significant Others focuses on daily dyadic relationships. Ogle & Damhorst (2003), for example, looked at mothers and daughters as dyadic pairs, referring to each other as the "dyadic other." Specifically, the authors studied this relationship in reference to dieting behavior. They found that mothers and daughters described a process in which they used their perceptions about the dyadic other and their relationship with that other to guide their body- and diet-related interactions. Each attempted to exert control over their interactions. However, although both mothers and daughters acted as diet supporters to one another, only mothers served as conscious socializers and safety supervisors.

A growing "UNform" of autobiography combines both the Significant Other and Self as Other (Meiotic Self). Autothanatography is essentially a memoir about dying, in which the Other, frequently familial, provides a map of a Self (Eakin 1990). In this death narrative, the dying person incorporates his/her own perspective on his/her own bodily deterioration along with the narratives of Significant Others about the dying person. According to Susanna Egan (undated), autothanotography reverses the usual

> pattern of autobiography; it covers a brief period of time and a single main experience, and involves other people than the dying self often in a dialogue of shared experience….Second, autothanatography takes on the whole business of the body…. Facing death, the body forces reversal of the normal trajectories of autobiography. Miller [1994], again, has described the forward-looking story about the "becoming" of a life and describes autothanatography as an "UNbecoming."

Recent memoirs that exemplify autothanatography include Eric Michael's (1997) *Unbecoming*, Christina Middlebrook's (1996) *Seeing the Crab: A Memoir of Dying*, and Miller's (1996) *Bequest and Betrayal: Memoirs of a parent's death.* This form of memoir epitomizes the social creation of the Self, and although not research, it raises questions with potential for qualitative research. How much of one's Self is so to speak "vaulted" in Significant Others? And, as Significant Others die, do they forever take with them, and hence render inaccessible, knowledge of another's Self? One then might imagine a young person whose mother dies and is no longer available to answer questions such as "Did I do such and such when I was young?" "Did I display a certain characteristic as a child?" "Tell me the story about…." However, even as one reaches late life, with each passing of family members and friends, how might the remaining elder feel less a Self, less storied? How might that impact his/her own identity and will to live? Even without death, the unity or fullness of the Self may also suffer during geographical transitions, as when one moves to a new job or neighborhood, leaving behind people who *knew* them best and longest and making friends with people who don't know one's

past nor care to ask. To what extent does the death or disappearance of the Significant Others leave the Self incomplete or, on the other hand, offer opportunities to create new Selves?

Finally, I have already discussed that research is being conducted on Nonhuman Others. So far, that research is focused on animals, primarily pets and companion animals such as cats and dogs. It is conceivable that this will eventually expand to other animals, particularly those that have already been studied by biologists and naturalists.

In short, I have tried to articulate and illustrate the roles and agency of the various Others that are usually subsidiary characters in the story of the Self. The literature on Selves easily allows individuals to keep rewriting their Selves with each new experience, each new disruption. But what about the Other? Its assumed subordination to, or at least secondary importance to, the Self produces and perpetuates a concept of Others that is somewhat stagnant. In fact, Others intersect, play multiple roles, and shift amoebically as they exist in a state of dynamic tension with the Self. A new generation of research and narrative focusing on the Other could enlighten and enliven the role of Others and Selves in the creation and maintenance of both social identities and interaction.

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Notes

1. I do not intend to imply here that Others and Selves are separate entities nor that Others have no Selves. Most Others do have Selves, though they often go unrecognized or undervalued.

2. One early noteworthy exception to the benevolent Other was Jose Ortega y Gasset's (1956) notion of a malevolent Other whose goal was to submerge the Self within it. Ortega referred to this as "alteration." He is discussed in Perinbanayagam (1985) as well.

3. One has to wonder whether the concept of discrete ego boundaries and their necessity for psychic health would even arise in societies not based on private property. Holstein & Gubrium (2000:11) relay the story of a Western researcher who lived with the Akaramas, a tribe in Peru. The Akaramas had no concept of the "individual;" group identity was paramount. Even upon death, a person's absence seemed to go unnoticed. Eventually, the researcher left the field because he felt his distinct "me" was being eradicated. However, the psychoanalytic and social theory that focuses on the Other arose in societies highly defined by the concept of property and privileging male ways of relating, so I proceed on that premise.

4. One could still argue that Lacan's creation of the Self could accommodate a less language-based construction of Self, as he argues that the psychological needs of Desire, Lack and Absence underlie human interaction. Language enters later as a human symbolic register that is representative of these needs.

5. While I personally would be easily convinced that animals have a Self, I believe this search for the "minimal Self" poses some problems. The arguments proffered are sometimes more about the humans involved in the human-animal interaction than they are about the animals. For instance, Irvine argues that humans seek relationships with animals and are concerned about animal well-being, that human-animal interaction increases in complexity over time, that animals act as "social facilitators," and that people name animals. Although this is only part of Irvine's evidence, she argues that these behaviors are evidence that animals "give off" (as in Goffman's (1959) "impressions given off") a sense of Self or subjectivity. That may be the case, but it is also possible that those same human behaviors may be projections of human subjectivity onto animals because that's how humans are accustomed to interacting. Humans are known to name and talk to dolls and stuffed animals and plants (Sometimes I even feel I'm talking to a wall!). Sometimes they paint faces on and name inanimate objects. Note the case of "Wilson" in the film *The Castaway*, in which the main character, played by Tom Hanks, stranded for years on a deserted island bestows a Self upon a volleyball, who becomes a needed

companion for Hanks. Wilson's demise probably brought tears to many an eye or a lump to the throat, but I don't think many would argue that Wilson had a Self or sense of subjectivity. In addition, the search for a minimal Self could foreseeably have us spelunking into the womb. At which point does a human (or animal) have the beginnings of a Self? Given that we now know that fetuses hear and feel in the womb and many (anal) parents now talk to, play music for, and practice math skills with their intrauterine baby, we may eventually hear arguments for a Prenatal Self. Is this somewhat akin to or will this intersect with the anti-abortion search for the earliest viable life?

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