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Locating Traitorous Identities: Toward a View of Privilege-Cognizant White Character

ALISON BAILEY

I address the problem of how to locate “traitorous” subjects, or those who belong to dominant groups yet resist the *usual* assumptions and practices of those groups. I argue that Sandra Harding’s description of traitors as insiders, who “become *marginal*” is *misleading*. *Crafting* a distinction between “privilege-cognizant” and “*privilege-evasive*” white scripts, I offer an *alternative* account of race traitors as *privilege-cognizant* whites who refuse to animate expected whitely scripts, and who are *unfaithful* to *worldviews* whites are expected to hold.

I had begun to feel pretty irregularly white. Klan folks had a word for it: *race* traitor. Driving in and out of counties with heavy Klan activity, I kept my eye on the rear-view mirror, and any time a truck with a confederate flag passed me, the hair on the back of my neck would rise. . . . I was in daily, intimate exposure to the cruel, killing effects of racism, which my Black friends spoke of in the same way that they commented on the weather, an equally constant factor in their lives. . . . I began to *feel* more uneasy around other whites and more at ease around people of color. . . . Maybe whiteness was more about consciousness than color? That scared me, too, the possibility of being caught between the worlds of race, white people kicking me out, people of color not letting me in.
(Mab Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, 1994, 80)

Recent scholarship in multicultural, postcolonial, and global feminisms has motivated a reanalysis of both feminist and mainstream philosophical texts,

methodologies, concepts, and frameworks. One project springing from these new approaches is a literature critical of white identities. At present, white identity is constituted by and benefits from injustice. Transformative work demands that whites explore how to rearticulate our identities in ways that do not depend on the subordination of people of color.

This paper addresses a simple but troublesome puzzle: the problem of how to describe and understand the location of those who belong to dominant groups yet resist the usual assumptions and orientations of those groups. The discussion begins against the background of three archetypes of knowers: the disembodied spectator, the outsider within, and the traitor. It sets out Sandra Harding's (1991) account of traitorous identities. Then, it takes issue with her portrayal of traitors as insiders, who as a result of a shift in the way they understand the world, "become marginal." I argue that Harding's description is misleading and that it fails to capture her intended meaning. The paper offers an alternative characterization of traitors that is less prone to misinterpretation. Crafting a distinction between "privilege-cognizant" and "privilege-evasive" white scripts, I characterize race traitors as privilege-cognizant whites who refuse to animate the scripts whites are expected to perform, and who are unfaithful to worldviews whites are expected to hold. Finally, the paper develops the notion of traitorous scripts and explains how animating them helps to cultivate a traitorous character. Using Aristotle's view of character formation (1980) and Maria Lugones's (1987) concept of "world" traveling, I briefly sketch what it might mean to have a traitorous character.

DISEMBODIED SPECTATORS, OUTSIDERS WITHIN, AND TRAITORS

Feminist epistemologists have long been attentive to the relationship between knowing subjects' locations and their understandings of the world. Dissatisfaction with Enlightenment accounts of knowing subjects as faceless, disembodied spectators who hover over the Cartesian landscape has led feminist theorists to consider knowers as embodied subjects situated in politically identifiable social locations or contexts. Attention to knowers as socially situated creates a new angle of vision that allows us to consider the alternative epistemic resources these situated subjects offer, Patricia Hill Collins (1990) and Sandra Harding (1991), whose writings represent the variety of feminist standpoint theory I have in mind here, prefer this approach because it is attentive to the social and political structures, symbolic systems, and discourse that grant privilege to some groups at the expense of others.

If the archetypal knower in Cartesian epistemic dramas is the disembodied spectator, then the starring role in feminist standpoint theory is played by the outsider within. Collins's description of Black female domestics offers a clear illustration of this second archetype (Collins 1986, s14-s15; also 1990, 11-13). As outsiders within, Black women working as domestics have an unclouded

view of the contradictions between the actions and ideologies of white families. This unique angle of vision is rooted in the contradictory location of the domestic, who is at once a worker, "privy to the most intimate secrets of white society," and a Black woman exploited by and excluded from privileges granted by white patriarchal rule. Her "Blackness makes her a perpetual outsider," but her work of caring for white women "allows her an insider's view of some of the contradictions between white women thinking that they are running their lives and the actual source of power in white patriarchal households" (Collins 1990, 11-12).

