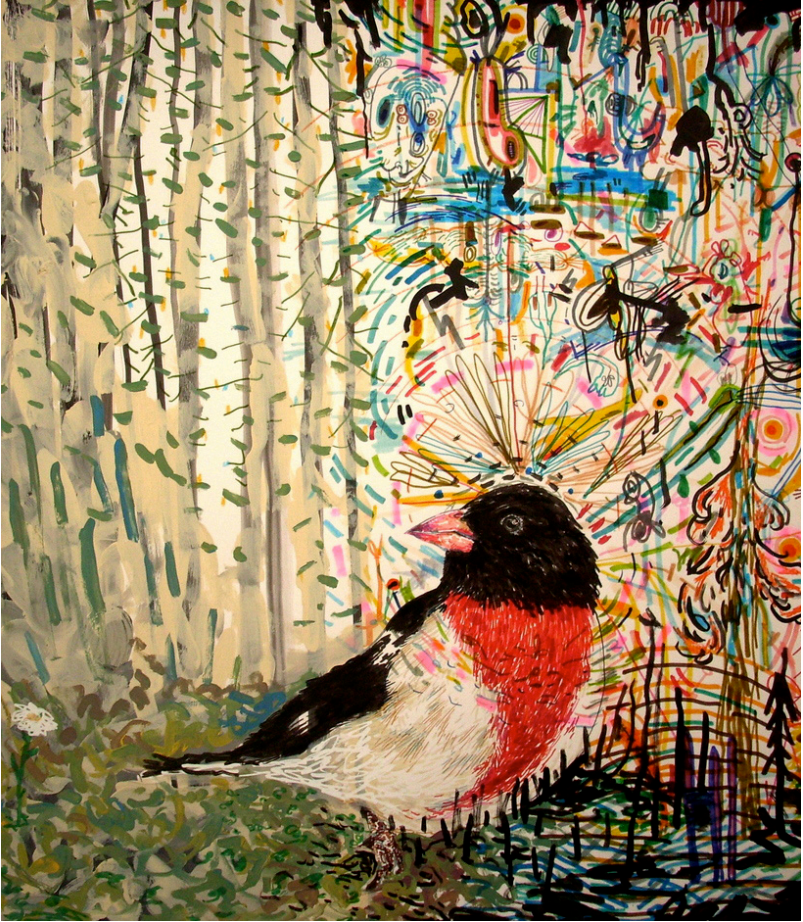


doing theory



theory@buffalo 20

theory@buffalo 20

doing theory

theory@buffalo 20

doing theory

Editors:

Gudrun Elsa Bragadottir, Natalia Pamula and Doruk Tatar

Editorial Board:

Marta Aleksandrowicz, Yintong Bao, Patricia Chaudron, Donald Cross, Josh Dawson, Elif Ege, Cheryl A. Emerson, Hyoseol Ha, Shayna S. Israel, Kevin Kane, Rachelle Kelchlin, Dipanjan Maitra, Jocelyn E. Marshall, Macy McDonald, Melissa Moeller, Mengxue Wu

Advisory Board:

David E. Johnson, Ewa Ziarek and Krzysztof Ziarek

Cover Design and Layout:

Gudrun Elsa Bragadottir

Cover Image: "The Oracle" by Schuyler Maehl

Sponsored by:

The Department of Comparative Literature, University at Buffalo

For more information and archived issues visit:

<http://gsa.buffalo.edu/theory/>

<http://facebook.com/theorybuffalo>

Copyright © 2018 Department of Comparative Literature, University at Buffalo. All rights reserved.

ISBN 978-0-9845662-6-6

contents

GUDRUN ELSA BRAGADOTTIR, NATALIA PAMULA & DORUK TATAR	
Editorial Introduction: doing theory	1
CECILIA SJÖHOLM	
Speech in the Belly: The Ear of Critical Thought	7
CHERYL A. EMERSON	
When Language Fails: A Review of Jill Stauffer's <i>Ethical Loneliness: The Injustice of Not Being Heard</i>	21
REY CHOW	
The Remains of Our Day: Evolving Conceptual Frames	29
ELISABETH ANKER	
Longing for Sovereignty: Violence and Power in the Trump Era	39
HAMIT BOZARSLAN	
When Violence Dominates All But Decides Nothing: Reflections on Violence, Cruelty, and the City	50
MADHAVI MENON	
Desiring India	68
RODOLPHE GASCHÉ	
Interview: Of Theory, and Its Affects, Political, or Other	80
ELIZABETH GROSZ	
Interview: The Problem of Theory Revisited	90
Contributors	98
theory@buffalo 21: [dis]placements	101

*Gudrun Elsa Bragadottir,
Natalia Pamula & Doruk Tatar*

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION:
DOING THEORY

In recent years, the value of critical theory has been questioned by various thinkers for reasons that may seem contradictory. On the one hand, it has been subject to criticism for its excess, for being redundant in the face of actual facts. On the other, it has been seen as lacking, impoverishing the object of analysis by forcing upon it a limiting framework. In response to this, humanities scholars have sought out new analytic tools, for example in the fields of neuroscience, cognitive science, and biology. The status of theory is reflected in economic difficulties confronted by university departments within the humanities, where comparative literature departments at many institutions are either diminishing—what is now termed “right-sizing” the departments—or being closed altogether, both in the U.S. and abroad. The 20th anniversary issue of *theory@buffalo* speaks to this “existential crisis” being experienced in the humanities. Is it time to move on from theory and cultivate other ways of thinking? Or is it time to rethink the ways we do theory and clarify its importance as a mode of engaging with the world—one that is just as indispensable as the scientific?

We want to emphasize the importance of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s “Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading, Or, You’re So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You” for the theme of this issue of *theory@buffalo*. In her essay, Sedgwick asks, with a considerable degree of urgency, what knowledge *does*. In this issue of *theory@buffalo*, we echo her words, asking: What does theory do?

What can or could it do? According to Sedgwick, critical theory tends to assume a predominantly suspicious or “paranoid” attitude toward its object of investigation while it can also take other forms, among which is “reparative reading”—a position that allows for ambiguity and a coming-to-terms with an imperfect world. Importantly, Sedgwick’s stance towards theory is a reparative one; she does by no means reject paranoid reading, but points to its shortcomings with the possible solution of reparative reading in mind. Thus, she strives to repair theory where it needs mending. This is exactly what some of the authors of this issue are doing as well, focusing in particular on how theory can be done on more democratic or just terms, in ways that are accessible and strive to be better. The issue’s first two pieces focus on the importance of listening for theory; Cecilia Sjöholm’s “Speech in the Belly: The Ear of Critical Thought” and Cheryl Emerson’s review of Jill Stauffer’s *Ethical Loneliness: The Injustice of Not Being Heard* both approach the topic of “hearing” the other, for doing theory more effectively as well as for bringing justice to those who have suffered in unjust circumstances.

When we say we want to “do theory” we mean doing theory that is accessible. Our approach is informed by disability studies, a relatively new field of study, that thinks of disability as a political category and a mode of difference, which does not require medical intervention, but social accommodation. We understand accessible theory as theory that engages with political concerns—the way Elizabeth Grosz discusses it in an interview that appears in this issue. Doing theory accessibly is to invite voices and populations that have been previously excluded from academic and public discourses and to invent new ways and languages, perhaps more creative or less restricted by academic jargon, of addressing politics.

The urgency of the issue of accessibility is heightened in the current political atmosphere, where new populism is on the rise, causing a growing feeling of anti-intellectualism across the world. This political climate is of great interest to our issue. Elisabeth Anker’s article speaks directly into this development in the U.S. with the recent election of Donald Trump into the presidency. In this context, as it relates to the university in the U.S. and outside it, neoconservatism and neoliberalism go hand in hand in the onslaught to academia and especially humanities departments within it. This phenomenon often translates into political violence on theory. Critical theory is a threat to populist politics and thus nativist-nationalist politics try to “do theory in”—to terminate it. The economically-driven downsiz-

ings and closures of humanities departments in the U.S. and Europe take a more political-ideological agenda in non-Western countries. The government-led onslaught on the Central European University in Hungary and the ongoing crackdown on “academics for peace” in Turkey are just two examples of illiberal politics within the academia in the recent years.

The status of theory changes in terms of the task(s) assigned to it in different geographies. In non-Western contexts like Turkey and India, where one witnesses a significant rise of nationalist-nativist populisms, theory is often subjected to ideological and political categorization, as it can be a suspect for bringing thoughts and concepts (mostly of Western origin) foreign to the native and national specificities of such contexts. A similar attitude of designating ‘inside and outside’ is particularly common among post-colonial nationalist visions of culture, as observed by Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism*. The distinctions of inside and outside, ours and theirs, friend and enemy exert violence on theory by subjecting it to modes of operations alien to theory. Hamit Bozarslan and Madhavi Menon offer invaluable insights on the position of theory between love and aggression, Eros and Thanatos, in non-Western contexts.

For this issue of *theory@buffalo*, we invited a wide range of articles discussing the topic of theory and its practice, some of which provide excellent examples of the ways theory can be done and, crucially, *is done* in today’s political climate. The issue will begin with texts that deal with theory and its potentiality; texts whose authors consider how theory could be done differently and more effectively.

In her article, Cecilia Sjöholm discusses the ways listening is crucial to critical theory, suggesting that under current conditions of censorship and failure of democratic processes, it is crucial to develop an “ear for critical thought.” She argues that this ear can be developed as an aspect of the capacity of thought as such, through the writings of Hannah Arendt, and then proceeds to explore the tonalities of thought and the importance of mood for engaging with the world and incorporating the voices of others in our critical thinking. The effort of incorporating listening in the way we conceive of critical thought, which, as Sjöholm points out, has historically been defined mainly in relation to vision, involves acknowledging “how thought implies the existence of the other in me, not through content but through tonality.” Listening does not only involve developing an ear for tonalities and voices, but also for silences, taking in to account the limitations of critical thought and the fact that some voices

have traditionally been deemed unworthy of being listed to and thus tend to be unheard.

Cheryl Emerson also tackles the problem of listening in her review of Jill Stauffer's *Ethical Loneliness: The Injustice of Not Being Heard*, in which the author visits various sites dedicated to what could be termed "ethical" hearing, such as "international courts, war crime tribunals, truth commissions, and other formal settings," where hearing fails despite good intentions. As Emerson points out, "From the title onward, Stauffer's book responds to multiple failures of language: a double abandonment by humanity, the first experienced in conditions of unspeakable suffering, and the second when attempts to speak of such suffering go unheard." As Emerson notes, the particular isolation experienced by those who have experienced this double abandonment is what Stauffer describes as "ethical loneliness;" loneliness that differs in important ways from the loneliness experienced by those "within the web of human relations."

Rey Chow's article marks a transition from discussing the ways theory can be done differently to providing an example of how theory is important for exploring specific historical moments and shifts within culture. In her article, "The Remains of Our Day: Evolving Conceptual Frames," she offers new ways of conceptualizing the notion of the "global" by invoking the 2016 death of African-American Philando Castiles and the use of social media in live-streaming his killing. Chow understands the global here as an evacuation of a temporal difference or "a capacity for going viral." However, a production and an immediate consumption of images of violence does little to ameliorate the causes of violence itself. In order to think through the relationship of the global and violence, Chow brings up the concept of the "remains" and juxtaposes it with the contemporary impossibility of losing data provided by the web and "save" function. She ends by urging us to consider "the global-as-viral" when conceptualizing contemporary biopolitics.

The two articles that follow Ray Chow's piece deal with different cultural and political contexts; the current state of affairs in the U.S., where Donald Trump was recently and controversially elected president and the war-torn geographies and temporalities in the Middle East. As Elisabeth Anker discusses in her article, the erosion of structures maintaining state power and individual autonomy over recent decades has resulted in a political backlash against the global, as well as an effort to "reinvigorate state sovereignty over and against the forces siphoning control over state territory." Ank-

er's focus is on one particular important effort to shore up state sovereignty; the election of president Donald Trump. Through analyzing the speech Trump gave to the Republican National Convention during his campaign, Anker shows that Trump's vision of sovereignty, which appeals to so many U.S. citizens, "eliminates participation and equality from visions of the political and disentangles freedom from the promise of sovereignty." In her analysis, Anker explores how Trump's discourse appeals to his supporters, which are predominantly white and to a great extent male, through the promise of "Making America Great Again" and thus restoring "sovereign greatness to a nation weakened by its openness to foreigners," at a time when many of his supporters feel the privilege to which they have historically been entitled to be precarious.

Hamit Bozarslan's article, translated from French by Donald Cross for *theory@buffalo*, is an attempt to theorize the current crisis of nation states in the Middle East as well as an exploration of what violence does to the conditions of possibility of "doing theory" in the Middle East after the Arab Spring. But even though Bozarslan's reflections on violence have their point of departure in the Middle East, he sees violence as a universal phenomenon. In the concrete examples from the recent history of Middle Eastern politics, Bozarslan draws attention to a kind of violence as "pure destruction" that "sweeps away everything in its path" including time that unifies and regulates power relations and everyday interactions. According to Bozarslan "the fragilization and fragmentation" of time and space bring along the destruction of any sense of future horizons, and hence a basic condition of possibility for society to continue existing.

Bozarslan's discussion of Thanatos' calamities in the Middle East is followed by Madhavi Menon's critical intervention to the notion of Eros in India. In her essay, Menon presents "a history of desire" as an alternative to challenge Michel Foucault's taxonomy in *The History of Sexuality*. For Menon, the temporal and terminological distinction of the history of sexuality overlaps with Foucault's cultural distinction between East and West: "the *ars erotica* belonged to the past, while the *scientia sexualis* is now." The "history of desire in India," in Menon's view, complicates that distinction central to Foucault's analysis. Menon also points at the absence of the colonial encounter between Western forces on the one hand and India and the Arab world on the other in Foucault's framework. Menon argues that, without reference to colonial relations, the colonial mindset's association of "the East" to "a primitive and backward moment in

relation to the developed ‘West’” seems lacking.

The issue ends with two interviews on the topic of theory, the first one with Rodolphe Gasché, who holds the Eugenio Donato Chair of Comparative Literature at the University at Buffalo and the second with Elizabeth Grosz, who is a former professor at the Department of Comparative Literature at University at Buffalo but now holds a position at Duke University. Both of them engage with the question of what it means to do theory at American universities today and what kind of urgencies academia needs to address. Having an issue titled ‘doing theory,’ of course, called for an invitation to Rodolphe Gasché, who has been doing theory for at least five decades. Our interview with Gasché visits the inside and outside facets of theory and dwells on theory’s relation to violence, praxis, and larger social-political issues. Throughout the interview, Gasché takes us to a fascinating stroll in not only the deep waters of theoretical discussions on thinkers like Kant, Derrida, and Arendt but also the student movements of the 1960s and the current hardship that academia and the humanities in particular have been going through. He also shares his ideas about the situation that theory is in today.

In 1999 Elizabeth Grosz wrote an article for *theory@buffalo* entitled “The Problem of Theory.” In 2017 we asked her to revisit that piece as we were curious which theories and fields of study that emerged after 1999 surprised her and created new and exciting avenues for engagement. 2017, though, is a year in which Trump became the U.S. president and thus Grosz discusses pressing political, social, and environmental issues theory needs to address and the role of universities in responding to the changing political landscape. By discussing this particular historical moment, Grosz addresses the interconnection of theory and practice and what it can and should do now, but she also urges us to look beyond this specific moment and think more broadly about the ways in which knowledge is produced and its relation to time and capital.

Cecilia Sjöholm

SPEECH IN THE BELLY: THE EAR OF
CRITICAL THOUGHT

INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE PROBLEM

The basic conviction that critical thought is connected to discourse appears to be unquestionable. What, however, only very rarely becomes the subject of inquiry is the way in which it is connected to listening. Insofar as language, and critical-thinking language in particular, has been historically defined mainly in relation to vision, the role of listening in language and thought, in philosophy and what we call critical theory, is still an open field for research. In a moment of history when democratic demands are overrun in countries with democratic constitutions, when new kinds of censorship of both language and thought are instigated, the necessity of developing an “ear of critical thought” appears necessary. How is thought, and critical reflection, related to the capacity for listening, and in what way is that capacity integrated in thought as such?

Critical theory may approach the sense of hearing—or perhaps rather the capacity for listening—in order to extend both the scope of its inquiries and perhaps also the awareness of its own limitations, as seen both from a historical perspective and from within the demands of its own role in contemporary cultural analysis. As I will suggest, such an ear can be developed as an aspect of thought as such. Looking at the writings of Hannah Arendt, we find the possibility of developing such a notion. In the work of Arendt, the concept of mood is most often used to imply a specific political movement or action.¹ But the idea of mood is reflected upon not only with regards

to collectivity, but also with regards to thought as such. Reflection is often connected with a tonality.

