Hematologies
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This book has presented a number of ways in which blood might be considered a substance that exists in the subjunctive mood. To be in the subjunctive mood—“usually signified in verbal language by auxiliaries such as ‘might,’ ‘could,’ or ‘should,’ by the substitution of ‘would have’ for ‘had’ and by the use of ‘if’ clauses” (Zelizer 2004, 163)—is “to be trafficking in human possibilities rather than in settled certainties” (Bruner 1986, 26). Veena Das invokes this mood in reading and listening to the narratives of her ethnographic interlocutors, which reveal points of reflection and unfulfilled potentialities, as well as actualities (Das 2015b). To speak of blood’s “as if” is to recognize how frequently the substance flows in bodies, tubes, and thoughts in states of hopeful uncertainty. Here we revisit some of these flows, both smooth and disrupted, and consider some supplementary ones in order to gain access to and convey the differentiated nature of hematic possibility in India.

We use the term “differentiated” advisedly. Laura Bear (2014a, 3) has recently questioned what she sees as the overly narrow anthropological focus on the future as either evacuated, nostalgic, or radically uncertain due to conditions of precarity. Such renderings are not necessarily inaccurate, but they tend to be understood and portrayed singularly, with too little attention paid to the differentiated and overlapping modes of temporal thought and action that factor into the visions and experiences they describe. Similar to the singularizing accounts Bear finds in anthropology, we find in studies of biopolitics and biotechnologies a particularly dominant rendering of biopolitical futures that pictures attitudes toward them as ever more risk averse and amenable to the involvement of new forms of capi-
tal and governance. Indeed, when futures are invoked in prevailing analyses of biological exchange, they tend to be certain neoliberal futurities that are emphasized—for instance, the forms of individualized insurance they may engender. Such accounts often cite Rose and Novas (2005, 452) on how contemporary forms of governmentality encourage citizens to foster an “active stance toward the future.” For example, Brown, Kraft, and Martin’s discussion of umbilical-cord blood banking points out that blood stem cells “are saturated with metaphors of banking, saving, investment and insurance, the deposition of biological assets that should accrue value and worth over the passage of time, as the twin futures of medical progress and disease risk are drawn nearer to the present” (2006, 315). As Marilyn Strathern (2009) explains in her account of the work of analogy in Catherine Waldby and Robert Mitchell’s discussion of cord blood banking (2006, 125), such practices often gain their validation and support “from beyond medicine, from the world of personal insurance and personalized risk management. Private blood banking is a form of ‘biological insurance.’” Strathern suggests that in forming such descriptions, Waldby and Mitchell borrow from finance in the same way as those they are giving an account of.

Like Bear, we have no interest in dismissing such accounts of biopolitical futures, which in many cases have been extremely persuasive. We do want to suggest, however, that these might not be the only futures on offer and that even where such metafutural accounts possess merit, too little recognition is given to the multiple, layered chronotopes of modern time that constitute them. In this book, we have taken a step back from the world of biotechnological possibility and novelty that is the main focus of the aforementioned accounts. Unlike the forms of biological insurance described by Rose and others, blood donation and transfusion are longstanding technologies that, in their basic form, are no longer at the frontiers of biomedicine. Notwithstanding the possibility of profiteering through secrecy (see chapter 5) and the persistence of paid donation (chapter 6), neither do they entwine capital with the politics of life in the same way. The anticipatory logics of blood and blood donation that we trace here thus cause us to be in sympathy with Marsland and Prince’s (2012) critique of how the focus of Rose and others on biotechnological subjectivities is skewed toward Euro-America and away from biopolitics at the margins in resource-poor regions of the world. Focusing on flows of blood in the margins, we see how biopolitical imaginations of speculation and futurity may be at least as varied as impressions and durabilities of the past.

To give a preliminary sense of our approach, let us briefly revisit our discussion in chapter 5 of the case of a “tantric” transfusion gone seriously wrong that resulted in the death of the donor child. In India, as elsewhere, medical doctors are considered not just to be exemplars of progressive modernity but also its
midwives. So it was all the more shocking that the parents of the young boy, whose blood was “donated” to their elder son, allegedly on the advice of a tantric priest, were doctors. The purpose of the transfusion was reported to have been to transmit intelligence (“brainy blood”) from one brother to the other in advance of the latter’s medical exams. Unsurprisingly, subsequent reflection on the event formed an occasion for journalistic cliches about the juxtaposition of the medieval and the modern in India (Pinney 2004, 202) and for “feudal accusation” (L. Cohen 2008, 45). Blood flowed from the younger to the elder son, but the blood flowed too quickly; it was meant to enable a hopeful future for an allegedly unintelligent child—to form a kind of quick fix—but in fact caused a break in time and the radical curtailment of the other son’s future. Recall the words of the TV astrologer who sought to explain the case in the light of the promise but also uncertainty of the present national moment: “[With] India’s economy . . . zooming . . . in the hurry to reach to the top . . . [everyone] is ready to take any short cuts. It’s not superstition that is winning, it’s our own greed.”

To reiterate: we do not take issue with arguments that emphasize the significance of neoliberal futurity in biomedical and biotechnological domains, but we suggest that the undifferentiated conception of the future they tend to offer can only account for a small part of the complexity of biomedical futurescapes (cf. Bear 2017, 143). The above episode shows this well, for indeed, it appears that a quest to access future economic gains, as narrativized by the government and all forms of media, might well have been important—the transfusion a kind of hematic speculation. But feudal accusation, thwarted modernity, rush, and speed in the form of both time representations and modes of labor in/of time, also formed constitutive presences. The case might stand as a metaphor for the heterochrony of the Indian blood donation and transfusion field—its layered, conflictual forms (Bear 2014a, 25) and its vitality (Vora 2015) and danger.

Blood’s “As If”

If the younger son’s blood was thought to carry his knowledge, it also carried the hopes of the boys’ parents. In the disastrous denouement, however, its excorporative flow came to signify the persistence of the time of the feudal in contrast to the “linear, progressive, homogeneous and forward-looking” time that, in spite of Gandhi’s dreams of Ram Rajya and continuing millennial strains of political thinking (Devji 2004), remains the “official” temporality of the modern Indian political scene (P. Banerjee 2013, 2). Indeed, blood all too often exemplifies this persistence of “backward” time. Studies have underscored the significance of caste-based purity of blood in the perpetuation of a kin-based system of blood
procurement in Pakistan (Mumtaz, Bowen, and Mumtaz 2012) and have shown the continuing significance of caste (as “agnatic blood”) in contexts of donor insemination and adoption in metropolitan India (Bharadwaj 2003), while strategies that attempt to forestall the occurrence of mixing in transfusion underscore the persistence of perceptions of the dangers of mixing. For instance, members of Hindu right-wing groups in Mumbai have been reported to avoid the dangers of intermixture that the possible future need for a transfusion would necessitate by stocking their own blood for their own future use (Heuzé 1992, 2261).