Outsiders within are thought to have an advantageous epistemic viewpoint that offers a more complete account of the world than insider or outsider perspectives alone. Their contradictory location gives rise to what W. E. B. DuBois refers to as a "double-consciousness," a sense of being able to see themselves through their own eyes and through the eyes of others (DuBois 1994, 2). Extending Collins's analysis, Harding argues that women scientists, African American women sociologists, or lesbian literary critics doing intellectual work in the predominantly white, heterosexual male academy also have "identities [that] appear to defy logic, for 'who we are' is in at least two places at once: outside and within, margin and center" (Harding 1991, 275). As strangers to the social order of the academy, they bring a unique combination of nearness and remoteness to their subject matter that helps to maximize objectivity (Harding 1991, 124).

Because insiders have few incentives or opportunities to cultivate a bifurcated consciousness, their identities are understood as obstacles to producing reliable accounts of the world. For example, class privilege makes it a challenge for those with money to understand why moving out of poverty is so difficult; the privilege afforded to white people by racism makes it hard for whites to grasp its pervasiveness. Similarly, heterosexuals are rarely in a position to analyze either heterosexual privilege or institutional and personal homophobia.'

For all of the social benefits afforded to insiders, some members of these dominant groups resist the assumptions most of their fellow insiders take for granted. Feminist standpoint theory has been less attentive to such subject positions than to disembodied spectators and outsiders within. However, in the final chapters of *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* (1991), Harding makes a compelling case for expanding the insights of standpoint theory to consider how traitorous identities might serve as sites for liberatory knowledge. Reaching deeper into the logic of standpoint theory she explains:

One can begin to detect other identities for knowers . . . standing in the shadows behind the ones [identities] on which feminist and other liberator-y thought has focused, identities that are struggling to emerge as respected and legitimate pro-

ducers of illuminating analyses. From the perspective of the fiercely fought struggles to claim legitimacy for the marginalized identities, these identities appear to be monstrous: male feminists; whites against racism . . . heterosexuals against heterosexism; economically overadvantaged people against class exploitation. (Harding 1991, 274)

Harding's discovery suggests that insiders are not, by virtue of their social location, immune to understanding the viewpoints and experiences of marginalized groups. Anti-racist whites do criticize white privilege, and feminist men do resist gender roles that reinforce women's oppression. So, "People who do not have marginalized identities can nevertheless learn from and learn to use the knowledge generated from the perspective of outsiders within" (Harding 1991, 277). Those who do are said to have "traitorous identities" and to occupy "traitorous social locations" (Harding 1991, 288-96).

Harding observes a significant epistemic difference between how insiders who are "critically reflective" of their privilege, and insiders who are oblivious to privilege, understand the world. Traitors do not experience the world in the same way outsiders within experience it, but outsider-within political analyses do inform their politics. Outsider-within standpoints provide tools for members of dominant groups who may be unable to articulate or clarify the occluded nature of their privilege and its relation to the oppression experienced by outsiders. By learning about lives on the margins, members of dominant groups come to discover the nature of oppression, the extent of their privileges, and the relations between them. Making visible the nature of privilege, enables members of dominant groups to generate liberatory knowledge. Being white, male, wealthy, or heterosexual presents a challenge in generating this knowledge, but is not an insurmountable obstacle.

Knowledge emerging from outsider-within locations, then, is valuable on two counts. First, it calls attention to the experiences of marginalized groups overlooked by earlier epistemological projects. Second, those who occupy the center can learn from and learn to use the knowledge generated by the analyses of outsiders within to understand their relationships with marginalized persons from the standpoint of those persons' lives (Collins 1986, s29; Harding 1991, 277). Harding describes insiders who adopt a critically reflective stance toward privilege as "becoming marginal." But I think this phrase leads to a misunderstanding about what it means to be a traitor.

IN WHAT SENSE DO TRAITORS "BECOME MARGINAL"?