Considering the ways in which listening can be related to critical theory, two aspects may be stressed. For the first, the art of listening is related to the capacity to think, and not only to affect or emotion, although these can certainly supply an aid for thought. Secondly, the act of listening negotiates the ability to put oneself in the place of the other. These two aspects can be considered integral to the "ear of critical thought;" they point to a notion of listening that has less to do with the very sensual experience of listening than with the inherent possibility of using the tonalities of thought in philosophical, critical, ethical, or political reflection.

Philosophy, as indicated already in Aristotle, has historically been conceived through a concept of *theoria*, an idea of overview or spectatorship. This indicates that philosophy is closely related to the sense of seeing. In the Western history of the senses, seeing is often referred to as one of the "higher" senses, since it does not immediately imply corporeal engagement, like "touch." Poetry, in contrast, has in periods of history been related to the sense of "listening." In the 18th century, as the arts were categorized, Johann Gottfried Herder, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, and G. W. F. Hegel identified the signifying means of poetry as tone rather than text, although the feeling of sonority has been replaced by a concrete sign that is articulated by a voice.² Voice and tonality, rather than textual and intertextual relations, dominated the view on poetry, but were later detached from poetic understanding. However, the capacity of "listening" can be applied to both philosophy and literature.

The question of how listening can be attached to reflective thought overruns aesthetic questions involving music. It is also not necessarily concerned with specific questions of dialogue. Moreover, it supplements, rather than being identical to, the engagement with public discourse and public demands. What is at stake here is the way in which the tradition of critical thought has identified something which may be called an inner voice. It is not a question of how thought reflects on experience, or how it affirms its positions in the mind. It is also not a question of judgment. It is rather a question of how thought implies the existence of the other in me, not through content but through tonality.

HOW DO I LISTEN?

As Mladen Dolar has pointed out in his book on the voice as the hidden tonality in metaphysics, ethics, politics, and physics, the first internal voice can be presented as a Socratic consciousness.³ Here, the voice has a daemonic function. In fact, Socrates, the fictional character, is a voice and nothing more: he has no body, no character, no face. It is this shadow which has continued to haunt philosophy, through an invisible voice of consciousness perhaps, but also through the invocation of laws and moral concepts in a more formalized manner. From a Socratic point of view, Dolar argues that the philosopher is submitted to the daemon of the voice, rather than being its agent (85).

In *À l'écoute*, Jean-Luc Nancy argues that the visible and the audible appeal to two different faculties with regards to their transcendental dimensions: the experience of visible appearances is carried by shapes and qualities that can all be referred to the same spatial categories. The transcendental potentiality of sounds lies in their temporal dimension. The sense of listening, to Nancy, testifies not to appearances or presentations, but rather to the "presence of presence;" not to the "pure" presence of phenomena that can be analyzed beyond the reflectiveness of aesthetic subjectivity, but rather to the presence of being here, at a specific place and time (37, translation by the author).

What is interesting about this categorization is the awareness of the limitations inherent in both senses. Not only does Nancy point to an intrinsic difference between the senses of hearing and seeing at the level of transcendental categorizations. He points to the limits of critical thought in its attempt to encompass phenomena in their totality. What aims for the simultaneous (spatial comprehension) misses the contemporary (the "presence of presence"). What aims for the contemporary misses the simultaneous. When it comes to critical thought and its engagement with phenomena, this is quite crucial: whereas awareness of the struggle with the relation between the visible and the invisible has been well integrated into the critical perspectives of feminism, post-colonialism, whiteness studies, etc.—think, for instance, of Sara Ahmed's seminal text on whiteness as the invisible grounding of the racial and racist categorization of skin tone⁴—the relation between what is heard and what is unheard is less inquired into, although that is also made an aspect of Ahmed's analysis—what we decide is worthy of hearing will also affect the

way in which we are capable of observing the way bodies are structured in space and time.

Critical thought would do well to take the unhearing, and the unheard of, into account, developing a more sensitive ear for tonalities and voices as well as for silences. From this follows a subset of questions related to the philosophical-aesthetic understanding of the act of listening. Is our sense of listening private, or does it engage and direct us to a community? Is our sense of listening more related to corporeal desires and intimate relations, or can it offer an instrument of a better understanding of community? I would like to suggest that the sense of listening transcends the division between private and public, intimate and collective, in a way that makes it crucial to critical theory.

The critique of Western logo- and visual-centrism (as we can find for instance in Jacques Derrida, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous) has pointed out that logocentric hierarchies maintain vision as active and masculine, whereas listening is framed as passive and feminine.⁵ This is inherent in the German words for hearing. The German verb *hö-ren* means “to listen.” But it is also related to words that imply, respectively, “power”—*geh-orchen*, obey, be in bondage—and “to belong”—*hör-ich*, *gehören*. The implications of a relationship of power could be related to the way in which listening is conceived. To quote Nancy again, the subject of vision is always given as an angle, a point of view. The hearing, however, is penetrated and called onto itself at the same time (44). The listener is not identified as an agent, as can be seen by looking into the etymology of the German concept outlined above. He/she is a receptor. Sounds are not something we act upon. They are something that breaks our shields, that runs deep into us. Whereas vision is framed, listening exposes us to a lack of limit.

From such a perspective, the sense of listening can be described as a kind of sensorial encroachment. The sounds that we hear impinge upon us; the voice that we are exposed to can be conceived as being both on the outside and on the inside.

This turns sounds also into an inherently powerful political tool. The Heideggerian term *Stimmungen* relates to a form of unraveling of Being that is non-discursive and non-conceptual. It is also not perceptible or sensible; it is a mood that sticks to phenomena of experience without being a property of them. To Martin Heidegger, moods such as fear and the sense of the uncanny unravel predicaments of Being. At the same time, it comes across in music, literature,

and art in general. In this sense, *Stimmungen* belongs to those aspects that cut across the line between literature and philosophy (§40 [185-90], 230-35). At the same time, there is, as was understood by Hannah Arendt, an aspect of mood that can be used to imply a tonality that is collective, and that overruns the sheer hearing of sounds. A *Stimmung* is an attunement, the coming-together of a mood. The German word *Stimmung* evokes the assembling of voices. Music creates moods. As has been evoked by Hannah Arendt, mood is an aspect of collective agency (On Revolution 119).

But moods may also be called upon in the service of totalitarian ideology. In Slavoj Žižek's film *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*, one scene depicts Beethoven's ninth symphony as a suggestive device; not only is it used for the European Union, it was also a symbol in Nazi Germany, China of the cultural revolution, Stalinist USSR, etc., an empty shell into which all ideologies can be spilled. The creation of a mood, or *Stimmung*, may be an extraordinarily powerful tool of ideological filtering. The mood we connect with tonalities needs to be supplemented with critical thought in order to function on the side of reflection.

I CAN HEAR MYSELF THINKING

As Nancy has pointed out, what the tradition of aisthesis has taught us is that to sense is to feel oneself. What defines the subject is precisely its sensory knowledge of itself; it feels itself, but at the same time it remains uncaught by the senses; this is the "I" of apperception (25). As we look at the early history of texts that precede the birth of aesthetics properly speaking, this logic comes to the fore: the aesthetic subject is born through the writer that reflects on itself sensing, such as Augustine, Hildegard of Bingen, or Descartes. What is rarely noted, however, is that the aesthetic question of hearing is linked from the outset to that of critical thought, as the philosophical field called critique develops in the 18th century, in close relation to aesthetics.

Tonality is present not only in the reception of poetry, but also in the figuration of thought. All language, Kant writes in his *Anthropology*, is signification of thought. This means that thought is not devoid of communicable language. It is communicable language directed to oneself. Thinking, he comments famously, is *speaking* with oneself; figuratively, it would correspond to "speech in the belly"

(§§ 39, 86). This means that thought, to Kant, is accompanied by an “I” of apperception that is in fact tangible through an inner tonality: to think is to listen to oneself. In Kant, the tonality of the belly can be incurred in the movement towards humanity’s venture to think for itself, i.e., to use reason, which means that thought, among other criteria for a thought that has matured into reason, should be reflective and consistent, but should also apply a certain universalist command: “to think for oneself (in communication with human beings) into the place of every other person” (§59).

We may reflect for a moment on this suggestion. It may well be the case that thought itself, as Arendt notes in her diaries, is guilty of the mistaken leap towards a humanist metaphysics that occurs when thought is conceived of as an inner, silent dialogue with a representative of reason that has no tone and no self. When thought fails to appear in the form of a tone, or when it appears in a way that is not distinct enough, the thinking self appears to be ageless, without qualities: “It is,” Arendt writes, “as if I am not a human being, but the human being” (*Denktagebuch* 723, translation by the author). The very attachment to the idea of thinking as a kind of toneless inner dialogue implicates that I can only be myself when I am thinking, Arendt writes: this is the grave mistake of *Sein und Zeit*. Heidegger, Arendt notes, could not deal with the fact that thought might be not only complicit with, but in fact also dependent on, the manifestation of plurality. Such a manifestation may offer itself in public space, for instance; to Arendt, such plurality was a condition of thought, and of the appearance of singularity. But not only Heidegger is unable to listen. The sterility of the thought of Hegel and Marx, Arendt argues, lies in their understanding of thought as pure consciousness (*Denktagebuch* 695). In a note on Heidegger, Arendt holds the great problem of thought, and therefore of philosophy, to be its lack of appearances. Arendt holds this reflection to be soundless. But this is an assumption that is modified in other places by a reference to tonality.

The voice from the belly, the inner voice from within the writings of Kant, suggests a doubleness of agency that is reflected on in *The Life of the Mind*. The doubleness of the thinking individual is added to her notion of plurality. Arendt’s agent of thought is what she calls a two-in-one, which in itself is an aspect of plurality and replaces the transcendental subject as agent of experience. As a reader of Kant, Arendt would later pick up the idea that to think is to speak for oneself, and to hear oneself “*innerlich*” (Kant §§ 39, 86). This “inner” motion of thought is not only inner with regards to being incorporat-

ed. It is “*innerlich*,” that is, in-tense, with regards to tonality.

Thought is not the universal reflection of reason, although it can be that. Most of the time, however, it is embedded in a mood which carries as much meaning as do the connotations of the words that flow in a conscious trail of thought. The mood of the thinking ego, she writes, is serenity, melancholy even, and intensely involved with recollection. It may also be ingrained with the punishing voice of conscience, or the voice of God; so close to consciousness, as in Shakespeare’s rendering of Richard III’s austere dialogues with himself.⁶ Here, what comes to the fore is a reflection on thought that cannot be dissociated from a sounding in which the thinking agent also hears its own thoughts. The subject that thinks does so from a position in which its reflections are intertwined with the tonality of its inner voice. Reading Humboldt, Arendt notes that the tone of language is the sensibilization of language. What is “inner” comes to the fore as a mood. Through this mood, language is not only pointing to phenomena, but also to itself. Language, therefore, does not communicate emotions to the exterior world as much as it transposes thought on various phenomena through moods (*Denktagebuch* 690). In this way, thought becomes more mood and tonality than reason.

If the inner voice is carried by tone, the capacity to think may well be related to the capacity to listen: the first requisite in unravelling the ear of critical thought.

THE THOUGHT OF THE OTHER

The second aspect of its potential criticality was that the act of listening may negotiate the capability of putting oneself in the place of the other. This is well explored by Arendt. In *The Life of the Mind*, she considers the relation of thought and morality, well known from her book on Eichmann. What she does also, however, is point to the fact that the thinking subject is enwrapped in the world of plurality, and not merely a subject of reason. Quoting Plato’s *Gorgias*, she discusses the following Socratic proposition: “It would be better for me that my lyre or a chorus I directed should be out of tune and loud with discord, and that multitudes of men should disagree with me rather than I, *being one*, should be out of harmony with myself and contradict me” (*On Thinking* 181). As Arendt notes, this is a paradoxical suggestion: in order for harmony to resound, we would need at least two tones, and therefore the I is not one, but marked by differ-

entiation or plurality from the very outset, in relation to itself. What does this mean?

The Kantian suggestion of an “inner voice” in thought directs us towards the life of the senses, as well as that of reason. Kant discusses inner sense as a function of thought affecting itself. For Kant, inner sense is a problem of psychology, and thus a question of experience that has to do with the way thought functions. As we experience the phenomenon of inner sense, we believe we are sensing ourselves as a kind of tangible phenomenon. However, this can only be an illusion of an experience. Kant’s discussion of inner sense resembles Hegel’s when he talks about the *schöne Seele*, or “beautiful soul.” It means figuring an inner life of the soul which lies hidden under other delusions, when in fact such a discovery only means giving up in the world and withdrawing into melancholy (Kant §§ 24, 53, 54).

To Arendt, however, thinking is critical and dialectical. In solitude, it literally resounds as man is becoming conscious about himself, and becoming conscious about being inherently plural. One might indeed discuss this in terms of a kind of introjection of alterity, although Arendt herself would never allow for such a psychoanalytic concept in her vocabulary. What resounds in thought is also nothing like the ego, or anything that has a punishing function. It is rather the manifestation of plurality in which the thinking subject is inserted and which is also what makes thinking possible. The capacity to think involves an “enlarged mentality.” This means that inner thought is not only a detached, ego-less, universalist abstraction; it is attached to a form of representation, although it may be a vague one; that of a tone, a sounding, a kind of voice.

As one can argue by reading Arendt, the inner voice can be imbued with tasks that point in a direction where the ear of critical thought, that is, the capacity of hearing, acquires a tonality that pushes the limits of the I of apperception. To think, to Arendt, is to engage in an inner dialogue; as an activity, it points to the primacy of alterity, since “the self is put in place of the friend, not the other way around.” This points to the fact that the “inner voice” in thought cannot simply be equated with reason. The inner voice rather is some kind of alterity. It is something that is integrated and yet it may push us in directions that we are not familiar with. Here, one may stress, again, that the very tonality of thought is the same as, but may well push the limits of, critical reflection. Thinking is open to voices and tonalities that are not congruent with, although they may be a condition for, the I of apperception.

The inner voice teaches me to think in the place of the other. How could I do that if I had not heard him? In other words, in my thoughts, I am never disengaged from the world, but in some sense receiving it through my inner voice.

Thought may carry a great variety of tonalities. Sometimes we may hear ourselves thinking. We may hear our own voice, as in an echo. Sometimes thoughts appear as voices in a cave. They strike us as from the outside. We hear them as if they are aspects of what Michel Chion calls *acousmêtre*, the invisible point that we can only hear but not see, and yet it is structuring our perception and our apprehension of space.⁸ When we hear our own thoughts, we may imagine ourselves alone, although we may be in a room full of people. When this occurs, we experience ourselves not as estranged from ourselves, but somehow as naturally double, as reflecting beings capable of reflecting in the world internally and silently, in our own minds. When the voices appear as foreign, as the voices of angels or devils, or simply as belonging to other people, this would be a sign of psychosis.⁹ When we hear our own thoughts internally, however, as an aspect of ourselves, we experience ourselves as beings of reason, capable of reflecting and, although we may be alone, capable of engaging in vivid internal reasoning.

THE MANY VOICES OF LITERATURE

As suggested by the reference to the philosophical discourse on literature early in this text, the experience of an inner voice may be conjoined to poetry and literature. Relating moods to critical thought is a question of engaging not music, but rather tonalities and accents. When philosophy listens to literature, it might get a sense of the inner voice. When it listens, instead of theorizing, something is breaking through. Here we deal with a kind of sensorial encroachment. The tone or voice is produced through a web of narratives, voices, tonalities, or moods. Such a web offers to a sense of listening something that is irreducible to hearing as a mere sense faculty. Psychoanalysis has shown precisely this, that signifiers are also sounds, which is something that also creates certain relations of associations, and which creates a certain layering between the conscious and the unconscious.

The experience of mood as a kind of tonality is not a question

of translating emotions. It is not about something; it merely is, the presence of presence. Poetic language, as is stressed by Arendt, is speaking *with*. It engages with an interlocutor that is interiorized. When the poetic sounding evaporates, it becomes a language that is, instead, *about* something. Poetry, in its original mode, is not talking and it is not speaking. It is a *sounding*: "out of my mouth came a sound, which assailed me unconditionally," writes Rainer Maria Rilke (*Denktagebuch* 214, translation by the author). He refers then to a language that does not have any distinct meaning, a language that *is* its own sensuality.

When philosophy listens to literature, what is made apparent is that to listen is to be immersed in the tonality of a voice that is interiorized. It is to be in a position of contingency, and to a certain extent to give up on full comprehension. The contingency of such a position forces a certain immersion. As we listen, the sounding of narratives, of witnessing, of demands, and of possible interlocutors will impinge upon us, rather than appeal to us with specific demands.