In chapter 6 we discussed the slogan “Blood for blood” as a menacing call for mimetic repetition of bloodshed in situations of communal tension. We also described Hindutva calls for mimetic bloodshed as a rejection of historical appeals for communal harmony, also in the idiom of blood (i.e., the different yet overlapping Gandhian and Nehruvian invocations of blood-mixing as an index of communal solidarity). A prevalent Hindutva hematic framing suggests, “The blood flowing in the veins of Indian Muslims is the same as Lord Rama and Krishna. . . . In a true sense, both Lord Rama and Krishna are ancestors of Indian Muslims.”1 It is part of a common political parlance that stresses—insists upon—inclusiveness.2 Former Indian defense minister George Fernandez (a Christian), for example, declares, “I look at a Pakistani as the flesh of our flesh and the blood of our blood. We are two different nations but one people.”3 A former leader of the BJP similarly asserted that “Muslims are the flesh of our flesh and the blood of our blood but they never got their rightful share in the nation’s development nor have they been able to join the national mainstream to play their due role in nation-building.”4 Of course, such inclusive rhetorical moves insinuate that were Muslims not of the same blood as Hindus, then it might indeed be legitimate to discriminate against them. Inclusion slips easily into accusation. After the catastrophic communal violence of 2002 in Gujarat, the VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad, “World Hindu Council”) leader, Praveen Togadia, is reported to have declared, “India’s Muslims should submit to genetic tests. Since the forefathers of Muslims are Hindus, how can the blood of Arabia flow in their blood? I advise all Muslims to get tested for their Hindu origin.”5 Echoing the blood mysticism of earlier prominent Hindutva ideologues such as Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who lay extreme emphasis on “the racial inheritance of Hindu blood” (Bhatt 2001, 95) and for whom, notoriously, “the blood in [converts’] veins . . . [cries] aloud with the recollections of the dear old ties from which they were so cruelly snatched away at the point of sword” (Savarkar 2007, 95–96), for Togadia, religion ceases to refer to belief or practice but simply to blood: the blood of Arabia does not flow in Indian Muslims’ veins; they are “mere” converts. It is a kind of nationalist version of what has been identified as the medicalization of kinship, where a connection must exist “irrespective of choice”: “Biomedicine insists
on uniting those who may not choose to be connected” (Finkler 2001, 239). Blood, in such conceptions, holds and fixes a set of connections, with the VHP leader turning to biomedicine and blood tests in order to attempt to enforce coercive inclusion. In a discussion of conceptual “male” and “female” interpenetration, Judith Butler (1993, 50–51) is interested in ideas that set limits on “receptivity” and that make it imperative not to “depart from one’s own nature” in spite of interactions with alterity. Similarly, Hindu-right activist rhetoric relies on the idea that one cannot be displaced from one’s original “nature,” located in—revealed by—blood. In the appeal made by the VHP leader to blood as consummate repository of indisputable knowledge, the body appears paradoxically as both prior to and locus of “religion”—“prior” in the sense that biomedical examination of the bodies of Muslims is what will reveal that they are not Muslims, and “locus” in the sense that it is in bodies that religion is nonetheless to be found.

Biotechnological time “mixes frames and registers” so that “now” can appear simultaneously as “then” (Strong 2009, 187). Global genetic-mapping schemes, justified as the key to securing future health care benefits, may serve as well to both naturalize and pathologize “archetypal” caste distinctions (Egorova 2011); Togadia’s call for genetic tests enrolls a signifier of modernity and promise in an attempt to give new force to a well-worn form of hate speech that calls on blood (see, e.g., Hansen 2001, 84). According to the linear, progressive, forward-looking model of time, blood—in the examples we have just given—is principally a substance of the past, of backward time (it is perhaps less that blood is “modernized” in its association with genetic testing but that genetic testing is “blooded” in the encounter [Franklin 2013]). But it is in part because of such “negative” associations that blood can work powerfully in the subjunctive mood to help create realities that hold out “the hope that life could become other than it is” (Das 2015a, 53).⁶

For instance, in chapter 2 we described how Mohandas Gandhi came to an understanding of blood purity based on how the blood shed by different religious communities formed one “mingled stream” that, in its very mixing, sacralized the land on which it was poured. Intermixing, under the sign of nonviolence, purifies the body politic even as—because—it transgresses communal boundaries. Anxieties about the mixing of substances are positively repurposed. Here, for Gandhi, lay blood’s potential. Consider as well the case of artist and provocateur Shihan Hussaini as well as the Bhopali activists, whom we met in chapter 3. There we described how both used blood as a tool to persuade political figures to do their bidding. If in those cases portraiture and blood writing were employed for instrumental purposes, there is another side to communicating via blood that underscores the performative role of mixing in blood’s subjunctive mood.
In Hussaini’s case, such mixing was achieved in the space of the portrait itself. Planned, enacted, and then subject to commentary, this was elaborated, reflexive mixture. Indeed, Hussaini was keen to explain to us uses of his portraiture that went beyond the “profane” side of politics of personal gain and that instead touched upon the politically sublime or utopian (Hansen 2001)—for instance, his use of blood portraiture in 1994 during Chennai’s Ganesh Chaturthi festival. The Ganesh festival features an array of pandals (pavilions) and the construction of large statues of the god, which are taken in procession and placed in the sea. The festival’s history of stoking communal tension is well known (R. Kaur 2001). According to Hussaini, these tensions became particularly acute during the early 1990s because of a dispute about the route of the procession through a predominantly Muslim area in the Chennai neighborhood of Triplicane. Every time it ventured through the area, stated Hussaini,

Muslims prayed in silence. There were meant to be no drums, but the festivities [nevertheless] became very loud, and miscreants would throw firecrackers, and the Muslims [would] throw stones. Every year there was bloodshed, and I said in 1994 I’d do something to influence all Hindus and Muslims, and in a huge hall I brought Muslim and Hindu students and mixed their blood and drew a huge portrait of Ganesha, and I drew Muslims and Hindus stamping on weapons. . . . After 1994 the rioting stopped and now there is peace.

Whether or not his portrait of Ganesh had the effects he implies, the episode forms a further example of blood’s subjunctive potential: performative mixing in order to effect a desired (politically sublime) outcome. It is, of course, a highly moral image, the commingling of bloods forming a depiction of the possibility of an undivided community in liquid form. Hussaini himself married a Hindu (i.e., had a “mixed marriage”). As is well known, there is an oft-posted logically implied sequence between intermarriages, substance transfers, and communal harmony (Carsten 2007). Unlike the mixed community marriages described by Veena Das (2010, 397) in Delhi, which engage the life of the other on the level of the everyday, thereby coming to form a challenge to the solidity of oppositional identities, Hussaini presents commingling as a spectacle. Rather than the everyday enactment of “nextness” (377), Hussaini “stages” such a state as the image of a future community that it might also, in some small way, help to achieve: a prefigurative politics of substance.

Mixing is central to Marriott’s (1989, 18) ethnosociological modeling (see chapters 1 and 3) as a pivotal dynamic process and variable alongside unmarking and unmatching (purity is said to lie in being “matched,” “unmarked,” and
“unmixed”). One of Marriott’s key postulations here is that mixing is “nonreflexive.” Though what he means by this term is not necessarily straightforward (a kind of mathematical property), he is clear that he perceives a general “rarity of reflexivity” in “the Hindu world” (19). We can, of course, point to cases such as Gandhi’s commitment to and elaboration of hematic intermixing (chapter 2), to the Bhopali enunciation of the political via blood writing (chapter 3), and Husaini’s performative imaging of the same as highly reflexive engagements with the hematic “mingled stream.” No doubt Marriott might reply that these cases are hardly representative. But the explicit reflexivity and staged nature of the Ganesh painting allows us to return to our argument in chapter 3 concerning the reflexive operationalization of Marriott’s schematic categories in order to produce particular effects. There we showed how Nirankari devotees seek to restore a lost symbiosis of substance-code (Marriott 1976) via blood donation as a kind of distribution mechanism: a key category within Marriott’s schema (substance-code) is made to persist precisely by way of a reflexive intervention that highlights a failure in a putative norm. For a range of actors in this book (including Gandhi, Nirankari devotees, Husaini, and Bhopali activists), mixture is enacted as a tool of inventive intervention. We are entirely in sympathy with Lawrence Cohen’s (1995b, 328–29) critical observation concerning Marriott’s models—namely, that they discount “nonHindu, nonuppercaste, and antinomian experience . . . ; the messiness of life is neglected to fit it to a triune model; and the projected desire of the theorist . . . for a coherent, predictable, and rule-bound universe remains unquestioned.” Yet if we unfix the variables—allow the variables to themselves be variable (and manipulable) and, critically, treat them as products of history—their productivity can come into focus. When thrust into the messiness of life, detached from an exclusively Hindu world, treated reflexively with antinomian aplomb, and transformed into critical methodologies, these processes can continue to carry purchase. 7