Describing subject identities in spatial terms initially offers a useful way of seeing social structures and imagining the power relations between knowers. In the margin-center cartography of feminist standpoint theory, traitors are

described as people who "choose to become marginalized" (Harding 1991, 289, 295). But this description is misleading for several reasons. The problem with describing traitors as becoming marginal is more clearly understood if we keep an historical example in mind.

In 1954, Anne and Carl Braden purchased a home in a white section of Louisville, Kentucky, for the purpose of deeding it to Charlotte and Andrew Wade, a Black couple. Andrew Wade, a politically conscious member of the Progressive Party and a World War II veteran, was furious that, even with his service record, he could not purchase the home he wanted. The Bradens, a progressive couple who opposed segregation, agreed to buy the house and deed it to the Wades. Their choice to break with the unspoken practice that middle-class whites sell their homes only to other whites ostracized (marginalized?) them in a way that other white families, who followed expected house-selling practices, were not. After the transaction, Louisville's segregationists publicly denounced the Bradens as "traitors to [the] race." They argued that the Bradens ought to have known better than to transgress the unspoken rule that the races ought to live in separate communities (Braden 1958, 82). Within hours of the title transfer, the Bradens received threatening phone calls and bomb threats. Months later they were charged with attempting to overthrow the government of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. In what sense then, could the Bradens be said to have chosen to become marginal? In her memoir, Anne Braden explains how, in the events that followed the house purchase, "some of the protections that go with white skin in our society fell from Carl and me. To an extent, at least, we were thrown into the world of abuse where Negroes always live" (Braden 1958, 7).

Braden's choice of words here suggests that the couple's subject position changed in some sense, but it also presents two problems. First, at a glance, to describe the Bradens as having become marginal makes it sound as if the Bradens actually came to occupy outsider-within subject positions like those occupied by the Wades. Deeding the house to the Wades did cause the Bradens to lose privilege in their community, so it might be said that they became marginal in the sense that they were ostracized from the white community because of their actions. But being cast out does not amount to the same thing as being situated as an outsider within. Given the wrath of segregationist whites, the Bradens' subject position might be said to have shifted in relation to white citizens who saw them as race traitors. However, because they were white in the eyes of those who did not know them, they did not completely lose their privilege. In spite of their actions, the Bradens continued to bear a socially privileged racial identity; the Wades never had this privilege. Whites who engage in traitorous challenges to segregation may undergo some shift in their subject position in the sense that they may be ostracized from certain communities, but they do not exchange their status as insiders for outsider-within status.

Harding anticipates this confusion and clarifies her position using the example of privilege-cognizant heterosexuals.

Some people whose sexual identity was not “marginal” (in the sense that they were heterosexual) have “become marginal”—not by giving up their heterosexuality but by giving up the spontaneous consciousness created by their heterosexual experience in a heterosexist world. These people do not think “as lesbians,” for they are not lesbian. But they do think as heterosexual persons who have learned from lesbian analyses. (Harding 1991,289)

Although the Bradens did not live as Black families in segregated Louisville lived, they could understand, even if incompletely, what it might be like to live in Louisville as the Wades lived in it. It is precisely this understanding that Harding thinks the narratives and analyses generated by persons of color can foster.

Thus, Harding’s intended meaning here is that it is possible for people like the Bradens to learn about the world of segregated Louisville as the Wades experienced it without actually coming to inhabit that world as do those who are marginal. Describing the Bradens as “becoming marginal” best describes a shift in their way of seeing, understanding, and moving through the world. Part of the reason for this confusion is that the words “margin” and “center” are usually used in standpoint theory to describe subject locations, and here they are being used to describe an epistemic shift. “Becoming marginal” refers to the shift from a perspective to a standpoint. The first is the product of an unreflective account of one’s subject location; the second, as the word “anti-racist” indicates, is a political position achieved through collective struggle (Harding 1991, 123-27; Jaggar 1983,317).