Philosophy may seem to imply a different activity. Thought, Arendt suggests, puts us close to the neutral manifestation of a non-self: "It is because the thinking ego is ageless and nowhere that past and future can become manifest to it as such, emptied, as it were, of their concrete content and liberated from all spatial categories" (*Life of the Mind* 206). But this neutrality is only an illusion. Thinking, in fact, takes place in a "time-space" in which the thinker is reflected and deflected. Time can come into being "only with [the thinker's], self-inserting appearance" (*Between Past and Future* 12). Neither philosophy nor literature may exist outside of the "time-space" in which the activity of thinking, writing, or listening takes place; producing the deflection of those that think, tell, or listen. This is precisely what philosophy may learn when it listens to literature. There is no place outside of time which can be emptied of this deflection.

This is why philosophy needs to listen to literature. Not to assert itself, but to transform. Literature, as has sometimes been claimed, expresses particularity as an answer to question of the "who." "Who" does this lyrical voice make appear? "Who" is this story concerned with? "Who" is that narrating voice? However, with modernism, another kind of subjectivity or perhaps non-subjectivity has emerged, which one might perhaps call "who-ever." This "who-ever" is not a transcendental subject or a subject of universality. Neither is it a destroyed subject, in the sense that it would be a non-entity. It is rather a reduced kind of subject. This may appear in

several forms. It may appear as a kind of *das Mann*, or man without qualities. It may appear as the blueprint of a subject through the signifiers of Kafka, for instance; like K or Er. This “who-ever” can also be covered under the details of its inflictions, like Ulysses. These subjects are neither universal nor transcendental, but they are reduced to a certain set of functions and, so to speak, minimized towards a certain kind of non-appearing.

As non-appearing as they may be, they can, however, never undo their voice.

It is not by chance that philosophical literature, as well as philosophical film, relies on voice rather than distinct appearances to make thought appear.

This is the case in Terrence Malick’s films, for instance. Malick, who is a philosopher’s filmmaker not least for his history as translator of Heidegger, works his way between narrative voice and visual storyline in such a way that the sound of thought becomes equally important as, and sometimes more important than, the depiction of the characters. Malick makes the inner voice of one or more of the characters serve as an *acousmètre* in Chion’s sense; it serves as a shadow, or an appearance of a non-appearance that sets the tone of the film. Playing with the relation between the subjectivity of the voice and the frames of film, he adds to a sense of the subjects of the film being on a journey; as Steven Rybin puts it, they are subjects of becoming (20-21). In *The Thin Red Line*, the inner voice of the film is identified as belonging to a specific biographical subject, played by Jim Caviezel, in the introductory frames. At the same time, the voice is supraindividual. It is a voice coming to and belonging to all those that appear, from a position where thought, the intrinsic sounding of something that gives meaning, explores also the limits of what might appear and what cannot appear.

Thinking, also, may be imposed through a dissymmetry between what the text allows us to see and what it allows us to hear. This is a phenomenon that has been used by Clarice Lispector, whose characters may appear also as hybrid voices, like the main character in *The Hour of the Star*. This novel never really answers the question of whether its subjects are to be approached as bodies or texts. The main character has a distinct voice, but is putting on a persona which exposes it to the freedom of non-being. The words of the novel are sounds: “vibrant and rich, morbid and obscure, its counterpart the deep bass of sorrow. *Allegro con brio*” (16). This fall into the neutral discourse of non-being, is, however, never achieved. The neutrali-

ty of non-being which is evoked is at the same time figured as the result of an inherent doubleness; it is evoked by a subject speaking to itself, assailed by its inner voice. As the novel clearly indicates, the discourse of philosophy can never quite undo its fictional, poetic counterpart: the voice of desire, of embodiment, of sounding.

Édouard Glissant, in turn, has demonstrated that the way in which philosophy listens to literature may be decisive for its critical future. He evoked the plantation of the colonial period as a figure for links of connectivity that can be explored in terms of sounding. The structure of the plantation is founded upon slavery. It is an organization confined within an enclosure, based on a structure that is never made visible. Here, the connections are not seen; they must be heard, as in the stories of who relates to whom. This implicates uncertainties of fatherhood, mixtures of blood, intricate meshes of lineages, in short, a complicated structure which grows and duplicates itself like a rhizome rather than a line. To Glissant, the plantation as model undoes given hierarchies. The literatures of the Caribbean, as well as those of the plantation, are literatures based not on signs but on listening. The literature of the *marronage* is oral, based on voices, or on silences. It is made up of fragments and snatches. "The storyteller is a handyman, the *djobbeur* of the collective soul" (Glissant 69). Speaking in alternative terms of sensibility, such a literature does not merely present itself as an exotic appendage to a white canon. Moreover, it addresses the philosophical issues of what is at stake not in terms of Being or truth, but rather in terms of what kind of linkage we may explore between literature and philosophy:

What took place in the Caribbean, which could be summed up in the word *creolization*, approximates the idea of Relation ... It is not merely an encounter, a shock ... a *métissage*, but a new and original dimension allowing each person to be there and elsewhere, rooted and open, lost in the mountains and free beneath the sea, in harmony and in errantry. (Glissant 34)

This demands another kind of critical thought than that which could be offered by the overview of *theoria*. If philosophy needs to listen to literature, it is in order to approach these connectivities, lineages, voices, and sensory phenomena through their tones and silences. There is no return to a secured spot in time and space which can remain unaffected. It is this challenge that critical theory needs to work with: gathering voices, in order to listen, rather than to re-

turn to the same, and thus straying errantly, farther and farther away from the web of voices. It is this challenge, also, that we need to face as we look for new models for critical thought. We need to find ways to act, think, or feel “in concert” and yet maintain a legacy of critical reflection and freedom in listening: to voices that affect and alter our inner voice of reason.

Notes

1. This is the difference between the American and French revolutions to Arendt; public freedom is supplemented by public happiness in the American case, which suggests another kind of active participation. (*On Revolution* 119-20)
2. Herder, in turn, argued that the origin of language was to be found in the exploration of sound, where poetry and song appear as archaic aspects of language, although they are refined art (103). See also the reflections of Lessing, who suggests that literature is “sounds in time,” (Lessing 101) and (Hegel, 88).
3. Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (MIT Press, 2006).
4. Sara Ahmed, “The Phenomenology of Whiteness,” *Feminist Theory*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2002, pp. 149-68.
5. Cf. Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*. Edited by Claude Lévesque and Christie V. McDonald, translated by Peggy Kamuf and Avital Ronell (U of Nebraska P, 1988); Luce Irigaray, *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*. Translated by Mary Beth Mader (U of Texas P, 1999); Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*. Translated by Betsy Wing (U of Minnesota P, 1986).
6. Arendt uses Richard III to explore the two-in-one of the despot in *The Life of The Mind*, vol. 1 (190-91). As Max Deutscher has shown, the self-divisive inner voice of Richard III finds no resolution; judgment must transcend the invocations even of that voice. *Judgment After Arendt* (Routledge, 2007), pp. 65-66.
7. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*. Edited by Nicolas Walker, translated by James Creed Meredith, Oxford UP, 2007, §41. Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*. Edited by Ronald Beiner (U of Chicago P, 1992), p. 73.
8. Chion defines *acousmètre* as the presence of a voice which has not been visualized through a face; instead, “we get a special being, a kind of walking and acting shadow” (21).
9. Cf. Jacques Lacan’s reading of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* in the seminar *Le Sinthome*, [1975–76]. Translated by A.R. Price (Polity Press, 2016), pp. 62-74.

Works Cited

- Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution*. Penguin, 1962.
- . *Denktagebuch*. Edited by Ursula Ludz and Ingeborg Nordmann, Piper, 2002. 2 vols.
- . *The Life of the Mind*. Vol. 1. Secker & Warburg, 1978.
- . *Between Past and Future*. Viking, 1961.
- Chion, Michel. *The Voice in Cinema*. Columbia UP, 1999.
- Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing, Northwestern UP, 1997.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by John McQuarrie and Edward Robinson, Wiley-Blackwell, 1978.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Lectures on Fine Art*. Translated by T. M. Knox, vol. 1, Oxford UP, 1975.
- Herder, Johann Gottfried. *Treatise on the Origin of Language. Philosophical Writings*. Edited by Michael Forster, Cambridge UP, 2002.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Translated by Robert Louden, Cambridge UP, 2006.
- Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim. *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*. Translated by E. C. Beasley, Longman, 1853.
- Lispector, Clarice. *The Hour of the Star*. Translated by Giovanni Pontiero, Carcanet, 1986.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. *À l'écoute*. Gallimard, 2002.
- Rybin, Steven. *Terrence Malick and the Thought of Film*. Lexington, 2012.

Cheryl A. Emerson

WHEN LANGUAGE FAILS

Stauffer, Jill. *Ethical Loneliness: The Injustice of Not Being Heard*. Columbia UP, 2015. Hardcover: \$55. Paperback: \$27.

The title of Jill Stauffer's *Ethical Loneliness: The Injustice of Not Being Heard* suggests a quandary, or at least an irony: how could loneliness be "ethical," under the common conception of "ethical" as good or right action? From the subtitle it is clear that Stauffer employs "ethical" in the broader sense to convey moral disapproval of an injustice: that of "not being heard." Yet an irony in the title persists as Stauffer visits multiple sites—international courts, war crime tribunals, truth commissions, and other formal settings "where listening is the aim but hearing fails;" where again and again "in the end the format won" (166; 84).¹ Such sites, dedicated to "ethical" hearing, often fail to hear. The loneliness of not being heard in such settings is "ethical" (ironically) in that the very mechanisms of justice serve to deepen the loneliness of those whose sufferings they seek to assuage. As Stauffer comments in an interview, "These are all sites where even people who very much want to hear well, do justice and create a better future, may fail to do any of that. And that will leave many people feeling unheard, invisible, lonely or worse."² Stauffer coins the term "ethical loneliness" "in response to a gap [she] felt in discussions people were having in various settings about how to respond to harm," all of which "focused to varying degrees on a discourse of repair" (Stauffer interview, np). She defines "ethical loneliness" as a double injustice: "the experience of being abandoned

by humanity compounded by the experience of not being heard" (9). The irony embedded in the title is that "ethical" loneliness is the deepest loneliness of all, when despite good intentions, sites of repair cause further isolation and harm.

From the title onward, Stauffer's book responds to multiple failures of language: a double abandonment by humanity, the first experienced in conditions of unspeakable suffering, and the second when attempts to speak of such suffering go unheard. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt notes the isolating effect of great bodily pain: "Indeed, the most intense feeling we know of, intense to the point of blotting out all other experiences, namely, the experience of great bodily pain, is at the same time the most private and least communicable of all" (Arendt 50-51). The first vulnerability of "story," as an account of events to serve as legal testimony, is the challenge of bringing an account of suffering into words at all. If a condition of justice—of being heard—depends upon the capacity to speak the unspeakable in a public setting, the first loneliness, as a loneliness of language, is already difficult to bridge by way of story. The first abandonment by humanity that Stauffer addresses in her book is an abandonment into the unspeakable, followed by a second abandonment when "persons who have been unjustly treated and dehumanized by human beings and political structures [...] emerge from that injustice only to find that the surrounding world will not listen to or cannot properly hear their testimony [...] on their own terms" (1).

Although Stauffer's text is a book about justice and the political ramifications of "unassuaged ethical loneliness" (2), it is also a book about narrative and the complex ways that justice, narrative, and Western conceptions of sovereignty and personal responsibility collide. Reviews of *Ethical Loneliness* rightly note the book's appeal to "an audience familiar with justice literature" (Koggel, np), but it makes an important contribution to the field of narrative theory as well. It is a book about stories, told by way of stories, and their vulnerability when the responsibility for "hearing," and hearing well, is relegated to formal mechanisms of truth, justice, and political reconciliation; where assumptions about "autonomy, self-sufficiency, or sovereignty, formal equality, liberty as the capacity to choose one's commitments [are] enshrined in what gets called the rule of law" (5). Drawing upon the ethics of infinite responsibility of Emmanuel Levinas, Stauffer insists that "responsibility for justice and recovery is, rather than a narrow legal concern, the very broadest of obligations;" that "it is everyone's job to author conditions where repair

is possible" (4). In her chapter "Hearing," she states the imperative even more forcefully: "Could we not—perhaps with help from other traditions—learn to tell and to hear different stories? I submit that we could. We *should* do that, because it is what justice demands" (104, author's emphasis).

Stauffer's appeal to a "we" and an "us" is pronounced throughout the book in a way that clearly yet caringly implicates the reader in the injunction to hear. The "we" Stauffer has in mind is a "we" who through sheer luck or privilege of wealth, or who have never considered ourselves to be guilty of crimes, leave to the courts and tribunals the ascertaining of guilt, distribution of justice, and determination of what restitution, if any, is afforded to victims. Stauffer's pronouns are specific: *Ethical Loneliness* is addressed to the Western "we."

The clothes we buy are likely made by slave labor or something strikingly similar to it. The food we eat is likely harvested by underpaid workers without citizenship or protection. Much of modern life in the Western world is so distanced from knowledge of what makes that way of life possible that those whose modes of wealth cause worldwide misery do not feel implicated in that misery (137).

Reviews of *Ethical Loneliness* observe the important yet difficult demand it places upon readers. Linda Ross Meyer describes reading the book as a "profoundly uncomfortable experience" (Meyer 144), while Christine M. Koggel notes that "the book is at times unrelenting in describing examples of cruelty wrought by human beings on other human beings" (np). Our discomfort is twofold: first in "struggling to hear fractured and broken stories told by survivors of worlds' end" (Meyer 144), and secondly by the responsibility the book places upon us to fulfill "what justice demands" by way of story: not only the stories we hear, but also the stories we tell (104).

One of my questions in reading the book is what distinguishes "loneliness" from "ethical loneliness" for Stauffer? Is it a difference in degree or in kind? Is "ethical loneliness" posed in contrast to a general human loneliness apart from "ethics," or is ethical loneliness an amplification of a condition common to humankind? After reading the book, am I able to recognize when loneliness becomes "ethical"? My answer, after what I hope has been a careful reading and re-reading of the text, is that for Stauffer, "it depends," inasmuch

as our assumptions about sovereignty, autonomy, and justice condition the stories we narrate and those that we hear (or fail to hear), which determine in advance what does and does not count as story.³ Stauffer begins “with small things, tiny heartaches” that illustrate ways “we are shaped by the worlds in which we subsist” (2-3). She begins “with mundane examples [...] in order to demonstrate, and keep it firm in our minds, that this book full of stories of violence and injustice is also describing the human condition: our intersubjective reliance on one another” (3). Later she notes “There is a whole lot that is unchosen at the heart of a self’s liberty. My sovereignty depends” (19). Initially, it appears that Stauffer’s narrative theory will evoke that of Hannah Arendt’s in *The Human Condition* to depict the web of human relations into which we are born and in which none of us is the sole author of one’s own life story (96). But Stauffer is cautious in her references to Arendt, noting that “Arendt’s observation is attached to a nuanced understanding of what it means to be a person who appears in public at all, and so to say what her observation would mean when applied to testimony in situations of unequal power requires some care” (192n73). I take Stauffer’s note on Arendt as a clue to understanding the difference between “loneliness” and “ethical loneliness,” in context of her argument, as differing registers of inter-subjectivity: those of “us” within the web of human relations experience loneliness differently from those without, whose stories fail to appear as stories at all.

I would object to readings of *Ethical Loneliness* that describe Stauffer’s appeal to everyday “tiny heartaches” as a gesture to mediate the shock of testimony by survivors of holocaust and apartheid. These “tiny heartaches” are not simply a “reprieve from the difficulties of hearing,” and are not given “in the form of a sort of ‘trigger’ warning” (Koggel, np). On the contrary, the “tiny heartaches” Stauffer incorporates are integral to her larger call for a change in subject. For Stauffer, “changing the subject” means that we “need to stop telling ourselves stories of self-formation where our acts and intentions get all the work done” (169). The consequence of approaching a concept of “duty” from an idea of personal sovereignty is that “no one will be reconciled, and many will be left unprotected, in a world where everyone dispatches every legitimate legal duty and nothing more” (68). The connection Stauffer draws between our “tiny heartaches” and stories of irremediable world loss is a challenge to sovereignty; to emphasize her point that “if we are sovereign, it is in a dependent kind of way” (10). It is to remind us of this

dependency that, throughout the book, she revisits moments of everyday, small sufferings. Stauffer's *Ethical Loneliness* depends upon the effectiveness of her challenge to the master narrative of sovereign subjectivity, and her book issues a highly effective challenge.

But how does Stauffer's change in subject help the reader to distinguish loneliness from ethical loneliness? It shifts our understanding of responsibility beyond a narrow framework of personal consent, but how does a change in subject make us better able to hear? *Ethical Loneliness* is not a 'how to' manual for ethical hearing. Drawing upon the work of Eve Sedgwick in reparative and paranoid reading, Stauffer notes that "reparative readers acknowledge that they may not have already at hand the tools to understand what they will encounter," while paranoid readers by contrast "expect to find a world full of oppression and injustice, and so nothing ever takes these readers by surprise" (104). By a change in subject, Stauffer hopes to cultivate listeners willing to hear the unexpected: stories of resilience where testimonies of victimization are the frame; stories of deep disrespect where testimonies of rape are the frame; stories of unforgiveness where political reconciliation is the frame; and stories that fail to accommodate a clear binary of victim/perpetrator, such as those of child soldiers forced to commit atrocities. *Ethical Loneliness* destabilizes the subject (the "we") long enough to press an opening for the unexpected.