Resonating with the Ganesh portrait, in chapter 4 we discussed the AVBDWB’s conceptualization of voluntary blood donation as holding out the hope of a hematological humanism of substantial flows beyond caste and religion. Blood as a substance, together with blood donation as a kind of ritualized frame for action, images for members of this vanguard organization a shared “subjunctive . . . ‘as if’ or ‘could be’ universe” (Seligman et al. 2008, 7) in which we come to realize the consanguinity of humanity. But this “could be” universe is in conflict with a different “could be” universe. “Our only hope,” as one medic put it to us, “is that sometime, maybe in the next five to seven years, we will not need any blood donors.” It is in connection with the technoscientific aspiration to substitute blood with an altogether new substance that the world of blood donation and transfusion comes closest to the biocapitalized and optimized futures we discussed at
the beginning of this chapter. But even if blood products were to reach such a
fully pharmaceuticalized form, inequalities in access and the niche and exclusion-
ary markets likely to develop around them mean that they are unlikely to herald
the kind of hematological revolution envisaged by technoscientific hype.

We have already seen that blood’s “as ifs” are differently multiple. A further
example was offered in chapter 2, in which we elaborated Ravi Chander Gupta’s
emotive blood portraits. These portraits are also, of course, in a subjunctive mood,
“expressing wish, emotion and possibilities rather than actualities” (V. Das 2012,
137). Indeed, their relation to actualities remains opaque. Depicting freedom
fighters (mythologized actualities) whose blood was shed in the past, Gupta hopes
they will stimulate willingness on the part of their patriotic viewers to shed their
(and others’) blood in the future in service of the nation. The pictures express
sanguinary aspirations. Like Hussaini’s portrait of Ganesh, they also embody a
hoped-for precipitative force; one could say they collapse the imperative into the
subjunctive. But unlike Hussaini’s portrait, it is willingness to shed blood—not a
willingness to cease shedding it—that is wished for and prompted. Since these
portraits, encoded with a hope for “future bloodshed,” are also literally composed
of blood as their material medium, we can say that they form a case of the “en-
acted subjunctive” (Sutton-Smith 1997)—“the world where possibilities are acted
out” (Thrift 2008, 119).

In chapter 3 we explored how Sant Nirankari blood donations imagine new
kinds of relations. Like Gupta’s portraits and Hussaini’s depiction of Ganesh, their
offerings both express and seek to eventuate a particular wish: the creation of ties
of humanity (insaniyat ka rishta) based on an expansively redefined code (in Mar-
riott’s [1976] sense), which are attainable through generalized diffusion of sub-
stance via blood donation as distributory mechanism. Blood donation offers the
movement a world of hematic possibility. As we explained, an image is formed
of donated Nirankari blood circulating outward, mixing with many other bloods
to both reformulate and restore a lost unity of substance-code.

Following from this, let us briefly return to Togadia and Hindutva blood rhe-
toric to again show how Marriott’s schematic categories can remain productive
and useful if (and only if) they are detached from a rule-bound and exclusively
Hindu universe. In 2002 the Milli Gazette, which styles itself as Indian Muslims’
leading English newspaper, prefaced an interview with Togadia with an intrigu-
ingly positive take on “blood ties” as the locus of a hopeful future:

Dr Pravin Togadia comes from the noble profession of healing and pro-
fesses to be a believer in the nobler ideas of Hinduism. Yet, he would
not pause for a moment before making uncharitable remarks against Is-
lam and Muslims. He holds Indian Muslims responsible for atrocities
in Pakistan, Bangladesh and, in the same breath, Kashmir. That, to him, is justification enough for the two-month-long Gujarat carnage. Distribution of a million trishuls at kumbh, followed by similar trishul-distribution campaigns at other places in India, fire arms training to Bajrang Dal cadres and repeated attacks on Muslim passengers in Sabarmati Express (pre-designed to provoke a dangerous conflict) by VHP stormtroopers in days preceding Godhra, which have brought the country to the precipice, do not bother him at all. However, there is still a silver lining in the darkness of hate: Dr Togadia does recognise the shared ancestry of Indian Muslims and Hindus. All of us know that blood is thicker than water, and a day might come when this burning rage fuelled by angry people like Dr Togadia would cool down and blood ties would reassert themselves.  

Recall Togadia’s statement that India’s Muslims must have their blood tested to demonstrate that “the blood of Arabia” does not flow within them. What is divisive in his speech—a means of underscoring a putative Islamic aberration (deviance from blood) as a justification for persecution—is instead taken by the editors of the Milli Gazette as indicative of a divorce between code and substance that may only be temporary, for “a day might come” when “blood ties would reassert themselves.” Marriott states that code and substance “cannot have separate existences in [the] world of constituted things as conceived by most South Asians” (1976, 110). But as in the ethical vision of the Nirankaris, as also in the worlds of many of the actors discussed in this book, the problem foregrounded in the editorial preface to Togadia’s interview is precisely their separate existences. The present scenario (the piece was written soon after the Gujarat massacres) is marked by bloodshed, not blood ties. The editors’ hope in these times of political division and abjection is that substance and code might be tied back together: the moral-substantial blood tie. For all that “ties through blood—including blood recast in the coin of genes and information—have been bloody enough already” (Haraway 1995, 265), hematic visions of substantial community retain their power, even amid, and in part because of, devastating bloodshed. Yet the editors’ vision of reuniting substance and code is undercut by Togadia in the interview that follows the preface: “All Hindus and Muslims should accept one reality—that we are ethnically and culturally the same. No one from the Hindu-Muslim society must suffer German-Jew paradigm. Each and every Muslim of India emanates ancestorially from the gene, RBC, bone, blood and flesh of a Hindu.” The Milli Gazette’s reconciliatory gesture toward a “silver lining” future—where substance and code may be reunited—is compromised by Togadia’s assertion of the “prior” purity of Hindu flesh and blood, a norm from which Muslim blood can only descend or deviate.
Also in chapter 3 we explored another possibility: that blood donation as a political style (Nandy 1970) might allow political actors to appear to move beyond the critique of political signs. However, if such witnessed, apparently incontrovertible blood extractions once held out an elusive promise of erasing past mistrust and regenerating political communication, we described—by way of numerous illustrative cases—how it equally provides new possibilities for political dissembling. This is where blood and blood donation’s “as if” enters a negative space. What Congress activists offered at the fake blood donation camp discussed in chapter 3 were as if blood donations. If the “as if” of fabrication and counterfeit is a particular species of the subjunctive, it reminds us that “noetic space”—an “imaginative space teeming with alternatives to the actual” (Amsterdam and Bruner 2000, 237)—does not necessarily contain alternatives that are either moral or desirable. “As if” blood donations were also a focus of chapter 5, which elaborated on ways in which the unactualized potential of the ungiven (and so untransfused) blood unit was imaginatively called into being by clinical activists as a figure of censure. The Bhopali activists’ sarcastic gift of paper hearts to the Indian prime minister, through partonomic obviation, similarly called attention to the assistance for survivors of the Bhopal gas disaster that was promised by the government but remained and remains ungiven (chapter 3).

We offer a further example now of how political blood donation events form sites of potential—of hope, liminality, and possibility—rather than certainty (Barnett 2015, 413, 421). In chapter 6 we explained how voluntary blood donation’s temporality as metricality is stitched together out of “other” repetitions, such as annual memorial blood donation camps at which donors mimetically repeat the blood shed by the remembered person. Rajiv Gandhi’s death anniversary is a case in point. In 2003, the Congress Party sponsored nationwide blood camps to commemorate his death. These events draw attention to the political capital the party aspires to, but they are also risky: “Because the outcome cannot be known in advance, success and failure . . . are contingent” (Howe 2000, 67).