Harding’s intended meaning of “becoming marginal” should now be clearer. However, even if we understand “becoming marginal” to refer to an epistemic shift, I would argue that this phrase does not really capture the meaning of the traitorous standpoint Harding finds so compelling. Describing traitors as “becoming marginal” encourages a blurring or conflating of the location of the outsiders within and the location of traitors. The description makes it sound as if traitors have a foot in each world and are caught equally between them, and this picture does not foreground white privilege. If, for the moment, we retain the language of standpoint theory, it is more accurate to describe the Bradens’ actions as destabilizing the center. Race traitors are subjects who occupy the center but whose way of seeing (at least by insider standards) is *off-center*. That is, traitors destabilize their insider status by challenging and resisting the usual assumptions held by most white people (such as the belief that white privilege is earned, inevitable, or natural). Descriptions of traitors as decentering, subverting, or destabilizing the center arguably work better

than “becoming marginal” because they do not encourage this conflation of the outsider within and the traitor. Decentering the center makes it clear that traitors and outsiders within have a common political interest in challenging white privilege, but that they do so from different social locations. Understanding traitors as destabilizers tidies up earlier misunderstandings, but I still think standpoint theory’s margin-center cartography tends to restrict Harding’s description of these subjects. If this language encourages misperceptions about traitors, then we need to consider alternative descriptions of these disloyal subjects.

PRIVILEGE-COGNIZANT AND PRIVILEGE-EVASIVE WHITE SCRIPTS

Perhaps a clearer, more descriptive picture of traitors, one that focuses on their decentering projects, will emerge if we think of traitors as privileged subjects who animate privilege-cognizant white scripts. The distinction Harding observes between insiders who are critical of their position and insiders who are not is more accurately expressed as a distinction between “privilege-cognizant” and “privilege-evasive” white scripts (Frankenberg 1993, 137-91). Understanding traitors along these lines requires spelling out what is meant by a racial script and how privilege-cognizant and privilege-evasive white scripts differ.

Like sexism, racism is a social-political system of domination that comes with expected performances, attitudes, and behaviors, which reinforce and reinscribe unjust hierarchies. Feminists have long paid attention to the ways gender roles encourage habits and nurture systems that value men’s ideas, activities, and achievements over those of women. The existence of sexism and racism as systems requires everyone’s daily collaboration.

To understand the nature of this collaboration, it is helpful to think of the attitudes and behaviors expected of one’s particular racial group as performances that follow historically preestablished scripts. Scripts differ with a subject’s location within systems of domination. What it means to be a man or a woman is not exclusively defined by one’s physical characteristics. Similarly, what it means to be Black, white, Comanche, Korean, or Latina is defined not only by a person’s physical appearance (so-called “racial” markers such as skin color, hair, facial features, body shape), but also by that person’s **performance**—by the script that individual animates. When the concept of racial scripts is applied locally, what it means to be a white woman in Louisville, or an African American man in Chicago includes a person’s gestures, language, attitudes, concept of personal space, gut reactions to certain phenomena, and body awareness. Attention to race as performative, or scripted, reveals the less visible, structural regulatory function of racial scripts that exclusive attention to appearance overlooks.

Marilyn Frye's (1992) discussion of "whitely" behavior and "whiteness" offers a conceptual distinction that is instrumental in understanding the performative dimensions of race and the distinction between privilege-evasive and privilege-cognizant scripts. Frye recognizes the need for a terminology that captures the contingency between phenotype (racial appearance) and the value of whiteness. Paralleling the distinction feminists make between maleness, something persons are born with by virtue of their biological sex, and masculinity, something socially connected to maleness but largely the result of social training, Frye argues for an analogous pair of terms in racial discourse and coins "whitely" and "whiteness" as the racial equivalents of maleness and masculinity, respectively. As Frye explains: "Being white skinned (like being male) is a matter of physical traits presumed to be physically determined: being whitely (like being masculine) I conceive as a deeply ingrained way of being in the world" (Frye 1992, 150-51). The connection between "acting white" and "looking white" is contingent, so it is possible for persons who are not classified as white to perform in whitely ways and for persons who are white not to perform in whitely ways. Racial scripts are internalized at an early age to the point where they are embedded almost to invisibility in our language, bodily reactions, feelings, behaviors, and judgments. Whitely scripts are, no doubt, mediated by a person's economic class, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religion, and geographical location, but privilege is granted on the basis of whitely performances nevertheless (Davion 1995, 135-39). A few examples can highlight some facets of whitely, or privilege-evasive scripts.