In my reading of *Ethical Loneliness*, the story I least expected was the dream of the goat. Every reader of Stauffer's text will be surprised by moments of reparative listening she undertakes, chapter upon chapter, carefully and painstakingly, beginning with the diaries of Holocaust survivor Jean Améry. But my moment of greatest surprise was the dream of the goat. From a certain understanding of story, it is impossible to think that a mother's testimony about a dream of a goat could ever amount to a truth, in the context of a formal truth as part of a reconciliation hearing. And in that context, indeed it did not. The story appears in Stauffer's 5th chapter, "Desert," and is subtitled "There was this Goat" (158-165). It occurs in the context of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, when Notrose Nobomvu Konile appeared "to face one of the men accused of killing her son" (159). Her refusal to forgive, in testimony before a hearing dedicated to truth and reconciliation, rests upon the evidence of a dream about a goat: "there was this goat looking up, this one next to me said oh! Having a dream like that with a goat looking up is a very bad dream" (159).⁴ The complexity

of Mrs. Konile's story involves the suffering of the "I", when Konile argues "that without her son she was reduced to an 'I' and could no longer make sense of the world" (160). Stauffer notes that "she wanted to be 'us,' but the killing of her son reduced her to an 'I.' That is what she suffers from" (161). There is no restoration of an "us" for Mrs. Konile, and therefore no forgiveness of the men accused of killing her son. To understand a loss of world, in this case and so many others, demands an openness to meanings of "world" that would surprise Western worlds predicated upon concepts of sovereign subjectivity, demanding a change in subject that would be reparative to "us" as well, reminding "us" that (lest we forget) "we" are not fully in charge of the meaning of "world."

I remarked that *Ethical Loneliness* is not a 'how to' manual for listening. It is a call and not a cure for bad hearing. Even after reading, I am still not certain how "I" am to aid in the reparative hearing of world global atrocities. I first read Stauffer's book in a specific place and time, which was January, 2017, during a stay in the 18th Arrondissement in Paris, France. Our daily walk to the Metro crossed a bridge over an abandoned rail bed where Syrian refugees had built an encampment, burning whatever trash and lumber they could find. It was winter and cold, with the temperature dropping to a low one night of -3°C. I saw efforts of human compassion in the form of blankets and water being lowered by ropes, as well as daily insults, taunting, and throwing of objects from bystanders. Meanwhile, the daily life of Paris continued, and we took part: crêpes were baked, which we purchased. We rode the Metro to visit the finest cafés, shopped at the Bouquinistes, and strolled the banks of the Seine. One evening, returning from a café just beyond the Péripherique, we walked past the formal refugee welcome center, which is a tremendous heated, inflated balloon tent that spans an entire city block. Outside of the formal welcome center, policemen stripped blankets off refugees who lacked proper paperwork. A few steps beyond the policemen was a blanketed cage at top of which danced two prostitutes. The line of customers was long.

My reading of Stauffer's text will be forever entangled with that night, just as my perceptions that night were entangled with my reading. I knew I witnessed ethical loneliness on a massive scale and that I was a part of this web of relations. The plight of these women stirred personal memories I was helpless to block. I wanted to scatter the line of customers, to shout at them, to do something—anything—but feared for my safety, especially when the police were

more intent on stripping blankets from the street refugees than putting a halt to the sexual exploitation happening a few steps away. I walked away from the scene that night, yet I still see and hear it. And it seems so little—too little—to merely write about it after the fact.

The great contribution of *Ethical Loneliness* is that it challenges what it means to listen: “to hear a story on its own terms, and to try to hear it before assuming [we] know what needs to be told, how the telling will transpire, what needs to be repaired, how to repair it, and who gets to answer those questions” (170). The true work of reading Stauffer’s text begins after the reading, in re-encountering the noise and pain of the world, with an attentiveness to ethical loneliness as a way to begin to hear.

Notes

1. Unless otherwise noted, all page references are from the book under review.
2. Columbia University Press Blog, October 1, 2015, interview with Jill Stauffer. <http://www.cupblog.org/?p=17545>. Accessed 27 April 2017.
3. For example, when Meyer describes her struggle “to hear fractured and broken stories told by survivors of worlds’ end” upon reading *Ethical Loneliness* (Meyer 144), what conception of story allows her to describe the stories told by survivors as “fractured and broken”?
4. Stauffer cites the work of Antjie Krog in this segment, both *Country of my Skull* (Random House, 1998), and Antjie Krog, Nosisi Mpolweni, and Kopano Ratele, *There Was This Goat: Investigating the Truth Commission Testimony of Notrose Nobomvu Konile* (University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2009).

Works Cited

- Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago UP, 1958.
- Koggel, Christine M. "Review: Ethical Loneliness." *Hypatia Reviews Online* (2015). <http://hypatiaphilosophy.org/HRO/content/ethical-loneliness-injustice-not-being-heard>. Accessed 27 April 2017.
- Meyer, Linda Ross. "Book Review: Ethical Loneliness." *NoFo* 13 (2016): 144-151. http://www.helsinki.fi/nofo/NoFo13_Meyer.pdf. Accessed 27 April 2017.
- Stauffer, Jill. *Ethical Loneliness: The Injustice of Not Being Heard*. Columbia UP, 2015.
- . "Interview." *Columbia University Press Blog*, October 1, 2015. <http://www.cupblog.org/?p=17545>. Accessed 27 April 2017.

Rey Chow

THE REMAINS OF OUR DAY:
EVOLVING CONCEPTUAL FRAMES¹

In early July of 2016, an African American, Philando Castiles, was shot dead by police officers in Falcon Heights, St. Paul, Minnesota. What made this tragedy stand out from the appalling collection of similar executions of African Americans by law enforcement in recent years was the way news about it circulated. Castiles' girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds, used her cell phone to capture part of the incident and live-streamed it online through Facebook, while providing clearly delivered comments on what she was witnessing in the disturbing scene of killing. Her live-streamed video became the first available public news report, on which subsequent news reports from mainstream venues based their accounts. Within a couple of days, it had been watched by millions of people on social media.

This story offers a timely summation of a predominant assumption of what we currently mean by the word "global." The content of the circulated video is, of course, crucial—in this case the outrageous murder of an innocent man who was complying with police orders to show his license and registration. At the same time, what turned this incident into a global event was the technology of communication, in this case social media, which served not only to convey the news but also to make it instantly accessible. This immediate information delivery across time zones and geographical regions rendered a local happening in Minnesota ready to screen thousands of miles away: this instantaneity or simultaneity of information circulation is a key, if implicit, to how we use the word global today.

Global, in this sense, has to do with a capacity for going "vi-

ral”—a capacity to objectify the world on the basis of the elimination, enabled by high tech, of temporal difference or what, in media-specific contexts, is called time lag. Whenever we invoke global, it seems that we are more or less caught up in this conceptual shift and entanglement whereby the seemingly descriptive term meaning “pertaining to the whole world” becomes, in effect, a collective acquiescence to, or endorsement of, a pervasively technological organization of everyday life. This organization has become so naturalized and “ready at hand” that it can be activated spontaneously without thought. When violence erupts, one can expect that another act, the capture of the incident on an electronic device, will happen concurrently.

But the globality that results from this other act, often understood in the positive sense of a democratization or proliferation of news distribution (as anchored in high tech gadgetry), does little to ameliorate the sources and causes of the tragedy. Global—as viral—often simply means that horrendous incidents can be rapidly released as media spectacles. In that connection, the global age has produced audiences who are so accustomed to consuming extreme images that they can hardly be shocked, let alone be mobilized; rather, they demand, and expect, more.

REMAINS (AS A CONCEPTUAL FRAME)

In light of this stream of associations—global, viral, spectacle, and “more”—the body of theoretical work in the philosophical and literary humanities as well as interpretative social sciences that specializes in thinking what may be called “remains” deserves some new attention. Remains and the implications of remains have a privileged, if understated, relationship with global understood in the terms just mentioned. Let me explain.

The political left, as we know, readily partakes of the imagining of remains. Insofar as the materialism inherent to Marxist thinking is a way of expressing concern with the unevenness left behind in socioeconomic situations in which resources are unequally distributed—and even if remains are by and large bad things to be corrected or inadequate things to be supplemented—interest in social justice is always part of a discourse of remains. In the realm of leftist cultural politics, the category “residual” in Raymond Williams’s well-known discussion of the “structure of feeling” is an excellent case in point

of the left's investment in, so to speak, what is left.² In Williams's account, lived temporality is made up of affects that saturate experiences with differentiations that are overlapping and never entirely clear-cut. Global, both in the sense of an objectification of phenomena in technologized terms and as a sensation of the extraordinarily fast and immediate, would seem a rather good fit with what Williams calls the dominant, though it is less clear how global might be juxtaposed with the other two categories—the residual and the emergent. Yet, much more than the dominant perhaps, these other categories register the lingering—and by implication the contradictory and unascertainable—aspects of lived experience.

With a different kind of emphasis, poststructuralism—or at least the deconstructive practices that follow the work of a philosopher such as Jacques Derrida—joins forces with the political left with its distinctive theorizations of linguistic, subjective, spiritual, and other signifiatory remains: trace, *différance*, gram, graph, mark, inscription, crypt, specter, indebtedness, translation, forgiveness, and so forth, to invoke some of the Derridean terms that have become indispensable to contemporary theoretical thinking. Indeed, working in the humanities and interpretative social sciences, we would be hard put to find an area of scholarly inquiry that has not been touched, modified, or transformed by the influential poststructural transactions of Derridean “imprints.” From speaking and writing to the psychic states of power, to intersubjective ethics and struggles, the human labor that leaves its spoor in the forms of differentiated temporalities, phenomenological spaces, and transcendent or redemptive strivings is most poignant where things seem finished and yet are not quite.

Remains haunt us, then, because they are incomplete, lacking in definitive clarity and finality, their reaches having been forgotten or become hidden, inarticulate. This essentially spectral status of remains has conventionally been accorded a special kind of value because the spectrality bears clues, or so it is imagined, to what is permanently lost or has become inaccessible. There is a particular economics, an economics of scarcity, at stake here: the fact that things *can* get lost, disappear, or become depleted means that remains are epistemically linked to the finitude of human capacities. Remains' elusiveness has everything to do with the assumption that they are a type of resource to be salvaged from imminent loss. This value-laden theory of remains has been widely operative around the modern world if we think of some of our most important civic in-

stitutions. In ways comparable to temples, churches, and libraries of premodern eras, modern society cannot do without places such as museums, zoos, archaeological sites, ecological sanctuaries, native reservations, and forensics laboratories, which are some of the typical loci where remains have proven to be indispensable sources of knowledge based in procedures of retrieval. These loci of capture and retention (if not detention and incarceration, as in prisons) suggest that modern cultural space has always operated as a space for the salvaging, maintenance, and display of remains.

Has a certain threshold been irreversibly crossed in the age of global digital media? An economics based on scarcity and human finitude, such as that which accompanies the appreciation of remains, has always meant that it is costly to store and transmit information. When loss, disappearance, and depletable consequences of change, acts of saving and repossession, however minimal, are valuable (that is, value-producing) undertakings; that is why remains are worth the labor of discovery and protection.

According to some, this conceptual and practical order has been turned upside down by the arrival of digitization. As the media theorist Viktor Mayer-Schönberger, among many others, has written, with the limitless capacity and infinite expandability of electronic space, it is, for the first time in human history, no longer expensive to retain and preserve information; on the contrary, what tends to cost more these days—in terms of the time needed to sort things out and the energy spent on making decisions about what can be discarded—is, increasingly, the very act of deletion.³ As the function “save” has become the default or requisite mode of daily transactions via the electronic screen, an unprecedented and previously unimaginable mass of material now lies adrift, indefinitely and at a hitherto unimaginable scale, somewhere in the cloud. Everything seems to be left, and can be left, in the form of data—a word that has its roots in the notion of the given.⁴ Indeed, the implicit economics on which such remains stay afloat is perhaps no longer that of scarcity but rather that of an inexhaustible mine, an ever-replenishable artifactual plenitude. Faced with this plenitude, the individual is often not only the photographer and uploader but also the compiler, archivist, curator, and exhibitor all at once. Whether she likes it or not, she must handle her data—and her self-identity that results from the many transactions that happen on her screen—as a kind of entrepreneur, someone who undertakes or manages her “self” as a business enterprise. This entrepreneurship is best summed up

by the “selfie,” which may be understood as a self that is endlessly capturable, manipulable, and passed around as an electronic image. As I asked earlier, has a certain threshold been crossed, irreversibly? What happens to our foregoing sense of remains and the economics of scarcity?

INSCRIPTION OR PLASTICITY?

Arguably, this is a juncture at which we can rethink some of the implications of writing as Derrida theorizes it in *Of Grammatology*. What is important about writing, Derrida suggests, is not only a matter of saving (in the sense of notation, record, inscription, and transcript); it is also, in the broader sense of what he calls arche-writing, the phenomenon of an originary rupture, one that cuts or breaks open (a ground, a route, a path, or some material). For Derrida, this cutting or breaking-open is the act or process of differentiation that “makes” writing writing. Derrida’s controversial, dialectical argument about grammatology—a science of writing but of writing as trace, supposedly to be “founded” between retention and escape, between appearance and disappearance—is what the contemporary philosopher Catherine Malabou seeks to query and bring up to date in her visionary philosophy on plasticity, a philosophy in which the scope of writing or *différance*, she says, can no longer be restricted to the Derridean paradigm of the graphic trace: “I call plasticity *the resistance of différance to its graphic reduction*” (Malabou 87). (What Malabou challenges, in other words, is the Derridean conceptualization of writing itself *as* graphic trace, as imprint, and as inscription. These words carry special import in our present discussion of remains and the global.) Instead, Malabou argues for a conceptual shift that would allow attributes of plastic modifiability and transformability to inform, indeed to regenerate from within, Derrida’s arche-writing.⁵

Malabou’s interest is in what I will call imprintless connectivity—connectivity without writing-as-graphic-trace (without a cut, without the space of a time lag?). This is thought-provoking not least because it seems symptomatic of a newly globalized epistemic regime in which the concept of remains, hitherto operative at multiple intersecting levels in the sense of what is leftover (based, as I said, in an economy of scarcity and inevitable instances of impoverishment and depletion), has been displaced or replaced by an emergent no-

tion of materialism whose capacity for recovery and rebirth is derived from the Hegelian beautiful soul—or so according to Malabou:

To recover: how does this movement inscribe itself in the mobility of deconstruction if it claims to exceed it? To bring it back and to differ: do these two metabolic operations follow an identical wake or do they separate exactly at the point of this question, namely the trace?

To bind together all these questions, I chose to interpret the famous statement in *Phenomenology of Spirit*: “The wounds of the Spirit heal and leave no scars behind.”

In this passage Hegel is talking about the beautiful soul which, always ready to forgive, to forget faults, perpetually returns to itself, rediscovers itself, reconstitutes itself, recuperates. It is possible to see in this phrase the very definition of the work of the spirit. It expresses precisely this process of recovery, healing, return, the re-knitting of the skin after the wound, in other words, the plasticity that appears as the very movement of the absolute. (Malabou 72-73)

In a fascinating stroke, Malabou links the internal dissidence of arche-writing to the biological and medicinal registers of wounding and healing—by inviting us to think of wounding and healing by way of spatialization understood in a new sense (rather than, as in Derrida’s case, by way of temporality and time lag). Meanwhile, biological and neuroscientific ramifications aside, I believe Malabou’s model of plasticity as self-reconstitution (“the re-knitting of the skin after the wound”) is also quite compatible, albeit in ways likely unintended by her, with trends in another major field, namely, computational media.

In computational terms, plasticity seems to resonate with the concept of an information mass that is ever renewable and ever present, because, technically speaking, this mass is ever uploadable, live-streamable, and undeleted. Another way of putting this: we are now never turned off, as our governments have ways of tracking us by our cell phones and other electronic devices even when we are not personally aware. In brief, in another parsing of “global,” we are permanently ON, ready for the world to find us. What seem like operations in a separate sphere—small empirical moves performed on the computer, such as not turning off, autosave, and so forth, by us or by others on our data—are now enmeshed with events (such

as inscription and plasticity) that are at once entirely heterologous and deeply related.