Asserting that “the best way to pay tribute to Rajiv Gandhi [on his death anniversary] is to follow his path in nation building,” the Andhra Pradesh Youth Congress (APYC) attempted to surpass all previous records in blood donation.9 In 2002, according to APYC president Venkata Rao, they “managed to gain an entry in the Limca Book of Records, but it was rejected by the Guinness Book of Records for lack of proper documentation. . . . This time, the YC had taken care to file all the documents, affidavits, videos and photos of the blood camps.”10 It seemed that in 2003 everything had been done to mitigate against the “risk of incorrect performance” (Howe 2000, 69) so that due recognition would be granted to the organization’s blood collecting feats. The key ritual props of affidavits, videos, and photos would aid proper inscription of these acts and thus not inhibit
due recognition as their absence had done the previous year. Collection fever was also manifested on the national level. It was claimed that “blood would be collected from 35,000 donors all over the country, which would be a world record. From Karnataka, blood would be collected from over 3,000 donors.” Specifying the precise intention prior to its carrying out, however, leaves little room for innovation or for explaining away results that may differ from the stated intention.

Newspaper articles that emerged in the week following the camps stated that the APYC “has recommended action against its presidents in five districts for not properly organizing blood donation camps on Rajiv’s death anniversary.” A spokesman said that the Khammam and Anantapur Youth Congress wings “failed to organize even a single blood donation camp despite reminders.” The Karaikal Youth Congress leader was suspended for failing to participate in the party’s blood donation program. A scheme that was meant to enhance the status of the party, to show its commitment to society and nation and its ability to mobilize its activists, ended up resulting in inglorious and rather humiliating headlines such as “Karaikal Youth Cong. Leader Suspended” and “Youth Congress for Action on Its Presidents.” Rather than mobilizing and motivating the nation for a noble cause, the party failed even to mobilize and motivate many of its own local leaders to organize donation camps; the party became its own opponent and was symbolically toppled by the forces that it itself had released.

In memorial blood donation camps more generally, the past event of political assassination is reinvented as sacrifice in the present—a form of creative remembering and mimetic repetition that seeks to instantiate desired political futures. The thwarted hope of the 2003 camps, which ended up putting the organizers themselves on trial, is of course consonant with the wider debased state of political blood extractions discussed in chapter 3. But what we also argued in that chapter is that even in the face of a perceptual-ideational shift concerning political blood extractions from ritual of verification to spectacle of dissembling, they do continue to retain a certain communicative force. Blood, as a political material, likewise continues, in spite of everything, to be laden with hopes, wishes, and possibility: a subjunctive substance.

Here we return to our earlier discussion of transitivity. The subjunctive mood accompanies transitions (S. Srinivas 2016, 144; Turner 1982), and blood, of course, is a substance that transits (“transit” and “transition” both derive from the Latin transitio, from transire—“go across”). Marriott (1989, 16, 21, 27) models time as a form of substance in Hindu thought and experience. Blood flows as a movement in time; it is the spatiotemporal substance. It transits within bodies and in multiple ways outside of them as well. We may recall here Hoeyer’s (2013, 7) definition of excorporable body parts as temporal relations—“a step on the way from
having been part of a body to not being so anymore”—rather than entities.\textsuperscript{16} It is perhaps in part because of blood’s propensity to movement (as a temporal relation)—its transitioning around and between bodies and between insides and outsides, its flowing “elsewhere”—that it becomes a subjunctive substance, freighted with potentials and possibilities.\textsuperscript{17} In Marriott’s conception, time is a kind of substance. With respect to blood we might agree, but put it in reverse: substance is a kind of time.

**Other Futures**

**Zero-Sum Futures?**

In the future, according to Regalia Mason, a character in Jeanette Winterson’s novel *Tanglewreck* (2006), “Wasted Time will be a thing of the past. Parents will have more Time to spend with their children, children will live longer happier lives. There will be no need to rush and race. There will be enough Time” (Winterson 2006, 333). How so? In part, because of time’s substantial zero-sum transmissibility in the form of the “Time Transfusion.”

Winterson’s novel uses science fiction to explore how we have arrived at a moment where it is seemingly permissible “to harm some bodies when attempting to prolong the lives of certain others” (McCormack 2012, 179). The novel renders commoditized time in starkly biological terms. Trading time as a commodity, a company called Quanta offers Time Transfusions; infinite life is possible, but only at the expense of others’ lifetimes. Cut to an almost empty ward in Bethlehem Hospital. The door sign at the entrance says “GIRLS 8–12.” The heroine Silver has crept into the otherwise secure space of the hospital unseen. Wondering at the seeming lack of any activity on the operating floor, she finally hears a heart beating, “unmistakable, like on a loudspeaker.” She sees a young girl lying peacefully inside a capsule: “Silver watched her, and saw something very strange start to happen; the girl began to age. Faint lines appeared on her face. Her skin grew redder and coarser. The lines deepened, her hair thinned and turned grey. Her skin wrinkled. She was old.”

In another cylinder close by, however, lay a woman who “was beautiful but not young, or rather she was getting younger every second. Her skin began to smooth out. Her cheeks plumped. The crow’s feet under her eyes disappeared and the lines on each side of her mouth vanished. Her hair was thick and blonde and her face was radiant. She was in the prime of her life” (Winterson 2006, 323–25). The recipient—who is none other than the CEO of Quanta, Regalia Mason—later eats cheese and scrambled eggs: “‘Protein is essential after a Time Transfusion,’ she said” (332). It is in extolling the benefits of the procedure that Mason tells
Silver that wasted time will be a thing of the past. When Silver points out that the procedure also steals time, causing people to die, Mason responds, “Quanta has been instrumental in reducing the world’s surplus population.”

Science fiction uses the future as a metaphor for the present (Chozinski 2016, 58) to enact (often critical) commentary on contemporary times. Winterson’s account, which makes explicit the asymmetrical temporal flows of many kinds of present-day biological exchange, allows us to see clearly how flows of biological matter are simultaneously flows of commoditized time. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2000, 193) famously noted how the black-market flow of organs “follows the modern routes of capital: from South to North, from Third to First World, from poor to rich, from black and brown to white, and from female to male.” To Scheper-Hughes’s unequal extractive dyads of poor/rich, black/white, and male/female, Winterson adds that of young/old: the young girl’s future time visibly drains from her, even as it is transfused into the villain who decreases in age before our very eyes.

Marx’s critique of capitalist commodification is famously filled with metaphors of bodily violation, mobilizing imagery of the extraction of young blood: the factory night shift “only slightly quenches the vampire thirst for the living blood of labor,” while apologists for industry insist that “British industry . . . vampire-like, could but live by sucking blood, and children’s blood, too” (Marx 1990, 367; see also Healy 2006, 6–7; Anagnost 2006, 510). Metaphor “travels back” (Franklin 2014) with present-day literal organ and blood selling now providing the backdrop to rereadings of Marx’s foundational critique of capitalism. In her work on organ transplantation in the United States, Lesley Sharp (2006) notes that the majority of brain dead organ donors in the United States are young men killed by guns or in traffic accidents, while Ishiguro’s dystopian novel Never Let Me Go (2005), which was also made into a film, features cloned children whose purpose is to provide organs to service the “normal” population until, after several donations, they undergo “completion.” In the HBO show Silicon Valley, Gavin Belson—the emblematic tech-titan—attends startup meetings while connected to his youthful “transfusion assistant,” extolling the virtues of the pseudoscience of wellness parabiosis. Young blood, and the buying and selling of youthful futures, remain figures of apprehension both in scenes of biological exchange and wider discourses of present-era capitalism (e.g., Comaroff and Comaroff 1999).