Lillian Smith, a white woman growing up in Jim Crow Georgia, offers one illustration of a whitely script. She was taught to "[act] out a special private production of a little script that is written on the lives of most Southern children before they know words" (1949, 21).

I do not remember how or when, but . . . I knew that I was better than a Negro, that all black folks have their place and must be kept in it, that sex has its place and must be kept in it, that a terrifying disaster would befall the South if ever I treated a Negro as my social equal and as terrifying a disaster would befall my family if ever I were to have a baby outside of marriage. . . . I had learned that white southerners are hospitable, courteous, tactful people who treat those of their own group with consideration and who carefully segregate from all the richness of life "for their own good and welfare" thirteen million people whose skin is colored a little differently from my own. (Smith 1949, 18)

Smith describes this script as a "dance that cripples the human spirit." It was a dance she repeated until the movements "were made for the rest of [her] life without thinking" (Smith 1949, 91). What I find remarkable about Smith's

"little script" is the clarity with which she connects racial segregation and the control of white women's sexuality.

Anne Braden recounts a similar script growing up in Alabama and Mississippi in the 1930s. Braden's description is especially attentive to the spatial dimensions of racial scripts.

Most of these things, it is true, were never said in words. They were impressed on the mind of the white child of the South's privileged class. . . .

It was a chant of. . . we sit in the downstairs of the theater, Negroes sit upstairs in the balcony-you drink from this fountain, Negroes use that fountain-we eat in the dining room, Negroes eat in the kitchen-colored town, our street-white schools, colored schools-be careful of Negro men on the streets-watch out-be careful—don't go near colored town after dark-you sit on the front of the bus, they sit in the back-your place, their place-your world, their world. (Braden 1958, 21)

Braden also acknowledges an interesting linguistic facet of whitely scripts.

Sometimes the commandments became quite explicit. For example, I could not have been more than four or five years old when one day I happened to say something to my mother about a "colored lady." "You never call colored people ladies [her mother replied]. . . . You say colored woman and white lady—never a colored lady." (Braden 1958, 21)

Attentiveness to maintaining the boundaries of one's racial location, then, is a strong dimension of all racial scripts.

Racial scripts are not regulated only by attitudes and an awareness of people's appropriate place; scripts also have a strong corporeal element that emerges in gestures and reactions to persons who we think of as being unlike ourselves. We are all, on some level, attentive to the race of persons with whom we interact, and this shapes our encounters. Even privilege-cognizant whites who are consciously committed to combating racism may react with aversion and avoidance toward people of color. African Americans receiving these avoidance behaviors feel noticed-marked. In his essay "A Black Man Ponders His Power to Alter Public Space," Brent Staples (1986) offers the following account of a white woman who passes him on the street at night.

I often witness the "hunch posture," from women after dark on the warrenlike streets of Brooklyn, where I live. They seem to set their faces on neutral and, with their purse straps strung across their chests bandoleer style, they forge ahead as though

bracing themselves against being tackled. I understand, of course, that . . . women are particularly vulnerable to street violence, and young black males are drastically over-represented among the perpetrators of violence. Yet these truths are no solace against the kind of alienation that comes of being ever the suspect, against being set apart, a fearsome entity with whom pedestrians avoid making eye contact. (Staples 1986, 54)

The majority of whitely scripts include being nervous around people of color, avoiding eye contact with them, or adopting closed, uncomfortable postures in their presence. The repeated animation of these scripts, however, reinscribes a racial order in which white lives, culture, and experiences are valued at the expense of the lives of persons of color, whose bodies are fearsome to whites and are who are cast as deviant, dirty, criminal, ugly, or degenerate.