SCARS

At a mundane level, the electronic moves of ready capturing and uploading, of course, render censorship irrelevant, because people are finding it so hard to keep up with such an overabundant supply of information that it seems unnecessary to prohibit anything. When considered alongside Malabou's notion of plasticity, however, the readiness of these electronic moves also renders obsolete the at-first-unrelated, bio- and temporal politics of another type of remains—those physical mementos of injury and wounding we call “scars.” By Malabou's logic, scar formation is based on the trace as the mark of a cutting, an intrusion, or the conquering of the resistance of a material (Malabou 57). Friedrich Nietzsche famously writes in *The Genealogy of Morals* that for learning to take place, there needs to be pain: something needs to be burnt into our memory in order to be retained. In contrast to this older philosophical notion of *worldly being*—of *being in the world*—as a matter of scar formation (through burning and pain), Malabou suggests that plasticity may be linked, in regenerative medicine, to a set of auto-repairing or self-regenerating techniques for organs and tissues: “Through the use of stem cells, regenerative medicine today tends to rediscover [the] self-repairing faculty inscribed in the memory of species.” As Malabou suggests, such new therapeutic possibilities

invite philosophical reflection[.][...] In particular they lead us to understand Hegel's phrase [about the beautiful soul] in a new light. When a salamander or lizard's tail grows back we do indeed have an instance of healing without a scar. The member reconstitutes itself without the amputation leaving any trace. (Malabou 81)

Note the important turn, in this passage, from the beautiful soul to animal life processes, though, as I have suggested, what make such passages on auto-repair and self-generation mindboggling are also the implicit links to computational media's projection of an ever-expanding, self-surpassing bandwidth.

At this juncture, a Foucauldian question seems obligatory: how do these very different occurrences in conceptual thinking happen in such “parallel” fashions? What is it that enables them—philosophy, medicine, biology, computational media, and so forth—to acquire valency, legibility, and indeed mutual intelligibility, as discourses in the same historical or contemporary moment? To sum up these complex interdisciplinary relations that seem to be co-emergent and unfolding in entanglement, we could venture the following polemic: not only does the capacity for ready capturing and uploading imply that no information will henceforth need to be lost (that is, experience the chance of being erased); in a parallel fashion, organisms, we are told (by thinkers such as Malabou), have the capacity to regenerate (retrieve, rebirth, renew, and replace) themselves from wounds and injuries—without incurring scars. Ever-capturable and uploadable data; ever-auto-repairing and un-scar-able life: conjoining these independent realms are a meta—or is it simply neoliberal?—condition of endlessly self-restarting, endlessly self-replenishing presence.

With names such as data capitalism, media ecology, neuroscience, and the like, the new epistemic regime of infinite, instrumentalist positivity is often announced in apocalyptic terms: for instance, computation logistics, it is said, have advanced to the point at which they can interface with neuronal pathways directly by means of algorithms, altogether bypassing more traditional agencies that are bound to the human sensorium, human perception, and human subjectivity—all those apparatuses to which writing-as-graphic-trace bears an intimate if not definitive relation. Rather than human sensuous activity, what seems to be rapidly assuming center stage is now a hyper-machinic automatism in which the impersonal processing and transmission of data is deemed the preemptive form and norm.⁶

And yet a somatic materialism, frequently elaborated alongside the metaphors of animal bodily activities (such as those of spiders, salamanders, and lizards), seems irrefutable: in her work, Malabou invokes neuronal connections, synapses, stem cells, and brain lesions, while other science studies scholars, such as Elizabeth Wilson and Elizabeth Grosz, describe the behaviors of the brain in relation to the gut, the nervous system, embodied sensations, and other physical functions.⁷ If such somatic materialism is constitutive of what Charles Darwin has called the descent of man, is not the human organism still a *vestigial* form—genetically coded, to be sure, but nonetheless a remainder, left over from millennia of other life

forms? Should this vestigial form be treated as data—to be permuted in infinitesimal numerical detail or ever self-generative plasticity—or as time-bound inscription, bearing memories of scarring? The conceptual revolution begun by Darwin was a revolution in global scale, but it was a matter of rewriting the history of man by reducing it in size to a tiny segment in the processes of natural selection. This revolution overthrew the human ambition that was divine transcendence, but man has not wanted to give it up, so he keeps reinventing that transcendence in different secular forms. Our contemporary obsession with the global-as-viral, with ourselves as electronically reproducible spectacles, and with ever more of all this, may be one such reinvention. It behooves us to examine the implications this has for contemporary geo- and biopolitics. The evolving, intersecting conceptual thresholds I have briefly sketched for you have, hopefully, provided some valid, if contentious, entry points.

Notes

1. Keynote address delivered at the symposium “The Global/Contemporary” at the University of Virginia on March 31, 2017.

2. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford UP, 1977).

3. See Viktor Mayer-Schönberger, *Delete: The Virtue of Forgetting in the Digital Age* (Princeton UP, 2009).

4. For a discussion of this innovative environment as massive incarceration, see Evgeny Morozov, *To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism* (Public Affairs, 2013).

5. For a stimulating series of discussions, see in particular the chapters “Grammatology and plasticity” and “The phoenix, the spider, and the salamander,” in Malabou, *Changing Difference*, pp. 41-66 and pp. 67-89.

6. The divide I have been describing between the “scarring” and the “self-regenerative” modes of approaching the humanities may also be seen as part and parcel of the divide between the traditional humanities and the newly fashionable “digital humanities.” For a lucid argument of what such a divide implies for the academy, see Richard Grusin, “The Dark Side of Digital Humanities: Dispatches from Two Recent MLA Conventions.” *differences*, vol. 25. no. 1., 2014, pp. 79-92.

7. For an admirable work bridging neuroscience studies and feminist theory, see Elizabeth Wilson, *Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body* (Duke UP, 2004). For philosophical discussions of materiality and materialism in light of Darwin’s theorizations of difference, see Elizabeth Grosz’s works such as *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (Columbia UP, 2008) and *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art* (Duke UP, 2011).

Works Cited

Grosz, Elizabeth. *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*. Columbia UP, 2008.

---. *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art*. Duke UP, 2011.

Grusin, Richard. "The Dark Side of Digital Humanities: Dispatches from Two Recent MLA Conventions." *differences*, vol. 25. no. 1., 2014, pp. 79-92.

Malabou, Catherine. *Changing Difference*. Translated by Carolyn Shread, Polity, 2011.

Mayer-Schönberger, Viktor. *Delete: The Virtue of Forgetting in the Digital Age*. Princeton UP, 2009.

Morozov, Evgeny. *To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism*. Public Affairs, 2013.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford UP, 1977.

Wilson, Elizabeth. *Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body*. Duke UP, 2004.

Elisabeth Anker

LONGING FOR SOVEREIGNTY:
VIOLENCE AND POWER IN THE TRUMP ERA

Over the past few decades, state sovereignty has weakened across the globe.¹ States have been losing the power of final authority over their territory. They are losing power to global capital flows, trade agreements, technological developments, neoliberal limits on economic and state regulation, international NGOs, non-state violence, and climate change disasters that make the world feel increasingly chaotic. Within states, economic inequality has grown while states retrench support for social services, at the same time that communities are torn apart by unemployment.² Within the U.S. specifically, events including the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, as well as the financial crisis of 2008, fostered a widely shared belief that nebulous and uncontrollable transnational forces have damaged the state's ability to protect citizens from forces inside and outside the nation-state.³

There are now many efforts across the globe to reinvigorate state sovereignty over and against the forces siphoning control over state territory. These efforts include the proliferation of border walls that aim to limit immigrants and visually demonstrate state supremacy over territory, as Wendy Brown has argued.⁴ They include the rise of ethnonationalist parties as in Modi's India, and anti-immigration efforts to shore up state boundaries, as in Britain's Brexit plan to leave the transnational European Union. They also include the use of the War on Terror by various states as a way to revivify state sovereignty over internal dissidents.⁵ States have also strengthened sovereignty over internal populations by militarizing police

forces and intensifying state surveillance over domestic groups.⁶ Sovereignty continues to be a key political norm in our ostensibly “post-sovereign” era, and various actions aim to bolster its practice.⁷

In this article, I want to theorize a mechanism particular to the United States for shoring up state sovereignty: the election of Donald Trump to the presidency. The Trump presidency, I want to suggest, is a mechanism for managing the insecurity of waning sovereignty as it affects many American citizens. Trump promises to revive American practices of state sovereignty in an era when they may otherwise seem debilitated. His policies, which might otherwise seem to be eclectic and incoherent, actually coalesce around strengthening the most visible forces of violent state action, and reinstating borders and territoriality as symbols of impermeable state power.⁸ Trump’s campaign rhetoric during the 2016 presidential election, however, shows something different than other attempts to strengthen sovereignty today. Trump’s vision of sovereignty, compelling to millions, disinvests in democracy or in even the semblance of social freedom. It eliminates participation and equality from visions of the political and disentangles freedom from the promise of sovereignty. The desire for the sovereignty Trump promises becomes a desire for domination absent other ends.

Many of Trump’s policy proposals promise to bring back state sovereignty in the realm of international relations. They aim to bolster the military, build an impervious border wall to stop undocumented immigrants, stanch the flow of refugees onto American shores, and generally place “America First” in the global order. As Trump stated in his Republican National Convention speech, “Americanism, not globalism, will be our credo.”⁹ Trump argues that violent forms of state expansion, especially strong borders—whether a concrete wall, mass deportation of immigrants, or outright denial of entry to religious and racial groups—plus an impermeable military force, can revive secure borders and state power. Not only will sovereignty be instantiated against external enemies, but against internal enemies as well; both are inseparable as threats to America. Trump states to the RNC, “[t]he attacks on our police, and the terrorism in our cities, threaten our very way of life. Any politician who does not grasp this danger is not fit to lead our country. ... I have a message for all of you: the crime and violence that today afflicts our nation will

soon come to an end. Beginning on January 20th 2017, safety will be restored.” Trump merges internal with external threats—violence against police and international terrorism—to define the contemporary moment as one rife with insecurity due to unchecked crime from all sides. State power includes the expansion of the military for external sovereignty, the deregulation of police power for internal sovereignty, and the heightened militarization of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement to bolster the border in between. Each targets threats to law and order, who are mainly black and brown people. For Trump, minority populations enervate (white) America by bringing violence and crime, though he never acknowledges the much more pervasive statistics of white criminality, and by dragging state resources down into welfare and tax redistribution. Indeed, the slogan “Make America Great Again” offers those dramatic performances of state power that can restore sovereign greatness to a nation weakened by its openness to foreigners.

In emphasizing the many forces supposedly weakening America, Trump’s campaign speeches foment a sense of being overwhelmed by dominating powers, and promise that strong state power can eradicate them. They diagnose Americans’ commonplace experiences of insecurity in our present moment—produced by inequality, stagnant wages, barriers to healthcare, political secrecy, drug epidemics, and climate change—through a melodrama of criminality, in which all feelings of fear and instability are traced to racialized threats to sovereign power:

The number of police officers killed in the line of duty has risen by almost 50% compared to this point last year. Nearly 180,000 illegal immigrants with criminal records, ordered deported from our country, are tonight roaming free to threaten peaceful citizens ... One such border-crosser was released and made his way to Nebraska. There, he ended the life of an innocent young girl named Sarah Root. She was 21 years old, and was killed the day after graduating from college with a 4.0 Grade Point Average. Her killer was then released a second time, and he is now a fugitive from the law. I’ve met Sarah’s beautiful family. But to this Administration, their amazing daughter was just one more American life that wasn’t worth protecting.

Trump emphasizes people's experiences of being overwhelmed by powerful forces, but rather than explaining this situation through, for instance, the forces of financialization, neoliberal economics, growing executive power at the expense of more democratic practices, or an unjust tax structure that places greatest burden on those who can least afford to pay, blame is placed on racialized others who are roaming to kill innocent victims. The forces out to kill the American Dream are here defined as immigrant populations, racial and religious minorities, and foreign governments. The speech cultivates feelings of vulnerability in supporters and then promises that strong performances of state power will eradicate those feelings and substitute in their place a feeling of potency and control. Trump's promise to his supporters is this: you may feel weak and injured now, but my forceful policies will soon overcome the enemies that sap your power and allow you to experience your rightful, and unbound, agency.¹⁰

Trump states of his presidential roadmap, "The American People will come first once again. My plan will begin with safety at home—which means safe neighborhoods, secure borders, and protection from terrorism. There can be no prosperity without law and order." He merges state sovereignty to individual daily experience, using the melodramatic trope connecting the home space to visions of the nation, in which the security of one's private home connects directly to the security of the national border. But in an inverse of a typical melodrama, rather than asking the domestic space to stand in for the public sphere, the insecurity of home life is projected outward to be an effect of international terrorism and a weakened state.¹¹ He acknowledges individual affective experience of humiliation and disaster but gives them a national scope and larger historical narrative that places blame on political elites and racialized citizens, and at the same time makes those feelings acceptable and commonplace. Trump's solutions for these humiliations similarly merge the national and individual to assume that the strength of the nation converts into the strength of the individual. As he exclaimed in many stump speeches, "We're gonna make our military so big and so strong and so great, it will be so powerful that I don't think we're ever going to have to use it. Nobody's going to mess with us."¹² It is a promise that state power can diminish individual vulnerability.¹³

This merging is compelling particularly because Trump himself appears to embody individual sovereign domination. Trump's display of vast material wealth and enactment of personal domination as a boss resonate with the fantasies of those who also desire

to reign supreme over others and commandeer their fate, especially in a time of socio-economic precarity. Trump's provocations often horrify his critics: calling Mexicans "rapists," fomenting Islamophobic anti-immigration fervor, and gloating about sexual assault to acquaintances: "Grab 'em by the pussy." Yet this violence is precisely what makes Trump appealing to many of his supporters. The one thing these provocations all have in common is that they advocate domination over vulnerable and marginalized others who are narrativized as a potential threat to one's personal power.

In dominating over others, Trump presents himself as the embodiment of the sovereign, who can force all others to bend to his indomitable will. By promising to take down the powers sapping American sovereignty—which he and his audience diagnose as terrorists, immigrants, other nations, and racialized others—he implies that U.S. political subjects can also overcome their feelings of dependence and vulnerability. "America First," his foreign policy strategy, similarly demands that other nations bow down to American superiority, rather than fall to their knees in subordination to international commitments. America (and Americans) do not need to capitulate to political correctness but to maintain traditional hierarchies of power that place them on top.

This helps to explain why Trump's support—and ultimately I am more concerned with the millions of people who find Trump's claims compelling rather than with Trump's individual desire—is overwhelmingly white, wealthier, older, and male, though white women also gave him a majority of their votes, aligning more with the benefits they gain through racial markers than with their subordination through gender markers. It is certainly not that these supporters are the population most injured by the economic recession or diminished state sovereignty, but that they feel unable to achieve the status that they have always been told is their rightful entitlement. The rightful entitlement they desire, Trump knows, is to be sovereign like him—or at least like the image he projects: a master over self and others, economically and politically potent, and beholden to no other. The pre-election presumption was that Trump's white supporters were lower-income voters, but post-election demographics paint a more complex picture of supporters who are often economically stable, and likely have certain expectations about their power and role in the world. Rather than only a revolt against global instability, their support of Trump is also a desire to maintain their substantive economic and racial benefits. Trump's campaign promise to

rehabilitate the sovereignty he performs is most compelling for those people who have historically and fervently invested in sovereign individualism, typically the white men upon whom it has been implicitly modeled since at least the nineteenth century.¹⁴ “Make America Great Again” indexes this desire—greatness means, for the individual, white and masculinized modes of sovereignty.

In this vein, Trump’s vision of masculine sovereignty directly counteracts neoliberalism, while still upholding masculine individualism. Neoliberal rationality contends that if you do not succeed economically it is your fault. If you do not have enough money to flourish, it is because you have not worked hard enough; indeed you haven’t succeeded in the marketplace of risky entrepreneurialism. Trump, by contrast, says this narrative is incorrect. He tells his supporters: you are not responsible for your inability to succeed—instead, bad trade deals and “bad hombres” are responsible. Trump acknowledges the affective experiences of frustration and neglect engendered by neoliberal governance, but insists those experiences are not the result of individual failure. He upends the individualization of economic potency within neoliberalism by arguing that the real culprits of lost individual potency are racialized others and a weak state afraid to lock people up or kick them out.