The temporal effects of diverse modes of biological exchange are usually explained in terms of asymmetrical exchange. Quite simply, the securing of recipient futures is at the expense of donor lifetimes—that is, finite lifetime is transferred from one to another, usually from donor to recipient. Sharp (2006) highlights a species of time that she calls “salvational”: transplant recipients declare that they have been “born again”; a language of conversion and renewed faith is em-
ployed by both recipients and their families, who also celebrate annual rebirthdays (110). But, of course, the recipient’s rebirthday is, at the same time and inescapably, the day on which the donor’s future was cut short; it is a day of tragedy for another family. Meanwhile, in his work on kidney selling and family planning operations in Chennai, Lawrence Cohen (1999; 2001) explains how kidney sellers are sold the promise of a better future through surgery that will enable them to cancel past debts. But instead he documents thwarted promise and endangered vital time. This is because (1) the debilitating effects of the surgery compromise future work prospects, (2) the initial conditions of indebtedness remain, and (3) being known to reside in a “kidney belt” area can make lenders quicker and more aggressive in calling in debts. Sellers become more vulnerable to future indebtedness and ill health. Cohen’s devastating conclusion is that they give up a part of their future in order to have a future at all. Donor and recipient futures are in a zero-sum relationship, where the rights (to a future) of the latter are privileged over those of the former.

What we find in the Indian blood donation and transfusion field is a set of understandings about time extraction and reincorporation that both parallel and diverge from the zero-sum futures discussed above. A remarkably pronounced time representation in the field publicizes transfusions as transmitting time in a way that is not at all dissimilar to that conveyed by Winterson in *Tanglewreck*, but with a crucial difference: blood banks emphasize that time is indeed transmitted and received, but at minimal cost to donors who “spend mere minutes” in donating. In other words, the directionality proposed by blood banks here directly counters the extractive flow of life-material from donor to recipient we have discussed above; the cost to donors is represented as minimal and nonexistent, and not life-threatening or depletive (cf. Vora 2015). At the same time—and recalling the zero-sum finitudes of Cohen’s and Sharp’s ethnographies, reluctant prospective donors do not accept this reconfiguration at all. They fear that their donation would curtail their own reproductive futures in the form of infertility and/or impotence (“I can’t donate—I’m getting married next month”) and vital time in the form of debilitating illnesses: blood donation as “defuturing” (Fry 1999).

Recruiters’ retemporalizing of the act of donation seeks to make a virtue of necessity in attempting not just to neutralize a damaging time representation but also to attract potential donors through emphasizing an enchanting temporal economy that sees the minutes it takes to donate translate and transform into whole recipient lifetimes. According to this time representation, not only are the minutes it takes to donate not “taken” from donors, but they are granted to them as a kind of gift. Meanwhile the figure of the child is mobilized not as an entity from whom time is stolen, but as the beneficiary of transfusion-enabled futures.
We return here to the question of proportionality, for it is the dramatic disproportion between time given and time received that is mobilized by recruiters as a micropractice of temporal persuasion. After Corsín Jiménez (2013, 77), we might call the process one of (rhetorical) temporal aggrandizement.

To be sure, time remains a commodity in the sense that recruiters recognize people’s time as a competitor—hence the emphasis on “taking beds to donors,” with “bloodmobiles” traveling to peoples’ places of work, study, and worship for donation events. Similarly, economy remains central to recruiters’ time representations. An AVBDWB activist in Kolkata, in comparing blood donation to education, characterized blood donation to us as an act of extraordinary temporal economy: “Where else can you save a life in a quarter of an hour? For giving someone literacy you have to spend an hour a day for four months, and they will forget easily if they don’t continue afterwards.” Minimal temporal contributions by donors potentially result in immense temporal consequences for recipients.

Such time representations are strikingly prominent in publicity materials that aim to motivate donors on account of the drama of the escalation between temporal income and outgo: “A minute of yours could mean a lifetime for another” says a poster in Delhi’s Red Cross blood bank. “It only takes a few minutes to save someone’s life,” says another in Chandigarh. “Donate blood. It means a few minutes to you . . . but a lifetime for somebody else,” says one in a Delhi government hospital blood bank. “Would you give a few minutes to save a few lives? Please walk in. Donate blood. Experience the joy of giving,” says another. Yet another is particularly emotive: beside a photograph of a newborn baby are the words “I thought I had no time to give blood until I held a baby with no time left without it.” A motivational song, set to the tune of a bhajan and sung before schoolchildren in Delhi, goes: “Oh youth, listen to us. Through blood is this life, through blood is this time (rakt see hai zindagi, rakt se hai yeh sama).”

On another poster, an egg timer is transformed into a “blood timer,” with an image of drops of blood, not sand, passing through it. The Bengali slogan accompanying it asserts that time is not merely tricked; it is defeated: “Time is defeated by blood donation. If you spend only 5 minutes you can save a whole lifetime (Samay tumi har menecho rakhataner kache pancht minute karle kharach ekti joban banche).” Moreover, many posters feature thalassemic children—those with the most future time to lose if blood is not received. This further rhetorically enhances the temporal proportions of the gift of blood.

This time representation is often coupled together with a politics of rush and discourse of urgency and crisis. The former president of a voluntary blood bank in Delhi stated in a newspaper interview, “It is a tragedy that in a city of 15 million people there is a shortage of 75,000 units of blood. Every minute someone, somewhere dies for want of the right type of blood group, whereas donating blood
takes only a few minutes and can make a difference between life and death.”

The website of a Chennai blood bank likewise employs together a temporality of aggrandizement and an affective language of urgency: “Make blood donation a way of life. Please do not wait for a call from any blood bank. Walk in and donate blood. Blood banks need time to test your blood after donation. Spread the message that donating blood is safe and simple. Your donation of blood can help save up to four precious lives. It takes less than the time spent on an average telephone call. Someone might need blood today. You have the power to save. We can stop the crisis. Will you help?”

The temporal proportions of the blood gift are thus mobilized by recruiters as a means of recruitment-by-enchantment. The “concrete time of human finitude” (Bear 2016a, 492) is outwitted (tricked) and overcome (defeated) through blood donation. In Alfred Gell’s formulation (1999, 167), enchantment is achieved by objects in their necessary referral to the technical means of their coming into being. In referring to prior dexterity, objects objectify past action while in their present-ness they render that action “in progress.” However, in the main, the virtuosity that is objectified is consigned to imaginings of its creation in the past. Blood donation reverses this technology of enchantment—it is enchantment with a futural orientation. The task of recruiters is to enchant prospective donors with regard to a set of procedures that they have the power to set in motion and for which they are configured as being ultimately responsible. Of course, the doctor or technician usually refers to donors as merely providers of “starting material” (Faber 2004). In chapter 5 we saw, in reference to replacement donation and component separation, how medics have an interest in claiming it is their own labor of extraction, separation, and testing, and not the labor of donation, that counts. There we described a kind of proportional politics of the gift: If component separation creates units out of units, then who should be allowed to take credit?

The proportions that are at stake here, of course, are those of time. Donors are figured as forming time out of time—as enacting dramatic escalations of it in an almost alchemical process where it is not transformation in kind that counts (since what donors give is figured as being also what recipients receive) but of proportion (since the small quantities donors give are received as whole lifetimes). Size and scale are again at issue, with the relation of magnitude (Corsín Jiménez 2013, 36) between that which is offered and that received—the disproportion between them—forming part of a temporally oriented marketing strategy in tune with the time representations described in chapter 6 in which recruiters charge donors with being able to save and generate family reproductive time. The partonomic relation of note is that which exists between the
“same gift” located at different moments in time. What you see (the donation in time) is what you do not get (that which is received—aggrandized time); a small “part” of time transforms into a “whole” lifetime.