These accounts of privilege-evasive scripts provide a contrast to my account of privilege-cognizant scripts; they also help to explain why privilege-cognizant scripts count as traitorous. What all racial scripts have in common is that in a white-centered culture, everyone is more or less expected to follow scripts that sustain white privilege. The whitely scripts described by Smith, Staples, and Braden are privilege-evasive: they do not challenge whites to think about privilege, and their reenactment reproduces white privilege. If scripts sustaining white privilege are required by members of all racial groups, then members of both privileged and oppressed groups can refuse to cooperate. What holds racism in place, metaphorically speaking, is not only that African Americans have sat in the back of the bus for so long, but also that whites have avoided the task of critically examining and giving up their seats in front. By refusing to examine privilege, whites uncritically resign themselves to whitely scripts—to having their identities shaped in ways they may not have chosen (Harding 1991, 294).

Recognizing that whites can use the analyses of outsiders within to forge traitorous scripts means we can learn to think and act not out of the “spontaneous consciousness” of the socially scripted locations that history has written for us, but out of the traitorous (privilege-cognizant) scripts we choose with the assistance of critical social theories generated by emancipatory movements (Harding 1991, 295). A key feature of privilege-cognizant standpoints is the choice to develop a critically reflective consciousness. As one participant in Ruth Frankenberg’s study of white women observes “coming from the white privileged class . . . means you don’t have to look at anything else. You are never forced to until you choose to, because your life is so unaffected by anything like racism” (Frankenberg 1993, 161). Traitors choose to try to understand the price at which privileges are gained; they are critical of the

unearned privileges granted to them by white patriarchal cultures, and they take responsibility for them.

Choosing to take responsibility for my interactions requires that I take responsibility for my “racial social location, by learning how I am connected to other whites and persons of color; by learning what the consequences of my beliefs and behaviors as a European American woman will be” (Harding 1991, 283). An integral moment in understanding my relation to people differently situated from me comes in learning to see how I am seen by outsiders. It requires a variation on DuBois’s double consciousness.

Unlike whites who unreflectively animate whitely scripts, the traitor’s task is to find ways to develop alternative scripts capable of disrupting the constant reinscription of whitely scripts. Privilege-cognizant whites actively examine their “seats in front” and find ways to be disloyal to systems that assign these seats. Some obvious examples include choosing to stop racist jokes, paying attention to body language and conversation patterns, and cultivating an awareness of how stereotypes shape perceptions of people of color. Telling, and permitting others to tell, racist jokes reinscribes images that are harmful. The traitor knows when it is appropriate to stop this reinscription. Similarly, the white woman who clutches her bags or steers her children away from African American youth, or the white man who acts uncomfortable or nervous in the presence of people of color, sends signals to those around him that members of these groups are to be feared. Whites who interrupt, ostracize, or dismiss the contributions of students of color in the classroom reproduce their invisibility by sending the message that these students’ contributions are unimportant. If traitors can rearticulate white scripts in ways that do not reinscribe these subordinating gestures, then we can begin to imagine ways of being, as Adrienne Rich (1979) says, “disloyal to civilization.”

The language of racial scripts presents an account of traitors that avoids the misunderstandings generated by standpoint theory’s margin-center cartography. It also offers a dynamic account of traitors that is consistent with the epistemic framework of standpoint theory. This distinction between privilege-cognizant and privilege-evasive scripts is another way of articulating the distinction standpoint theorists make between a standpoint and a perspective. Privilege-evasive white scripts might be said to have unreflective perspectives on race. For example, most liberal discourse on racism illustrates a form of linguistic privilege-evasiveness characteristic of the whitely scripts. Phrases such as “I don’t see color, I just see people,” or “We all belong to the same race—the human race” erase color, which also amounts to a failure to recognize whiteness (Frankenberg 1993, 149). Privilege-cognizant scripts rely on anti-racist standpoints because they come about through collective resistance to naturalized patterns of behavior and social actions that reproduce white privilege. Animating a privilege-cognizant script requires more than occasionally interrupting racist jokes, listening to people of color, or selling Black

families real estate in white neighborhoods. An occasional traitorous act does not a traitor make. Truly animating a privilege-cognizant white script requires that traitors cultivate a character from which traitorous practices will flow.