Blame for individual vulnerability is also placed on an effete intellectual class that teaches that women and minorities deserve “special treatment” due to past oppression and should get benefits they, from this perspective, do not deserve. Stripping tenure is another way of declaring sovereign domination over an academy presumably focused on the global, the minority, and the cosmopolitan at the expense of the ethno-national. “America First” aims to counteract that move by “Making America Great Again.” Trump promises that real Americans can gain back their lost dignity by re-acquiring a measure of sovereign control from the people and institutions that unjustly hold them back from acquiring their rightful economic, social and political power. As one enthusiastic supporter states of Trump’s substitution of domination for the vestiges of democracy, “I don’t care what he does. I’m behind him 100 percent. Put it this way: If he became a dictator, and they said, ‘We want him in forever,’ he’s my man. He’s in. I’ll never vote against him ... I love his power ... It’s the power that does something to me.”¹⁵

Toward the later end of the 20th century in America, as Sheldon Wolin and others have noted, individual political power and democratic citizenship were channeled into economic consumption, so

that civic expression became an act of material acquisition.¹⁶ George W. Bush's post-9/11 plea for Americans to show their patriotism by shopping is only one of many examples. Under neoliberalism, when public life is privatized and individual economic power is siphoned upward by global financial forces, individuals are doubly stymied, as the one vector emphasized for individual civic power—economic success—is now shunted. Part of what Americans may be railing against in support of Trump is not only their economic instability, then, but also their inability to actively express themselves politically and be part of self-governing processes through real participation. This loss of democracy is something that all people experience across the political spectrum. The system, everyone knows, “is rigged against them,” but in supporting Trump citizens do not aim to fight for popular sovereignty to unrig the system. Instead, Trump offers a fantasy of domination and revenge against the political institutions that have, for so long, denied the political power of collective governing that is the supposed hallmark of American politics. Millions of Americans have responded differently to this situation by fighting for democracy and for a public life in common with others: they engage in large-scale protests and demonstrations over injustice and inequality, turn the civil service into a politicized site for public politics, and reinvest in political processes for equal participation, both institutional and non-institutional. However, for Trump supporters, rather than trying to gain more political power, as they do for economic power, they instead turn against the institutions premised on democratic representation. Instead of fighting for democracy, they want to assault those people and institutions that harbor political power. Trump's promise to “drain the swamp” reflects not merely a desire to end corruption but a vengeful desire to dump democracy as an aspiration and a norm.

Sovereignty without democracy in Trump's formulation is merely domination over internal and external populations in order to produce state greatness. Trump's political goal is not to make the nation free, as it has been for democratic and republican presidents alike for at least the last 80 years, even to justify very different policies. It is to make the nation great. Trump's presidential rhetoric has eliminated freedom and democracy from presidential political discourse, and millions of people support this elimination. Sovereignty becomes supremacy without the legitimating premise of democracy inherent to America's traditional, even if surface, justification for final authority. Trump's supporters have seemingly decided that if

they cannot be free from domination, they must at least have domination over others. And all this, while the real beneficiaries of the global order continue to embezzle economic and political power from people who have transferred their remaining investments in democracy to an authoritarian promising revenge.

Notes

1. For example: Richard Bellamy, "Sovereignty, Post-Sovereignty and Pre-Sovereignty: Three Models of the State, Democracy and Rights within the EU." *Sovereignty in Transition*, edited by Neil Walker (Hart Publishing, 2003), pp. 167-90; Nancy Fraser, *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World* (Columbia UP, 2008); Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (Zone, 2010).
2. Sheldon Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism* (Princeton UP, 2008); Martin Gilens, *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America* (Princeton UP, 2012).
3. Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (Bloomsbury, 2016); Isabell Lorey, *States of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious*. Translated by Aileen Derieg (Verso, 2015); William E. Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style* (Duke UP, 2008); Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (Verso, 2004); Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Duke UP, 2011).
4. Brown (2010); Joan Cocks, *Sovereignty and Other Political Delusions* (Bloomsbury, 2014).
5. Elisabeth Anker, *Orgies of Feeling: Melodrama and the Politics of Freedom* (Duke UP, 2014).
6. Elisabeth Anker and William Youmans, "Sovereign Aspirations: National Security and Police Power in a Global Era." *Theory & Event*, vol. 20, no.1. 2017, pp. 3-18.
7. Michael Shapiro, "Moral Geographies and the Ethics of Post-Sovereignty." *Public Culture*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1994, pp. 479-502.
8. Elisabeth Anker, "Heroic Identifications: Or, 'You Can Love Me Too – I am so Like the State.'" *Theory & Event*, vol. 15, no.1, 2012.
9. "Donald Trump's Republican Convention Speech." *CNNVideo*, www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2016/07/21/rnc-convention-donald-trump-entire-acceptance-speech.cnn. Accessed 13 April 2017.
10. Elisabeth Anker, "Trump's Melodrama." *Daily Nous*, 14 March 2016, <http://dailynous.com/2016/03/14/philosophers-on-the-2016-u-s-presidential-race/#Anker>. Accessed 13 April 2017.
11. Linda Williams, *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O.J. Simpson* (Princeton UP, 2001).

12. <http://dailynous.com/2016/03/14/philosophers-on-the-2016-u-s-presidential-race/>
13. On this dynamic see Anker (2014).
14. Carole Pateman and Charles Mills, *Contract and Domination* (Polity, 2007).
15. Jeb Lund. "It's the Power That Does Something to Me': Dispatches from the Saturday Night Trump Rally." *Esquire*, 20 February 2017, www.esquire.com/news-politics/a53275/trump-melbourne-florida-rally/. Accessed 13 April 2017.
16. Sheldon S. Wolin, "The People's Two Bodies." *Fugitive Democracy and Other Essays*, edited by Nicholas Xenos (Princeton UP, 2016), pp. 379-93.

Works Cited

- Adorno, Theodor W., and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Stanford UP, 2003.
- Anker, Elisabeth. "Heroic Identifications: Or, 'You Can Love Me Too – I am so Like the State.'" *Theory & Event*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2012.
- . "Mobile Sovereigns" manuscript in progress for *The Symbolic and Material Construct of Guns*, edited by Austin Sarat and Jonathan Oberst, Oxford UP, under contract.
- . *Orgies of Feeling: Melodrama and the Politics of Freedom*. Duke UP, 2014.
- . "Trump's Melodrama." *Daily Nous*, 14 March 2016, <http://dailynous.com/2016/03/14/philosophers-on-the-2016-u-s-presidential-race/#Anker>. Accessed 13 April 2017.
- Anker, Elisabeth, and William Youmans. "Sovereign Aspirations: National Security and Police Power in a Global Era." *Theory & Event*, vol. 20, no.1, 2017, pp. 3-18.
- Bellamy, Richard. "Sovereignty, Post-Sovereignty and Pre-Sovereignty: Three Models of the State, Democracy and Rights within the EU." *Sovereignty in Transition*, edited by Neil Walker, Hart Publishing, 2003, pp. 167-90.
- Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism*. Duke UP, 2011.

theory@buffalo 20

Brown, Wendy. *Politics Out Of History*. Princeton UP, 2001.

---. *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*. Zone, 2010.

Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. Verso, 2004.

Cocks, Joan. *Sovereignty and Other Political Delusions*. Bloomsbury, 2014.

Connolly, William E. *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style*. Duke UP, 2008.

“Donald Trump’s Republican Convention Speech.” *CNNVideo*, www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2016/07/21/rnc-convention-donald-trump-entire-acceptance-speech.cnn. Accessed 13 April 2017.

“Donald Trump’s Speech at the Republican Convention, as Prepared for Delivery.” *CNN*, 22 July 2016, www.cnn.com/2016/07/22/politics/donald-trump-rnc-speech-text/. Accessed 13 April 2017.

Fraser, Nancy. *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World*. Columbia UP, 2008.

“Full Text: Donald Trump 2016 RNC Draft Speech Transcript.” *Politico*, 21 July 2016, www.politico.com/story/2016/07/full-transcript-donald-trump-nomination-acceptance-speech-at-rnc-225974. Accessed 13 April 2017.

Gilens, Martin. *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America*. Princeton UP, 2012.

Lorey, Isabell. *States of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious*. Translated by Aileen Derieg, Verso, 2015.

Lund, Jeb. “‘It’s the Power That Does Something to Me’: Dispatches from the Saturday Night Trump Rally.” *Esquire*, 20 February 2017, www.esquire.com/news-politics/a53275/trump-melbourne-florida-rally/. Accessed 13 April 2017.

Markell, Patchen. *Bound by Recognition*. Princeton UP, 2003.

Pateman, Carole. and Charles Mills. *Contract and Domination*. Polity, 2007.

Shapiro, Michael. “Moral Geographies and the Ethics of Post-Sovereignty.” *Public Culture*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1994, pp. 479-502.

Standing, Guy. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. Bloomsbury, 2016.

Wolin, Sheldon S. *Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism*. Princeton UP, 2008.

---. "The People's Two Bodies." *Fugitive Democracy and Other Essays*. Edited by Nicholas Xenos, Princeton UP, 2016, pp. 379-93.

Hamit Bozarlan

WHEN VIOLENCE DOMINATES ALL BUT DECIDES NOTHING:
REFLECTIONS ON VIOLENCE, CRUELTY, AND THE CITY¹

After high hopes incited by the 2011 revolutionary protests, the Arabic world and, more generally, the “Greater Middle East” confront a massive phenomenon of violence: while General Abdel Fattah al-Sissi’s *coup d’État* reintroduced cruelty into the heart of the city in Egypt, Libya, continuing into the region of Sahel, Sinai, Yemen, Syria, Iraq (and to a lesser extent Lebanon), and, finally, Afghanistan and Pakistan risk a partial or even total political and social collapse. The disintegration of the States is accompanied by the disintegration of societies that find themselves fragmented into micro-segments and delivered over to armed micro-powers. The toll is indeed heavy in terms of both human lives and the militarized atomization of space. The conflicts from 2011 to 2014 have already annihilated dozens of cities [*villes*], leaving victims in the hundreds of thousands and refugees and so-called internally displaced persons in the millions. Nothing indicates that we will still be able to speak of a “Syrian society” or of a “Libyan society” in 2020. With respect to the scale of the armed fragmentation, one will simply recall that some 1,200 militias are active in Syria and almost 300 in Libya, without even counting the other conflict zones.

Except in Tunisia, a reason of protest—the now-distant spring of 2011 that was marked by the quest for dignity, liberty, and equality—has given way to an entirely other reason that defies our intellect and interrogates the very pertinence of our conceptual tools and our analytical categories. For example, in numerous countries throughout the region, we witness a “decay or “vanishing [*dépérissement*]” of

time understood as “unifying [*unificateur*]” and regulatory for both power relations and everyday transactions.² Time has always constituted the principal “capital” of both States and the agents protesting them: powers, indeed, can anchor across time only on condition of being clockmakers of a time that they regulate and convert into relations of domination, instruments of legitimation, or tools of intervention into space. As the historian Bernard Lepetit suggests, “space” is only, in the final analysis, the “solidified” form of time (137). Inversely, as Ibn Khaldun already understood in the fourteenth century, all protest aims at overturning and then pulverizing the time of the existing power in order to turn its own time into a tool for the conquest of space.³ Yet, what happens when a power can ensure its durability only by destroying collective time and space, as in the case of Syria? How does one analyze situations where the State is transformed into a sort of militia coexisting, not only in Syria but also in Iraq, Yemen, or even in Libya, with other militia that prove just as destructive of time and space?

To be sure, research in the social sciences is not entirely helpless before this phenomenon, which one can explain both on the basis of the ethnical, confessional, tribal, territorial, or trans-border “fundaments” of these societies and on the basis of a simple chronology showing how the militarization of the conflicts gradually becomes operative before unleashing a vertiginous process of fragmentation.⁴ Yet, although pertinent, “explanations” thus offered have no traction or, even worse, the “light” offered by them “shows us precisely the things from which we wish to be delivered, against which we try to struggle” (Shestov 312-13).

“Explaining” violence on the basis of the context in which it emerges and its mutations proves to be of practically derisory utility and does not in the least allow one to overcome the crisis of meaning that it provokes, a crisis before which researchers remain just as unarmed as citizens. However refined it might be, indeed, research cannot, according to its very vocation, create a critical consciousness or contribute to the formation of an active citizenship capable of exerting an influence on the course of the events.

This civil urgency lies at the foundation of the present text. Despite an education in political history and sociology, I have opted to present here, not a research article, but rather a few reflections that I admit from the beginning to be free, reflections that find their point of departure in the Middle East but attempt to think violence as a universal phenomenon.

VIOLENCE OR THE HOLLOW "CONVERSION"

At the end of the 1960s, Hannah Arendt was shocked by the weakness of works on the phenomenon of violence and, more generally, by the poverty of the theoretical concepts and tools for thinking the phenomenon.⁵ This observation could no doubt be verified once again in the 1980s. Since then, numerous publications both theoretical and monographic, comparative and interdisciplinary, have come forth. Yet, "violence" as the object of research or of philosophical reflection continues to escape us. Despite the typologies that we elaborate, we manage neither to "define" it nor to "make sense" of it: either it becomes the object of a morbid description of facts; or it is taken over by an equally repressive and counterproductive security apparatus, as the paltry results of the "global war on terrorism" demonstrate; or it provokes an indignation that relieves hearts and minds but remains ineffective in the field; or, finally, it dissolves into the magma of other subjects. To be sure, the phenomenological approach, which allows violence to be analyzed by linking it to relations of domination and protest, processes of social construction and dissolution, is undeniably the most fruitful that one can develop on the issue, but it fails no less to take into account the transformative effects that violence engenders as a *practice*. Similarly, the phenomenological approach does not carry the keys to the intelligibility of the situation in which violence dominates all but decides nothing or, if there is a decision, violence incises into life.⁶ One thus finds oneself, at bottom, before the Hegelian problematic of "convertibility" that Étienne Balibar⁷ reactivates: in the cases that interest us here, either violence is exercised without the ability "to convert" the projects and wishes of its actors into "power [*pouvoir*]" or, more serious still, it "converts" the resources for socialization—confessional, tribal, or from militarized circles—into an action the meaning of which lies in pure destruction or in the proclamation of H-Hour, of the "new era," which is also the era of the triumph of Thanatos, i.e., the God of death and destruction.⁸

To be sure, this "inconvertibility" and this "destructive conversion" have their roots in the social and the political understood as relations of power, domination, submission, protest, indeed, of class and inter-ethnics. Whether a question of *shabiha*⁹, the "ghost men" of Bashar al-Assad, the soldiers in black from the "Islamic State," the militants of AQIM (al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) and AQAP (al-Qaeda in the Arabic Peninsula), the tribal militiamen of Misrata

or Zintan in Libya, the Taliban in Afghanistan or Pakistan, or the al-Shabaab and Boko Haram in Somalia or Nigeria, agents of violence do not rise from a social, political, economic, or cultural weightlessness. But the sacrificial process in which they are engaged “radicalize[s] the world” (Baudrillard 10), and as a consequence their world endows them with their own passions and sacredness and thus allows them to break from their conditions of emergence. It is in the aftermath of this trajectory, at times condensed in a very short spatio-temporality, that they become a force propelled by its only axiological dynamics: the values produced and ceaselessly modified by and in violence determine good and evil, allow for distinguishing friend from enemy, and dispense with protection or justify executions. This constant disarticulation between upstream and downstream, resulting in the transformative capacity of violence as a *practice*, also constitutes the spring or source of our incomprehension and our discontent [*malaise*].¹⁰ For example, these agents do indeed have a past, which is documented and studied extensively and even on the basis of individual and collective trajectories and “career changes,” but they nevertheless are not inscribed in a logic of continuity or accumulation; on the contrary, they multiply over time by the springs of their permanent metamorphoses, which deprives them of all horizon. In the same way, if they do indeed have a “materiality” that one might study on the basis of reference points in space (places of origin, mobility, circles of solidarity or socialization...), time (intergenerational transmissions and discontinuities, foundational events, real or reclaimed historical filiations...), symbols (particular vocabulary, choices in war names, aesthetic language...), this materiality is constantly undermined by a violence that sweeps away everything in its path. Violence then goes from being the midwife of a new society to becoming the agent of demolition of society in all its complexity, its past, its present, and its future. But the agents of destruction then become agents of their own annihilation, as well; they anchor over time and control plots of space, to be sure, but they do so at the price of the fragilization and fragmentation of *their* time and *their* space, which condemns them to suffocation and to a path with no tomorrow. By placing violence at the heart of their exercise of power and by becoming “politicides” in the proper sense of the term, they transform their victories into markers of their decline.

These disarticulations, which transform from simple effects of violence into its “ontological being” and its habitual *modus operandi*, also permit us to reformulate the question of “evil;” far from

remaining in a dialectical relation with “good,” even far from all metaphysical signification, “evil” is forged by and in action. It is the consequence of the increasingly accentuated unbinding of agents *vis-à-vis* the social and the political, an unbinding that destroys not only their historical filiations and their own reference points but also all ethical considerations in its path. It is by the autonomization and the acquisition of power [*puissance*] by action that the “unspeakable” becomes something “ordinary” and accessible to tens of thousands of men (and a few hundred women) of all social and ethnic origins, indeed, of practically all generations, from veterans of the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s who are now between 55 and 60 years old to the youths born in European cities [*villes*] at the end of the 1990s. This diversity not only produces a “universal” and intergenerational “community” of fate that allows each member to be “reborn” and then “die” for the “cause;” it also facilitates the transfer of technical “expertise” from one field to another, the diffusion of a “gothic aesthetic” borrowed from the virtual world of “war games”¹¹ to be deployed in a very real field, and of course an “ethical de-responsibilization [*déresponsabilisation*]” that, insofar as it is collective, also de-responsibilizes each individual. The power that everyone gains as a member of the “community of violence,” the power on par with the sacrifices to which individuals consent, not only has the value of proof of the “justness of the cause;” it also gives birth to an emotional, moral, and cognitive mechanism that makes murder an act of “courage” and “virtue” as much as a “moral” and collective obligation. One thus sees a double process put into place, a process of the destruction of the individual in the power that the collective provides him or her and a process of rebirth in the axiology that, by a return effect, allows the collective to grow in power.