We underscore that these are time representations. More practically what recipients receive is tested and treated blood components, usually from several different sources, which may or may not help them to recover. There is rarely a singular identity between a particular donated unit and a transfusion, so it is poetic license to say that one donor’s few minutes is subject to alchemical aggrandizement into a whole lifetime saved. Further, it takes time to receive a transfusion—several hours usually—with transfusion usually forming one part of a treatment regime, along with drugs, consultations, rehabilitative exercises, and so on. Together, these may assist in patient recoveries and help extend the concrete time of human finitude. Blood donations are laden with diverse temporalities, and the effects of receiving them include effects of a temporal nature. But recruitment by enchantment, which extols the way in which time is created out of time, is a conjuring trick. Its purpose being to boost medically useful blood donation, it is, perhaps, another lie told without mendacity (see chapter 4)—a “politics of the gigantic and the exaggerated” (Corsín Jiménez 2013, 76–77).

In exploring temporal proportionalities here, our purpose has not been to criticize existing commentaries on biological exchange in which donor and recipient finitudes are argued to be in a zero-sum relationship—there is much to suggest that such commentaries are all too accurate for the situations they describe—but rather to enlarge the discussion with another case that foregrounds how a time representation that is damaging to the project of voluntary blood donation comes to be countered by another that temporally reproportions the donation of blood and its projected effects in a new rhetoric of temporal persuasion.

**Astral Futures**

We discussed in chapter 6 possible relations between the date, time, and place of birth; the number of times a person donates blood; and the time of the workday. We turn now to a second astral proposition: that blood donation may be employed in order to manipulate the future events allotted to persons according to their **bha-gya**. We cite a representative example of this line of thinking from the *Tare Sitare* (Stars) section of a national Hindi daily by astrologer-columnist Pandit K. K. Sharma:

Why does a person become involved in accidents (*durghatnaon*) again and again (*bar-bar*), and why do they suffer death-like pain again and again? These questions are answered by his horoscope (*janam patrika*).
In an accident, along with bodily injury the person also loses blood, and blood’s owner is the moon, and if the moon becomes polluted by Mars, then that person’s blood keeps getting regularly polluted. When the moon is weak in a person’s horoscope, their blood is not dispensed correctly. [The] manufacturing of blood is controlled by Mars. This is how we can conclude that production of blood and maintenance of the body are done by both Mars and the moon. . . . Big operations [and illnesses] like [or concerning] appendicitis, cancer, pleurisy, tonsils, high fever, death, red marks on the body, surgery, bleeding (khun behena), wounds, accidents, murder and bloody skirmishes (khun-kharaaba)—all of these are studied under Mars. . . . Those persons whose horoscopes have inauspicious (ashubh) combinations of Mangal (Mars) and Shani (Saturn) and who suffer from accidents again and again, can do the following remedies (upaays): Such people should do regular blood donation (niyamit rakt daan). This is the only way to protect them and their bodies (shareer). By regular (niyamit) blood donation, you can avert (talna) the accidents which are due to occur in your horoscope. They can also do mahamrityunj paath (a Shiva-related prayer recitation). Or the regular paath of Hanumanji’s Sankat Mochan. Regular recitation of Mohammad Rasool Allah also protects (hifaazat) such people.

In her work on astrological consultations in Banaras, Caterina Guenzi (2012) notes that the astrologer is not only a specialist in identifying auspicious and inauspicious moments in time, as suggested in many existing analyses, but that he also “identifies and calculates the material and symbolic ‘lots’ to which his clients are entitled, and, according to their wishes and needs, he elaborates strategies aimed at increasing, saving, or investing shares of wealth” (40). But this can work both ways: one’s “astral store” may contain misfortune, in which case a kind of reverse or remedial astrology is practiced: “Although it usually indicates goods or wealth, the concept of yog [the astral configuration used to indicate the moment in which the good allotted to the person is available to them] may sometimes refer to a loss or to danger, as when a person has the ‘yog for accidents.’ In this case, rather than potential wealth, the yog indicates the ‘risk’ of getting one’s share, and the astrologer will prescribe some remedial and protective measures in order to avoid the risk” (49).

With respect to blood donation, it is of course remedial astrology and the “yog for accidents” that is at stake. Pandit K. K. Sharma suggests that blood donation can act as a kind of preemptive strike against the potentially catastrophic blood loss that occurs in “accidents” (durghatnaon); if ashubh blood must be spilled, better that this be in the controlled manner of medical blood donation than in
Chapter Seven

an accident. Recitation of various devotional formulas may also help, but blood donation is the preeminent prophylactic identified here against accidents. Moreover, it is regular blood donation (niyamit rakt daan) that is recommended—a strategy well in keeping with the dream of repetition in time that is the ideal rhythm of voluntary blood donation. Once again astral time (as preventative routine) appears to be at least approximately in sync with the officially sanctioned donation rhythm in which giving blood is routine. The Pandit’s recommended course of action for the person whose bhagya foretells accidents takes blood donation as a prophylactic “time tricking” (Moroșanu and Ringel 2016) device that aims to inoculate the donor against his or her foretold future. The word “inoculate” is germane since the procedure involves the agentive introduction of an infective agent (i.e., moderate bloodshed) into donors in order to immunize them (against immoderate bloodshed).

In response to audience questions to Indian TV astrologers concerning their future life chances (in marriage, work, and so on), solutions are offered that often involve moral prescriptions such as Vedic chanting or donations to the underprivileged (Udupa 2016, 16). Blood donation is not infrequently mobilized as a technique for the management of the donor’s allotted share. Pandit Priyasharan Tripati, in an episode of his morning astrology show on the news channel IBC24, laid emphasis on the nature of blood donation as a form of dan: “It’s such an important dan that the nation truly needs. It can save somebody’s life; it is pran-dan (life donation). You should cooperate with us in this great mission (maha-mission).”

Yet, to paraphrase Derrida (1997, 144) in his discussion of Baudelaire, for Tripati, to donate blood is to do a good deed while at the same time making a good deal. As Tripati explained: “In this way you can do good for the society and country and also do good for your planets. Blood donation appeases the planets (grihashanti), so one moves from bad luck (amangal) to good luck (mangal). Blood is red in color so if you donate blood it completely removes the mangal dosha (fault in Mars). If the mangal is with ketu it protects you also from the need for surgery (lit. ‘scissors’).” The astrologer goes on to explain how blood donation also calms tensions, anger, and worry caused by the influence on the horoscope of Mars.

Blood donation as pran-dan is both part of a larger maha-mission and a remover of the donor’s inauspiciousness, but there is little sense here of the latter passing on to transfusion recipients. Säävälä (2001) has shown the continuing relevance of ideas concerning the removal of inauspiciousness through gift giving in urban life (specifically, in Hyderabad). Through such means, she argues, low-caste families can maneuver themselves into secure middle-class identities. According to Säävälä, the ejection of inauspiciousness by one party need not dic-
tate that it is transferred to another, as is understood to happen in the contexts explored in the classic works on *dana* by Parry (1994) and Raheja (1989). In the cases Säävälä documents, families seeking to remove inauspiciousness through giving simultaneously accepted gifts as an important feature of the process, indicating that “the dynamics of ritual gift-giving cannot be summed up simply as the passing on of evil influences through giving *dannam* [unreciprocated gifts]” (2001, 314). Similarly, manipulating one’s future through blood donation toward auspiciousness and away from accidents, and so on, does not seem to entail a willed transferal of evil influences to transfusion recipients, which would indeed be a scenario seemingly quite at odds with Tripati’s emphasis on blood donation as a *maha-mission* for society and nation.