CULTIVATING A TRAITOROUS CHARACTER

When traitors refuse to act out of the spontaneous whiteness consciousness that history has bestowed on them, they shift more than just their way of seeing and understanding the world. To be a race traitor is to have a particular kind of character that predisposes a person to animate privilege-cognizant scripts. The shift from privilege-evasive to privilege-cognizant white scripts, then, can be understood as a shift in character. It is this change in character that causes whites to move “off-center,” to reposition themselves with regard to privilege. This final section briefly explores what it might mean to cultivate a traitorous character and demonstrates why developing a traitorous character must include being a “world traveler.”

The idea that animating privilege-cognizant scripts helps to cultivate a traitorous character, and that traitorous characters are more likely to animate these scripts is, at root, Aristotelian: becoming traitorous is a process similar to the acquisition of moral virtue (Aristotle 1980). For Aristotle, virtues arise through habit, not nature. Virtue is a disposition to choose according to a rule; namely, the rule by which a truly virtuous person possessed of moral insight would choose. All things that come to us by nature we first acquire potentially; it is only later that we exhibit the activity. We become virtuous by doing virtuous deeds. Although states of character arise from activity, Aristotle makes a distinction between two sorts of activities and their ends. There are activities such as shipbuilding, in which the product of one’s activity (the ship) is an end distinct from the process of shipbuilding; and, there are activities such as getting in shape where the product (a healthy and fit body) is part of the activity of working out and not a distinct end. The activity of virtue resembles the workout example. Just as a person does not become fit by doing a series of situps and then declaring, “There, I am fit!” so a person does not become virtuous by doing a series of good deeds and then declaring, “Finally, I am virtuous!” Virtue and fitness arise in the process of continually working out or doing good deeds. We become virtuous when we have the practical wisdom, for example, to act courageously to the right degree, for the right reasons, and under the right circumstances.

When Harding describes standpoints as achievements, I think she means “achievement” in the sense in which having a virtuous character is an achievement (Harding 1991, 127). Achieving a traitorous standpoint, like cultivating virtue, is a process. When a person has the practical wisdom to know which lines in whiteness scripts to change, when to change them, and when to leave them alone, then they can be said to possess the practical wisdom necessary for

a traitorous character.² Having a traitorous character is not the same thing as possessing a particular trait. Just as there is no recipe for attaining a virtuous character, there is no one formula for becoming a race traitor. It is a mistake to think that becoming traitorous is tantamount to completely overcoming racism. There will be times when our traitorous practical wisdom will be a bit off and we will fall back into *privilege-evasive* scripts, often without being aware that we are doing so. An account of traitorous character recognizes this instability. Developing a traitorous character requires a political strategy. It is not enough, as Harding says, to repeat what African American thinkers say, and never to take responsibility for my own analyses of the world that I, a European American, can see through the lens of their insights. A “functioning anti-racist-one who can pass the ‘competency test’ as an anti-racist-must be an actively thinking anti-racist, not just a white robot programmed to repeat what Blacks say” (Harding 1991, 290-91).

Developing a traitorous character requires lots of legwork. Learning about the lives of those on the margins means understanding the material conditions that give rise to outsider-within analyses; and to gain such an understanding, traitors must be “world travelers.” In her now-classic essay, “Playfulness, ‘World’-Traveling, and Loving Perception” (1987), Maria Lugones offers an account of identity in which subjects are shifting and multiplicitous. Recognizing identities as plural takes place through a process she calls “world” traveling.³ Lugones believes that women’s failure to love one another stems from a failure to identify with women who inhabit worlds they do not share; it is a failure to see oneself in other women who are different. Lugones’s work addresses this failure, which she attributes to seeing others, who occupy worlds outside the ones in which we feel comfortable, with “arrogant eyes.” When white women perceive Asian women with “arrogant eyes,” or when African American women view Jewish women with arrogant perception, they fail to interact and identify with one another lovingly. Because arrogance blocks coalition building, world traveling must be done with loving perception.

The notions of “world,” “world-traveling,” and “loving perception” help Lugones to explain why she is perceived as serious in Anglo, or white, worlds where she is not at ease, and as “playful” in Latina worlds where she is at home. The failure of white women to love women of color is implicit in whiteness scripts in which Anglo women “ignore us, ostracize us, render us invisible, stereotype us, leave us completely alone, interpret us as crazy. All of this *while we are in their midst*” (Lugones 1987, 7).