VIOLENCE, TIME, AND SPACE

In the 1980s, the Middle East *sensu lato* faced a generalized “state of violence,”¹² to which I will subsequently return. With the exception of Kurdish and, in part, Palestinian agents, the violence of this period was striking not only because of its density but also because of its sterility in that, in the end, it led to nothing constructive and effected no “conversion.” The Iran-Iraq War, one of the most destructive conflicts between states since the Second World War, left between 800,000 and 1,000,000 victims, but it resulted in the return of

two belligerent parties to the *status quo ante*, without the least gain for one or the other; the civil war in Lebanon had similar results, leaving 180,000 victims and missing persons out of a population of 4,000,000 inhabitants and concluding with a simple readjustment of the 1943 “National Pact” of communities; the Soviet-Afghan War, which also mobilized several tens of thousands of “Arabs,” managed to put an end to the Red Army’s occupation, to be sure, but it led above all to territorial fragmentation of the country.

This decade also witnessed the radical Islamist wave’s rise in power, reinforced by the shockwaves of the Iranian Revolution and the Afghani dark romanticism that the Afghan jihad exerted in many Arab countries and beyond. Yet, there again, the “conversion” was inoperative or operated perversely: the regimes, which moreover had not hesitated to “export” the radicalism of their youth toward Afghanistan, did not fail to use “terrorist threats” to consolidate their authoritarianism. The Algerian and Egyptian *jihads* of the 1990s, explicable in part (but only in part) by the return of “Afghan Arabs” to their homelands, also constituted moments particularly destructive of spaces, but also of generations of militiamen and civil populations, but politically they had no other consequences than the consolidation of authoritarian States in the two countries.

If one looks to the Greater Middle East today, which under the influence of past and present jihadist transhumance has now extended to Afghanistan and to Pakistan in the East and to Sahel in the West, one observes once again a “state of violence” that finds its most manifest translation in the militarization of “regionalist,” confessional, and tribal dynamics that are themselves fragmented. International borders, which Anthony Giddens defines as a “power container” deciding the spaces of state sovereignty (120), have become sites producing a trans-state violence, and they have above all been doubled by other, this time internal borders. Far from all fluidity, these new lines dividing “national” territories into fragmented entities have been transformed into “fronts” in the etymological sense of the term.

More than in the 1980s, the violence one currently observes in the region is inscribed simultaneously on a material register and a register of passions, which Balibar defines respectively as “ultraobjective” and “ultrasubjective” (13) and which is radicalized by the amplificatory effects that their fusion produces. The violence is “ultraobjective” in that it undeniably engenders economical and symbolic resources placed at the disposal of its authors; indeed, it gives

birth to a “system of transaction”¹³ of which it is the principal regulator. The collapse of the Syrian economy observed and deciphered since the fall of 2011, for example, had no impact on the “economy of war,” which prospered, rather, from the regime and then from jihadist movements.

The “materiality” of this violence also comes from the fact that it takes the form of a total de-subjectification; while it does not carry out pure and simple massacres or use cruelty and fear as resources, it fragments and then destroys temporal and spatial markers, as well as the social bond, without which the *subject* cannot exist. The disappearance of “collective space” takes from individuals the very possibility of anchoring confidently in a locality all while remaining potential agents of mobility; the disappearance of collective time prevents individuals, but also society in its entirety, from conceiving themselves with help from retrospective and prospective markers, from revitalizing in their past and from constructing their future; finally, the end of the social bond condemns everyone to bend to a strictly individual, familial, or at best micro-spatial framework of survival. As Simone Weil emphasizes, indeed, “[h]uman injustice produces ... not martyrs but quasi-damned souls” (*Gravity* 28). In the course of this process, however, “men in arms” become themselves “quasi-damned,” indeed, “over-damned.” As Weil again specifies in her decryption of the “ultimate secret” of the *Iliad*:

Battles are not determined among men who calculate, devise, take resolutions and act on them but among men stripped of these abilities, transformed, fallen to the level either of purely passive inert matter or of the blind forces of sheer impetus. ... The art of war is merely the art of provoking such metamorphoses, and the tools, the techniques, even the death inflicted on the enemy are only means to this end; it has for its true end the very soul of the combatants. (*Poem* 61-62)

On the other hand, one also observes the emergence of a dark regime of subjectivity, which is marked by an axiological urgency qualifying all stakes, all battles, all tactics as though charged with a “vital” importance, indeed, as though unfolding from a cosmic drama the resolution of which would depend on nothing but the combatants’ determination and spirit of sacrifice alone. This ahistoricization of the sequence, nevertheless unfolding in a sadly terrestrial time and space, has as a consequence the pulverization of the very

notion of “strategy,” which is nevertheless omnipresent as a consequence of the violence inscribed over time. There is no doubt that the regimes degraded into military forces, Islamic combatants or the other confessional or tribal armed groups, think about the conflict, that they are capable of displacing the frontlines, that they ensure control of their respective spaces, that they sometimes organize the mobility of their forces over great distances, that they master speed and rationalize their economic and coercive resources, but they do so by putting the body of the other and their own bodies under the pressure of a single movement and a single immediacy, thus in fact depriving them of all past comprehended as a reservoir of resources and of all future perceived as the horizon of change or realization of projects. The continuity between these three declensions of time on which philosophers have insisted since Saint Augustine—present, past, and future—finds itself broken.

As one of the probable consequences of this rupture, the agents of violence turn to a chiliastic logic. As Karl Mannheim specifies, this logic

severs all relationship with those phases of historical existence which are in daily process of becoming in our midst. It tends at every moment to turn into hostility towards the world, its culture, and all its works and earthly achievements, and to regard them as only premature gratifications of a more fundamental striving which can only be adequately satisfied in Kairos. (198)

The second consequence, which is even more extreme than “chiliasm,” is the search for an eschatological deliverance the realization of which is supposed to take place *hic et nunc*, in immediate and terrestrial space and time. The authors of violence then cease to conceive of themselves as actors [*acteurs*] in the proper sense of the term—in other words, with experiences from the past, projections into the future, and axiological and ethical responsibility in the present—in order to become simple agents [*actants*] fulfilling a purpose imposed from beyond, forbidding themselves as a consequence all faculty of judgment or of readjustment if it is not of a strictly military or organizational order. One is indeed unsettled upon seeing the extent to which a millenarianism, at times explicit and at other times subjacent, is constantly present in the discourses and symbolic registers of the actors—whether stately or non-stately, Alawite, Shiite, or Sun-

nite—catalyzing the “ethical de-responsibilization.” Finally, a third consequence must be emphasized that finds greatest expression in the suicide attacks. Rarer in the 1980s and 1990s, these attacks have since September 11 become ordinary, numbering in the thousands. Is it necessary to recall that this particular form of self-sacrificial action consists in killing the other and subsequently all alterity in itself, in destroying time and space, in sum, the world in itself and by itself?

THE STATE OF VIOLENCE AND THE COLLAPSE OF SOCIETIES

The concept of a “State of violence,” elaborated by the philosopher Frédéric Gros in the 2000s (see above), designates the birth in Western democracies of a new regime of security that does not recognize any “discontinuity” between the interior scene and the exterior front, the army and the police, the periods of mobilization and the periods of demobilization. In an earlier work,¹⁴ I applied this notion to the Middle East of the 1980s where these dividing lines not only disappeared; under the impact of a military transhumance, notably but not exclusively, of the Arab world toward Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Iran-Iraq War, and the Lebanese Civil War, the distinction between State and non-State agents also faded out, and the borders were transformed into sites producing mass violence. Over the course of that decade, the States, the only entities recognized as legitimate by international law, had appeared as the first agents to violate the Westphalian principles that had founded them.

As Heinrich Sharp and Bertrand Badie suggested six decades apart,¹⁵ the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia no doubt allowed the Old Continent to exit the wars that had set it ablaze; by recognizing the exclusive sovereignty of princes over “their” respective territories, however, it also annihilated the hope for a supranational or imperial Europe. The States thus found themselves legitimated twice over—theoretically—as exclusive agents of violence: they thenceforth had the legal *right* to make war beyond their borders and the whole leisure of using military activity “to develop” their territories, to centralize, to implement a policy of taxation and military drafts, and, finally, to grant themselves a technocratic and bureaucratic efficaciousness. It is in this way that the “State,” which both Max Weber and Charles Tilly present ultimately as a mafia that has succeeded in institutionalizing itself,¹⁶ managed at least in part to pacify “its” territory.

The evolution was entirely different in the Middle East,¹⁷ which entered the Westphalian world only in the twentieth century. The process of the militarized fragmentation of societies, as well as the “degradation” of States into militia, indeed, into predatory forces within the territorial framework granted to them by the Westphalian system, was already clearly perceptible in the 1980s; silently at work in the 1990s and in the 2000s, the process has since 2011 accelerated at a vertiginous rate, provoking the collapse not only of the States but also of societies, the former dragging down the latter in their fall. Vast zones or important cities [*villes*], at times places with considerable military resources like Timbuktu in Mali or Mosul in Iraq, “fall” without the least resistance under the assault of a hundred or a few thousand men. While the “national army” attempts to ensure its own survival by fleeing, the civil population, unarmed [*désarmée*] in both senses of the term, does not know how to defend itself and cannot defend itself. The pacification of the City, which Ibn Khaldun, in contrast to Machiavelli,¹⁸ considers the very condition of its existence, might very well produce obedience to the Prince;¹⁹ when the Prince vanishes, however, society finds itself delivered to its dissident margins²⁰ or to militias that come from elsewhere, militias that have at their disposal resources for violence and know how to make war, to kill, *and* to be killed for a “cause.” The transformation of the “national army” into a militia produces the same effect: in times of peace, society can manage a power, even an oppressive power, accept the terms of submission that the power dictates to it, and find the means for coming to terms with it, but society does not know how to defend itself against a Prince that assures his survival through the war that he wages against it, a Prince that has available considerable means of coercion and is equipped with not only mercenaries but also men from its community like the notorious Syrian *Shabiha*.

THE PRINCE AND THE MILITIAMAN: THE CITY AND THE TEST OF VIOLENCE

The collapse of the city, following attacks from its margins or from its Prince, also invites us to reflect upon the link between violence and politics. From Ibn Khaldun to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, numerous thinkers have understood violence as foundational for a new order. By contrast, other figures like Walter Benjamin and Sebastian Haffner,²¹ were distraught by the irruption of violence in the City, and Hannah Arendt later put forward the hypothesis of an

antinomy between violence and politics. According to Arendt, who clearly took Antiquity as her model, the City could very well wage foreign wars but on the condition of recognizing the “non-political” nature of the activity.²² One might at first glance interpret this remark as a sign of a profound misunderstanding of the phenomenon of violence. After all, not only has violence always been present in the City; as an episode, indeed, as a foundational act, it has often been at its base. Yet, if one releases this empirical register and moves toward a normative horizon, one can find in this reflection a valuable key for reading the conditions of the very *viability* of the City. In order to ensure its sustainability, the City must indeed be based on a twofold, contradictory but convergent *political* principle, *both* folds of which exclude violence: the consensus for defining its identity, its borders, and its system of representation and government; the *dissension* in order to legitimate, negotiate, and perhaps resolve its internal conflicts or, in certain cases, institutionalize them. From such a perspective, the introduction of violence into the City can only have its collapse as a *final* consequence: by defying it in its quality as a collective, institutional, and moral personality, violence effectively puts the principle of consensus into question and, by substituting the critique of weapons for the weapon of critique, precludes *dissension* as a legitimate apparatus. An armed dissidence, attempting moreover to impose its hegemony in order to ensure victory for itself, can only kill legalized dissidence.

To be sure, in this domain, like in others, one must not move too quickly. In reality, the term “violence” (in the generic sense of *Gewalt* in German) erases the distinction between the *force* of an organized power and the armed dissidence of a part of society and consequently proves to be a poor heuristic tool. To remove this distinction, which is central in the analyses of Georges Sorel and in those of Charles Tilly,²³ would indeed amount to emptying a great number of politically foundational concepts of their meaning, such as domination, protest, exclusion, integration, or simply citizenship. As the history of revolutions throughout the world recalls, violence can emerge as a response from the dominated, the excluded, or simple political opponents to coercion by power. Similarly, violence can aim at unblocking an oligarchical political machine that refuses all political and social representation and, consequently, all expansion of political play. It can also, at least in the subjective reading of the agents, be the last resort for resolving a “social question” aggravated by high inequalities. Finally, it is undeniable that it is not radicalism

as such that leads to violence but, rather, its banishment from the city; the radicalisms of the left in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s or the African American protests of the same period, as a general rule, renounced violence the moment they were able to obtain the possibility of becoming part of the public or political space and access means of action for supporting and realizing certain vindications.

Yet, in certain configurations where the City has already been destroyed or considerably weakened, violence nourished by radicalism, not necessarily a political radicalism but a radicalism of race or confession, can reach a paroxysmal level that makes any distinction between armed protest and coercion by power disappear. In these particular cases, it is certainly the powerful, indeed the executioners, and not the excluded, the “proletariat from within” of which Arnold Toynbee speaks,²⁴ that make recourse to violence and monopolize the two registers, symbolic and discursive, of *legitimate* order and *legitimate* protest; by this synthesis that already fascinated and terrified the lawyer Sebastian Haffner (187-88), they can justify their brutality and do so both *on the basis of the right* to defend themselves as an established power and *on the basis of a right* to rebellion as the “oppressed” or the “excluded” of an “unjust order.” National Socialism was thus particular as an *order* and as an *anti-order*, as an executioner and as a victim, and it deprived those that it exterminated of the right to present themselves as victims and to an even greater extent, of course, of the right to rebel as victims. Bashar al-Assad’s militant State and the Islamic State that now controls a vast territory in Syria and in Iraq *as a State* act on exactly the same model, legitimizing themselves *both* by limitless coercion that they consider legal, or at least necessary to defend *order*, *and* by violence that they justify through their condition as “oppressed” in order to break an “unjust order” associated with their victims.

One thus sees the emergence of a “perverse rationality” or a rationality *ad absurdum* to which Murray Edelman has drawn our attention,²⁵ which is certainly efficacious in terms of rational action or the production of a set of values and perfectly manages to convince a circle of accomplices, but disarms its victims in both the proper and the figurative sense of the term, leaving them with no choice but to live the cruelty and “meaninglessness” as the only possible human condition or history. A-meaning [*a-sens*] is, as Cornelius Castoriadis specified in his time, “a possible threat for the meaning of society” in that it includes the “risk that the social edifice of significations will totter” (152). Cruelty, for its part, becomes itself

a system of exchanges, accepting only as a response a cruelty increasingly massive, increasingly capable of shocking us through a dynamic of ever-rising stakes. In such a system, as Marie-Françoise Baslez specifies, “neither the executioner nor the victim are strictly speaking subjects but, rather, postures of political subjection the cruelty of which is the hidden instrument” (48).²⁶ The consequence of this evolution, which is also perverse, is that “power” is preserved as a principle and an efficacious organ but placed in the service of the methodical destruction of the City. On the one hand, the agents of violence manage to structure themselves, to equip themselves not only with an army but also with ministries; they sign decrees or *fat-was* followed by real effects; they pay salaries, at times even raising them, as in the case of the “Islamic State;” they impose taxation and drafts; with great cruelty, they administer their justices; they impose their own curricula on educational establishments; they adopt preferential politics for redistributing resources; they exercise, in short, the majority of the prerogatives of a state entity. On the other hand, however, this bureaucratic and technocratic rationality goes hand in hand with the mass use of tanks and/or aviation in urban space; it fragments rather than unifies; it creates fear rather than the confidence that the City needs; it “disconnects” rather than “connects.” By implementing a detailed social Darwinism on the scale of cities [*villes*], neighborhoods, and even streets, violence redefines alterity as an irreducible enmity, indeed, as an abomination that should be removed by murder; consequently, it does not expel death from the city as Jean Baudrillard suggests²⁷ but, rather, transforms death into a widely publicized theater of massacres. It has a rationality that finds its meaning in murdering the city’s reason [*la raison de la cité*] and that, in the final instance, transforms itself into a rationality of ruins over the course of an enormous “Third Night of Walpurgis.”²⁸

Like certain sadly famous periods of the past, the violence that we observe today in the Middle East also poses the thorny question of “responsibility.” “Violence” is not an agent but a practice; one does not “interrogate” it but, rather, suffers it. “The point here,” as Hannah Arendt says, “is that violence itself is incapable of speech, and not merely that speech is helpless when confronted with violence. Because of this speechlessness political theory has little to say about the phenomenon of violence and must leave its discussion to

the technicians" (*On Revolution* 19).