**Prophylaxis and Insurance**

Blood’s relation to the planets helps to form the future; blood donation as a labor in and of time (Bear 2014a) inoculates the donor against an undesirable version of it. Blood donation as prophylaxis is not the province of astrology alone. It is also practiced by the devotees of a charismatic guru, Aniruddha Bapu, based in Mumbai. Bapu foretells a time of disasters. Devotees voluntarily donate their blood—as a humanitarian gesture, to be sure—but also to inoculate themselves against a great forthcoming bloodshed: “If you donate blood for me once,” says the guru, “you will never need to take blood, and neither will your next seven generations.” Inoculation and insurance are intimates in that both are oriented toward future uncertainties and provide protective measures against them—both are anticipatory logics—but they are usually distinguishable as separate actions and modes of reason: whereas inoculation seeks to prevent possible eventualities, insurance provides protection against the effects of those eventualities when they come to pass. But blood donation in millennial time combines the two modes of preparedness: “Soon there will be rivers of blood flowing so we are donating to get ready for that. . . . So many people are going to die, and we can’t help that. But those who survive can take our blood.” *Inoculation* for the donating person and *insurance* for others are held together in such donation acts. The time of the civic—voluntary blood donation’s metatemporality composed of repetitions over time as dutiful contributions to civic life (see chapter 6)—folds together rational and millennial times in relations of disruptive enablement. Hematic futures are differentially multiple.

In chapter 5 we described a less cosmic insurance mode: the voluntary card offered to donors after they have donated. As we explained, this card entitles them or their family members to receive blood should they require it in the future. The card is a locus of dissension in Indian blood banking circles for several reasons.
Chief among them is that it makes the blood bank too banklike in the most primitive sense of a system of deposits and withdrawals. Of course, any blood bank contains features of such a system, but the card individualizes and privatizes those features (cf. Strathern 2009, 15). For many blood bankers, the passbook function of the card and future expectations it seems to engender make it a kind of Trojan horse undermining the larger project of constituting a donor base that gives with no sense of entitlement or expectation. As a Mumbai recruiter put it to us: “A lot of donations are not voluntary in the real sense because they are looking for something they get out of giving blood—a lot of donors give because they want the assurance they will receive it whenever they want it in the future. The card system is very retrograde. Some day we will have to wean them off it because you’re creating blood depositors. [The card] is a matter of the psychology of donors—it is to get them to donate.”

Does the card reflect a psychology of expectation on the part of donors, as this recruiter suggests, or does it rather create such a psychology? Slogans such as “Be a donor, not a depositor,” prominently displayed in Mumbai, for instance, reflect this recruiter’s wish to wean donors off the cards they are currently given. From the point of view of donors, however, the picture is confusing and disheartening: blood banks give them cards entitling them to receive free blood should they need it, but if they seek to utilize them they are criticized for failing to donate their blood without expectation. Indeed, blood banks may not honor the cards. Blood banks appear to call into existence a certain conception of morality but also destroy the grounds for taking it seriously (Poole 1991, ix). Different futurial imperatives compete with one another: a utopic future in which voluntary donations will be made “without expectation” and a more practical one in which one’s family members will be able to obtain blood should they require it.

Blood banks’ refusal to honor the cards they dispense represents an attempt both to limit their liabilities and to stabilize the gift as a gift. Such stabilization attempts only underscore the scandalous alterability of transactional forms. The card is more than just a marker and creator of expectation and provider of protection against the effects of possible eventualities. It is in reference to the card that we can see most clearly how what was supposed to be a series of linear transitions between transactional forms, from those classed as dangerous and obsolete (paid and replacement) to another classed as safe and modern (voluntary), is in fact a domain of transactional simultaneity and reversion: voluntary donation, if a card is involved, may be viewed as “paid donation in kind.” Moreover, that card—already an “in kind” payment—may itself be sold. But the offering of the card also (and again) brings to light the closeness of replacement and voluntary donation. They are temporal inversions of one another. In one case the donor must replace that which is needed for his or her transfusion-requiring relative; in
the other, the blood bank replaces for the donor’s transfusion-requiring relative what was previously taken from the donor. In its temporal arrangement, voluntary donation is made visible as a preemptive, or nonimmediate, mode of replacement. An ideal-typical voluntary donor donates for anybody who is in need. But rationales of specificity accompany this outward movement: the donor card entitles specific people to benefit (i.e., those known to the donor or the donor’s immediate family); a donation for anyone is therefore simultaneously a narrow-focused protective act. In replacement donation the rationale of specificity is reactive and immediate; in voluntary donation it is preemptive, a kind of forward planning. Thus, the narrow specificity of replacement is not eliminated in the successor transactional form but rather repositioned: it comes into play in a different moment, with the abstracted gift for anyone in part facilitated by the entitlement it provides for someone. This is not to suggest that donors’ motivations are in either case dealilke; neither would we wish to overlook the key experiential differences between the forms but would rather point out the structural similarities and reversions between the transactions that are the source of the dissensus and controversy attached to them. When we also consider the ways in which the rhythm of replacement informs the pattern of voluntary camps (see chapter 6), voluntary donation comes to appear positively possessed by the replacement mode it was meant to supplant, the relation between them not one of succession but sublation—an economy of Russian dolls.

**Bloodscape of Difference**

Let us now return to our analytic of a bloodscape of difference by reading back through it the different thematics of this book. Recall that the bloodscape of difference, in our characterization, is composed of interrelations between temporalities, proportionalities, and sovereignties, each of which itself, critically, is differentially composed.

**Different temporalities:** Mimetic bleeding is bleeding that refers back to and reenacts a prior bleeding; it is also, therefore, a form of repetition. The repetition is never isomorphic with that which is repeated; it is separate and different. But the mimetic repeat may also *extend* that which is repeated, make it endure, and open it up to a new sphere of actions and relationships. It may constitute a form of, or claim to, inheritance (DSS bleeding as a mimetic extension of Sikh bleeding; see chapter 6). It may in turn serve to contest that inheritance (Sikh bleeding as a mimetic extension of DSS bleeding as a mimetic extension of Sikh bleeding). It may reenact, make fresh, and form a response to nationalist bleeding (chapter 2) or other sacrifices (chapter 6). It may call for its own mimesis (chapter 2). Acts
of bleeding “quote” other acts of bleeding (chapters 1 and 2). Voluntary blood donation’s temporality as metricality is a composite of these and other repetitions. The nonhuman repetition of cellular death and regeneration allows the movement, examined in chapter 4, from a conception of the act of blood donation as irreversible and nonrepeatable to an act that is reversible and therefore repeatable. “It is time to come back and donate,” says the blood service. The donor can only “come back” because blood comes back.

The rhythms of blood donation are multiple and conflicted, and the time it takes to give, the time it takes to receive and the time that is “enabled” are in complex relation. Institutionally speaking, the transfusion, which itself embodies “a temporality of second chances” (V. Das 2007, 101), is a remarkable spatiotemporal achievement—a product of many different actors’ labor in and of time across the vein-to-vein chain (cf. Berner and Bjorkman 2017). As we explained above, blood is a substance of time in its own right, its futures inclusive of but not reducible to the speculative claims of promissory biocapital. The wishes and hopes it carries are linked to its transitivity.

**Different proportionalities:** Drawing on Corsín Jiménez’s innovative work, we have employed a proportional lens to trace substances and exchanges in and out of balance, and suggest that such a lens is indispensable for studying bloodscapes of difference, since rightful hematic balances (both within and outside bodies) are rare in the extreme, with whole economies and rhetorical and campaign apparatuses coming into existence in order to correct them (see chapters 4 and 5). We emphasize again, however, that proportionalities, temporalities, and sovereignties emerge together and in dialectical relations within bloodscapes. For instance, temporalities of repetition may be disproportionate, as when a paid donor gives too frequently, or a replacement donor not frequently enough (chapter 6). The figure of the phantom or ghost unit (chapter 5)—an “as if” blood product belonging to virtual time—is calculated by subtracting the actualized part from the potential whole: whether blood donors (chapters 3 and 5) or blood prescribers (chapter 5) form the target, morally charged proportional logics may be mobilized as means of pointing out failings and inducing reform.