The *privilege-evasive* scripts animated by white women are easily explained in the logic of world travel. The failure of whites to see race privilege is, in part, a function of a failure to world travel. In the United States, people of color world travel out of necessity, but white privilege ensures that most whites need to world travel only voluntarily. When Anglo women refuse to travel to worlds where they are ill at ease, they are animating *privilege-evasive* scripts. Most

whites are at ease in white worlds where we are fluent speakers, where we know and can safely animate whitely scripts, where people of color are out of our line of vision, and where our racial identity is not at risk. When I restrict my movement to worlds in which I am comfortable, privilege is difficult to see, and whitely scripts are never challenged. Loving perception requires that white women world travel as a way of becoming aware of the privilege-evasive scripts we have learned.

World travel, then, is an indispensable strategy for cultivating a traitorous character. Traitors must get out of those locations and texts in which they feel at home. World travel forces us to put our privileged identities at risk by traveling to worlds where we often feel ill at ease or off-center. Like virtuousness, traitorousness requires developing new habits; and one crucial habit might be to resist the temptation to retreat back to those worlds where we feel at ease-whole. In the process of traveling, our identities fall apart, our privilege-evasive scripts no longer work, and the luxury of retreating to a safe space is temporarily removed. Travel makes privilege-evasive scripts visible and we get a glimpse of how we are seen through the eyes of those whom we have been taught to perceive arrogantly.

Mab Segrest's story is a moving illustration of how world travel is integral to coalition building across boundaries of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. As a white lesbian doing civil rights work in North Carolina, Segrest explains how "with Reverend Lee and Christina in my first months at Statesville, I crossed and recrossed more racial boundaries than I had ever managed in the eighteen years I had lived in my similar Alabama hometown. With them, I had access to the Black community, and I saw white people through their eyes" (Segrest 1994, 17). Learning to see ourselves as others see us is a necessary starting point for learning to undo privilege-evasive scripts. Whites like Segrest, who, with "loving perception," travel to the worlds inhabited by African American civil rights activists in the South, put their identities at risk and, in so doing, realize the difficulties surrounding the process of unlearning privilege-evasive scripts.

The approach I have outlined here is not a radical break from Harding's original insight. What I have tried to do is to rearticulate her insights in a language that avoids some of the confusion I think the margin-center cartography of feminist standpoint theory encourages. I have also tried to explore what it might be like to cultivate a traitorous character in a way that focuses on traitorous performances, rather than on traitorous identities and locations. The idea that traitorousness requires developing a traitorous character that makes one more likely to animate a privilege-cognizant script is very much in the spirit of Harding's work. Although Harding's descriptions of traitors as "becoming marginal" through a process of "reinventing oneself as other" limits her descriptions of traitors, I think what she is after is an active account of traitorousness as more than just a political identity. Recall that "reinventing

ourselves as other" refers to a shift in one's way of seeing, and Lugones's sense of world travel certainly does this. Harding hints at this when she says "intellectual and political activity are required in using another's insights to generate one's own analyses" (Harding 1991, 290). Harding's description of traitorousness as political activity is closer to the performative notion I have in mind, and I think it is one with which she would agree.

NOTES

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1. As standpoint theory focuses on institutional systems, practices, and discourses that unequally distribute power, the word privilege is used to refer to systematically conferred advantages individuals enjoy by virtue of their membership in dominant groups with access to resources and institutional power that are beyond the common advantages of marginalized citizens (Bailey 1998).

2. Traitorous acts committed just for the sake of traitorousness can be dangerous. History and literature are filled with cases of well-meaning whites whose good intentions put the lives, jobs, or achievements of friends and acquaintances of color in jeopardy. See, e.g., the fictional case of Bigger Thomas in Richard Wright's novel *Native Son* (Wright 1940).

3. For those unfamiliar with Lugones's work, "worlds" are neither utopias nor constructions of whole societies. They may be small parts of a society (e.g., a barrio in Chicago, Chinatown, a lesbian bar, a women's studies class, or a farmworkers community). The shift from having one attribute, say playfulness, in a world where one is at ease, to having another attribute, say seriousness, in another world Lugones calls "travel" (Lugones 1987).

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