The “sizing up and down of descriptions” (Corsín Jiménez 2013, 2) is a scalar property of a blood economy that is in large part formed out of attempts to move surpluses that are out of place into the “right” places (chapters 4 and 5). Excesses can be useful if properly located (distributed). The excess of sacrifice, we suggested, is not eliminated but redimensioned. This is in spite of AVBDWB efforts to make the only hematic excess that matters the one that is held within all human bodies. In this regard, and again following an insight from Corsín Jiménez, we suggested the term “spillover hematology.” The gift share identified by AVBDWB
activists—flowing over its originating biological province to help others as well—is political because it is a field of contestation. Consisting of the surplus within a person’s lifeblood that can be safely donated, it is made to stand against depictions of a selfishness biologically determined, for it now looks as if human bodies were made to give (pro)portions of their blood to others (chapter 4). A darker spillover hematology was described in chapter 5: another kind of surplus is secretly generated in the blood bank. This is possible due to the epistemological inscrutability of the blood unit, the proportions of which are productively reversible: one, now three, and back to one again. Component separation redimensions the unit of blood—it is a technology of (dis)proportionality. How will the effects generated by the resizing of the blood unit be channeled—redistributively in order to help the “kin-poor,” or acquisitively?

A proportional politics is also evident in the way in which gifts may be mobilized as a particular species of criticism: in chapter 3 we elaborated the partonomic gift that foregrounds proportional relations between the given and not given, with that which is given underscoring (and thereby critiquing) that which is not (i.e., deficits and absences of care and concern). The Sant Nirankaris display just such a logic in critiquing (and redressing) fallen familial forms; the Bhopali activist-children who donate paper hearts to the prime minister do likewise.

**Different sovereignties:** Relationships between excess and sovereignty are fascinatingly explored by Sheila Ager (2006). The particular immoderation she is interested in is royal incest in the Ptolemaic dynasty in which the breaching of limits produced and displayed power. We have explored a connected dynamic: immoderate bloodshed in political contexts as claims to authority and legitimacy (e.g., the Shiv Sena’s contested mega blood donation camp on Maharashtra Day and the discussion of “substances of the civic” [chapter 3]), and inheritance (chapter 6).

Blood donations and blood paintings perform bodily political commitments. Apparently less easy to simulate than fasting, blood extractions may, in fact, be just as deceptive. If one focus of chapter 3 was discussion of a fake blood donation camp taken as a species of political corruption, blood is also donated to protest, precisely, corruption. Indeed, this book has held together and moved between commentaries and campaigns as and about bloodshed. “City Youth Donate Blood for Corruption-Free India,” states a headline from 2011. We see that though such performances may “quote,” or mimetically repeat, other bleedings, they are often, at the same time, enacted in the subjunctive mood. “‘It is another war of freedom (from corruption) for which we decided to donate our blood just to express our solidarity to Anna [Hazare],’ said Vipulendra Pratap Singh, a research scholar of Hindi department.” Donating to the future, these Banaras Hindu
University students’ blood extractions also express a wish about it (that the future nation be corruption free). Yet the donations also form mimetic repetitions of the blood shed by nationalist freedom fighters: two wars of freedom—one from colonial rule, the other from corruption. Blood—a substance of time—flows between times, connecting and separating them. In this case its flow connects past and future sovereignties.

Many of Gandhi’s hematic reflections were also of course made in the context of an anticolonial politics. Moving from his personal concern to maintain proper circulation and blood pressure—in complex biomoral relation with external events—to delineate a hematic politics of sovereignty, the scalar specter of corrupt blood and locating the means to purify it were once more matters of concern. We encounter different blood purities and ways of thinking about hydraulic equilibrium. In particular, the blood mingled in martyrdom comes to be thought of as a process of purification. This commitment to intermixing comes to define a new set of criteria for the purity of blood in the body politic—the equidistant relation of several religious groups to the possibility of its sacrifice. A marker of abhorrent violence, ex-sanguination may yet give cause for celebration if performed unwaveringly in the face of the corrupt blood of a sovereign power. It is in this sense that blood flows between violence and nonviolence, connecting and separating the two misleadingly polar poles: demonstrating their mutual implication. As we saw in chapter 3, it also possesses a double valence in the case of menstrual activism. Indian feminist activists recognize the polyvalence of blood to connote violence and enforce segregation, yet they are also able to make it flow differently as a mechanism of exposure and medium of truth: blood’s as if, here, refers to a future sovereignty of bleeding, which will exist beyond the province of purity and pollution in newly remade substance-code relations. The substance flows: relations between substances and social order are not static.

The following was posted on Facebook on 18 August 2016 by “Blood Donors India”: “#Hyderabad ONLY Kamma Caste Donors, O+ve blood needed at Max Cure Hospital. 3 yr old CHILD. Pls call [. . . ].” Blood Donors India subsequently disowned and deleted the post, declaring it to be a fake, but not before many with Indian-sounding usernames had commented:

is this a joke? It’s a 3 year old child and thy r looking for caste here?

Group of mad people

Shameless

And in India even freaking blood needs to be caste proofed. Pathetic how perfect idiots still exist in India. Time to call and ask the joker how does the caste matter for blood for a baby.
I will be happy if they don’t get blood group accordingly to their caste preference and their loved one dies.

I am a non kamma, want to donate blood, save the child and kick on the parents’ ass till they bleed to death.

The hoax, as Fleming and O’Carroll (2010, 58) put it, “lies in order to tell the truth.” Hoax or not, the post certainly did occasion revealing anxieties and accusations. The reversibility of the substance: from a hematic utopia of the “mingled stream” and flows across difference comes a quick return to caste-based purity and passionate denunciation. Caste politics may indeed witness rapid degenerations of hematic utopias. We quote from a poem by Varavara Rao that was written in response to upper-caste protests against the Indian government’s move to institutionalize affirmative action in higher education and public employment (original in Telugu).29

We stand in hospital queues
To sell blood to buy food
Except for the smell of poverty and hunger
How can it acquire
The patriotic flavor
Of your blood donation?

Like the Bhopali children’s gifts of paper hearts, the words of the poem are laced with irony. Yet here the gift not given critiques that which is. We suggest that it is not that the model of partonomic critique is destabilized by the example of Rao’s poem, but that it is made flexible: the proportional elements of transactions can be pejoratively valued as surfeits and deficits and become subject to moral judgments. The given and the withheld, so to speak, comment on one another: the given upon the withheld, or indeed, the withheld upon the given.

This book has illustrated that blood donation is now an established mode of public protest throughout India, and this has included blood donation in order to protest caste reservations. For instance, in 2007 trainee medics in Bangalore fasted, conducted numerous boycotts, formed a silent human chain, and donated blood in protest against proposals to reserve 27 percent of places in elite medical institutions for so-called Other Backward Classes.30 In a riposte to the special privileges claimed by pro-reservation campaigners, protesters sought to occupy the modernist-integrative high ground in protesting charitably (the beneficiaries being pointedly no one in particular). For all the poetic license taken in Rao’s poem (as if all low-caste people had to sell their blood to survive), the point is compellingly made that one has to be of a certain socioeconomic status to even begin to consider voluntarily shedding one’s blood as a means of political expression. The
“we” of the poem—laborers, those of nonelite status who might qualify for reservations—are hardly likely to consider that they possess the surplus blood necessary to shed it in order to form political statements. (They are far more likely to consider their bodies to contain a deficit.) Thus, that which is not given—that which indeed may be sold—thus dramatically highlights the self-serving underlay of the “integrative,” “charitable,” and “patriotic” protest blood donation and its class basis. The bloodscape of difference contains other substances besides. The drama of the mediatized blood gift, suggests Rao, all too easily deflects attention from other ungiven substances of the civic and bare survival: food and water.