Is "suffering" violence, however, not also a way of delivering the world over to the fatalism of ruins and, moreover, to a greater irresponsibility? Does it not come down to contributing to the destruction of the "subject" that can exist only if it is thinking, reflective, critical, and *active* upon itself and upon the world?

If one cannot interrogate violence, one can *and* one must, inversely, interrogate its authors by taking from them the right to present themselves either as defenders of a just cause or as simple actors with no responsibility of their own in a cosmic drama. The "international community," here and elsewhere in the past, annihilated itself by its own paralysis before the horrific scenes unfolding before its eyes and the City, our universal City, has not grasped that "[f]ar away violence dominates for now" (Reemtsma 151) or that "civilization's discontent" elsewhere is also "discontent" in *civilization* as such.²⁹

Translated by D. J. S. Cross

Notes

1. "City" regular translates *cit *, which is a technical term designating a territory the inhabitants of which are governed by their own laws (the *cit s* of ancient Greece, for instance). Wherever "city" translates the more common term *ville*, it has been glossed in brackets. –Translator.

2. This expression comes from Jules Michelet, *Histoire de la R volution fran aise* (J. Hetzel et Cie, 1848).

3. Cf. Hamit Bozarslan, *Le Luxe et la violence. Domination et contestation chez Ibn Khald * (CNRS Editions, 2015).

4. Cf. Hamit Bozarslan, *Moyen-Orient 2011-2015*.

5. Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic* (Harcourt, 1972).

6. ... *si elle tranche, elle tranche dans le vif*. There are two untranslatable plays in this formulation. First, *trancher* means literally "to cut" but figuratively "to decide" (as in the very title of this article: "When Violence Dominates All but *ne tranche rien*, that is, Decides Nothing); second, *dans le vif* means figuratively "into the heart of the matter" but literally "into the living." I have tried to capture something of these senses with the -cise root common to *incision* and *decision*. – Translator.

7. Cf.  tienne Balibar, *Violence and Civility: On the Limits of Political Philosophy*. Translated by G. M. Goshgarian (Columbia UP, 2015), pp. 34-41.

8. Cf. Sigmund Freud, *Civilizations and Its Discontents*. Translated and edited James Strachey (Norton, 1962).

9. An armed militia consisting of mostly Alawite groups that are sponsored by Bashar Al-Assad and the Ba'ath government of Syria.

10. Though "unrest" would be the more literal translation for *malaise* in this case, I have given "discontent" to keep active the implicit reference to Freud's *Civilizations and Its Discontents* (*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*), which is translated into French as *La malaise dans la culture*. – Translator.

11. In English in the original. – Translator.

12. On this concept, see Frédéric Gros, *States of Violence: An Essay on the End of the War*. Translated by Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Michael Richardson (Chicago U of Chicago P, 2010).

13. On this concept, see Daniel Pecault, "De la banalité de la violence à la terreur: le cas colombien." *Cultures et Conflits*, vol. 24-25, 1977, p. 166.

14. Hamit Bozarslan, *Une histoire de la violence au Moyen-Orient: De la fin de l'Empire ottoman à Al-Qaïda* (Éditions de la Découverte, 2008).

15. Cf. Heinrich Scharp, *Abschied von Europa?* (Verlag Josef Knecht, 1953), and Bertrand Badie, *Quand l'histoire commence* (CNRS Éditions, 2012). [Part of Badie's book has been published in English as "When History Begins." *International Trends*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 4-14. – Translator.]

16. Cf. Max Weber, "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology." *The Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1981, pp. 165-66 and Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime" in *Bringing the State Back In*, edited by Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschmeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge UP, 1985), pp. 169-91.

17. Cf. Rolf Schwarz, *War and State-Building in the Middle East* (U of Florida P, 2013). p. 2. The same goes for sub-Saharan Africa and its close ties to the Arab world, which was studied by Achille Mbembe in *Sortir de la Grande Nuit. Essai sur l'Afrique décolonisée* (Éditions de la Découverte, 2013).

18. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*. Edited by Quentin Skinner and Russell Price, translated by Russell Price (Cambridge UP, 1988), p. 72.

19. Cf. Hamit Bozarslan, *Le Luxe et la violence. Domination et contestation chez Ibn Khaldûn* (CNRS, 2014) and Gabriel Martinez-Gros, *Brève Histoire des Empires. Comment ils surgissent? Comment ils s'effondrent?* (Seuil, 2014).

20. As I am using it here, the term "margins" does not necessarily designate "peripheral" or socially and economically marginalized agents but, rather, categories that have the capacity to produce a radical dissidence in the city.

21. Cf. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History." *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Edited by Hannah Arendt (Harcourt, 1968) and Sebastian Haffner, *Defying Hitler: A Memoir*. Translated by Oliver Pretzel (Picador, 2003).

22. In dealing with other states or city-states, the polis as a whole acted with force, and thus in its own eyes acted 'unpolitically.'" See Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*. Edited by Jerome Kohn (Schocken Books, 2005), pp. 149-50 and pp. 164-65.

23. Cf. Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*. Edited by Jeremy Jennings (Cambridge UP, 2004) and Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (Cambridge UP, 2003).
24. Cf. Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History, Vol. 1: Abridgement of Volumes I-VI*. Edited by D. C. Somervell (Oxford UP, 1946).
25. "Justifications of enmity take the form of constructing a narrative about the past and the future: a story plot that rationalizes draconian measures against supposed enemies on the ground that an evil must be destroyed in order to save the public and the enemies themselves for a better future. To burn heretics, destroy their careers, or publicly humiliate them is to save the social order from contamination and to cure a pathology in the antagonist." Murray Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (U of Chicago P, 1988), pp. 75-76.
26. My translation. – Translator.
27. Cf. Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism*. Translated by Chris Turner (Verso, 2012).
28. Cf. Karl Kraus, *Die dritte Walpurgisnacht*. Edited by Bruno Kem (Marix Verlag, 2015).
29. ... *malaise dans la culture*: "culture" is not "civilization" but, like in note 9 above, I have rendered it as such so as to keep clearly active the reference to Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*. – Translator.

Works Cited

- Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution*. Penguin, 1965.
- . *Crises of the Republic*. Harcourt, 1972.
- . *The Promise of Politics*. Edited by Jerome Kohn, Schocken Books, 2005.
- Badie, Bertrand. *Quand l'histoire commence*. CNRS Éditions, 2012. English translation: "When History Begins." *International Trends*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 4-14.
- Balibar, Étienne. *Violence and Civility: On the Limits of Political Philosophy*. Translated by G. M. Goshgarian, Columbia UP, 2015.
- Baslez, Marie-Françoise. *Les Persécutions dans l'antiquité. Victimes, héros, martyrs*. Fayard, 2007.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *The Spirit of Terrorism*. Translated by Chris Turner, Verso, 2012.

- Benjamin, Walter. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Edited by Hannah Arendt, Harcourt, 1968, pp. 253-264.
- Bozarslan, Hamit. *Une histoire de la violence au Moyen-Orient: De la fin de l'Empire ottoman à Al-Qaida*. Éditions de la Découverte, 2008.
- . *Le Luxe et la violence. Domination et contestation chez Ibn Khaldûn*. CNRS Éditions, 2014.
- . *Moyen-Orient 2011-2015. Configurations révolutionnaires et état de violence*, CNRS Éditions, 2015.
- Castoriadis, Cornelius. *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy*. Edited by David Ames Curtis, Oxford UP, 1991.
- Edelman, Murray. *Constructing the Political Spectacle*. U of Chicago P, 1988.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Translated and edited James Strachey, Norton, 1962.
- Furet, François. *La Révolution française*. Gallimard, 2007.
- Giddens, Anthony. *The Nation-State and Violence*. U of California P, 1987.
- Gros, Frédéric. *States of Violence: An Essay on the End of the War*. Translated by Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Michael Richardson, U of Chicago P, 2010.
- Haffner, Sebastian. *Defying Hitler: A Memoir*. Translated by Oliver Pretzel, Picador, 2003.
- Kraus, Karl. *Die dritte Walpurgisnacht*. Edited by Bruno Kem, Marix Verlag, 2015.
- Lepetit, Bernard. *Carnets de croquis. Sur la connaissance historique*. Éditions Albin Michel, 1999.
- Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince*. Edited by Quentin Skinner and Russell Price, translated by Russell Price, Cambridge UP, 1988.
- Mannheim, Karl. *Ideology and Utopia*. Translated by Louis Wirth and Edward Shils, Harcourt, 1954.

- Martinez-Gros, Gabriel. *Brève Histoire des Empires. Comment ils surgissent? Comment ils s'effondrent?* Seuil, 2014.
- Mbembe, Achille. *Sortir de la Grande Nuit. Essai sur l'Afrique décolonisée.* Éditions de la Découverte, 2013
- Michelet, Jules. *Histoire de la Révolution française.* J. Hetzel et Cie, 1848.
- Pecaut, Daniel. "De la banalité de la violence à la terreur: le cas colombien." *Cultures et Conflits*, vol. 24-25, 1977, pp. 159-193.
- Reemtsma, Jan Philipp. *Trust and Violence: An Essay on a Modern Relationship.* Translated by Dominic Bonfiglio, Princeton UP, 2012.
- Scharp, Heinrich. *Abschied von Europa?* Verlag Josef Knecht, 1953.
- Schwarz, Rolf. *War and State-Building in the Middle East.* U of Florida P, 2013.
- Shestov, Lev. *In Job's Balances: On the Sources of Eternal Truth.* Translated by Camilla Coventry and Carlile Aylmer Macartney, Ohio UP, 1975.
- Sorel, Georges. *Reflections on Violence.* Edited by Jeremy Jennings, Cambridge UP, 2004
- Tilly, Charles. *The Politics of Collective Violence.* Cambridge UP, 2003.
- . "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime." *Bringing the State Back In*, edited by Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, Cambridge UP, 1985, pp. 169-91.
- Toynbee, Arnold J. *A Study of History, Vol. 1: Abridgement of Volumes I-VI.* Edited by D. C. Somervel, Oxford UP, 1946.
- Weber, Max. "Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology." *The Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1981, pp. 151-80.
- Weil, Simone. *Gravity and Grace.* Translated by Emma Crawford and Mario von der Ruhr, Routledge, 2002.
- . *Simone Weil's The Iliad or the Poem of Force: A Critical Edition.* Edited and translated by James P. Holoka, Peter Lang Publishing, 2003.

Madhavi Menon

DESIRING INDIA

Michel Foucault and I are good friends. We have never met personally, of course, and he died in Paris in 1984, but I've spent many congenial hours in the presence of his ideas. He has written widely on subjects like prisons and surveillance, but most famously, he has written about sexuality: What it is, how it is produced, and by whom, who has a sexuality, and what it means to have or not have one. These are questions I had not thought about before encountering Foucault in graduate school in the U.S. in 1995. Now these are questions that I ask all the time. Indeed, no one can work on desire in 2017 and not have a relationship with Foucault. Love him or hate him, one has to deal with him, especially when one is writing, as I am, a book titled *A History of Desire in India*. The title immediately echoes Foucault's famous *The History of Sexuality*, volumes I to III, even as it deviates from it in one or two respects. But why the echo?

Does Foucault have anything to say about a history of desire in India? Surprisingly, despite having lived in France and the U.S. and never having visited India, Foucault nonetheless wrote about India in a way that is both important and problematic. In the first of his three-volume book, published in 1976, Foucault notes that there are two ways in which the truth of sex has been produced. The first mode he terms the *ars erotica*, or the erotic art, in which sex is based on pleasure rather than utility. In such a scheme, sex becomes an artistic secret into which a disciple is initiated through a series of lessons. The second mode he terms *scientia sexualis*, or the science of sexuality, in which sex becomes a thing to be categorised and used in the service of power. Sex here is treated as something that can be

studied scientifically, and discourses are developed in order to classify and understand sex.

According to Foucault, the first mode of *ars erotica* was practiced in “China, Japan, India, Rome, and the Arabo-Moslem societies,” (57) while *scientia sexualis* is a feature of “our civilization,” (58) by which he means Europe. In such a division, India has apparently cultivated and followed pleasure in sex, while Europe has been busy monitoring and classifying it. There is clearly a lot of truth to these assertions. The laws by which non-hetero sexual acts are governed in India today are a direct legacy of the Indian Penal Code developed by and under the British. Punishments for similar “crimes” were in the pre-colonial era mild even in a puritanical text like the *Manusmriti*, which laid down strict rules for caste and gender. Indeed, at about the same time that sexual multiplicity was flourishing in India, Europeans were burning sexual “deviants” at the stake.

Even as pleasure texts like the third century *Kamasutra* slot neatly into the mode of “Eastern” *ars erotica* by unabashedly celebrating all matters erotic, it is true that they are *also* sexological treatises that participate in the classification of sexual behavior. If the taxonomy by which Foucault maps cultural difference onto sexological difference depends on a distinction between *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis*, East and West, then a text like the *Kamasutra* frustrates his purpose. Not at first, though. In Foucault’s exegesis on the *ars*, he notes that:

In the erotic art, truth is drawn from pleasure itself, understood as a practice and accumulated as experience; pleasure is not considered in relation to an absolute law of the permitted and the forbidden, nor by reference to a criterion of utility, but first and foremost in relation to itself ... Moreover, this knowledge must be deflected back into the sexual practice itself, in order to shape it as though from within and amplify its effects. In this way, there is formed a knowledge that must remain secret, not because of an element of infamy that might attach to its object, but because of the need to hold it in the greatest reserve, since, according to tradition, it would lose its effectiveness and its virtue by being divulged. Consequently, the relationship to the master who holds the secrets is of paramount importance; only he, working alone, can transmit this art in an esoteric manner and as the culmination of an initiation in which he guides the disciple’s progress with unflinching skill and severity. (57)

The early chapters of the *Kamasutra* play straight into this mould of the *ars erotica* by suggesting that eroticism is to be learned from masters adept in these arts. The text cites itself—repeatedly—as the most adept master of all. Foucault’s observations that in such societies erotic pleasure was not considered taboo is certainly true of India, where temple sculptures from the tenth century are so sexually explicit as to make Madonna seem like a nun. It is also true that the *Kamasutra* advises that a list of sixty-four arts—including “putting on jewellery,” “practicing sorcery,” and “skill at rubbing, massaging and hairdressing”—should be learned alongside the arts of wooing and sexual aptitude taught in the text. Erotic pleasure is an art that requires many skills to make it bloom. Here is what Foucault says about the *scientia sexualis*:

On the face of it at least, our civilization possesses no *ars erotica*. In return, it is undoubtedly the only civilization to practice a *scientia sexualis*; or rather, the only civilization to have developed over the centuries procedures for telling the truth of sex which are geared to a form of knowledge-power strictly opposed to the art of initiations and the masterful secret: I have in mind the confession[.] (58)

By virtue of the power structure immanent in it, the confessional discourse cannot come from above, as in the *ars erotica*, through the sovereign will of a master, but rather from below, as an obligatory act of speech which, under some imperious compulsion, breaks the bonds of discretion or forgetfulness. (62)

Foucault’s description of the *scientia sexualis* does not mention pleasure anywhere. Instead, we get the formidable specter of knowledge-power. There is no master, only rules that place one under the obligation to speak—and thus create—sexuality. This description suggests that sexuality here is coercive rather than pleasurable. And that it is made to speak the singular truth of the self rather than gesturing towards a plethora of pleasurable possibilities. The distinction between the two schemas carries on:

Let us consider things in broad historical perspective: breaking with the traditions of the *ars erotica*, our society has equipped itself with a *scientia sexualis*. To be more precise, it has pursued the task of producing true discourses concerning sex, and this by adapting—not without difficulty—the ancient procedure of confession to the rules of scientific discourse... Nearly one hundred and fifty years have gone into the making of a complex machinery for producing true discourses on sex: a deployment that spans a wide segment of history in that it connects the ancient injunction of confession to clinical listening methods. It is this deployment that enables something called “sexuality” to embody the truth of sex and its pleasures. (67-8)

On the one hand, *scientia sexualis* can be traced from the medieval Christian practice of confession to the present moment which, according to Foucault, has been moulded most fully since the middle of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, the regime of *ars erotica* does not seem to have any such temporal component. Instead, it seems to be suspended in the swirling mists of a timeless past, somewhere over there. In addition to his geographical division between East and West along the lines of art and science, then, this temporal faultline too runs through Foucault’s theorisation of sexuality. In fact, this faultline was the first inkling I had that all was not well in my relationship with Foucault. Geographical segregation mapped onto categorical division is made worse by an added division between different historical moments. Foucault’s most famous chronological distinction, of course, is between the sodomite and the homosexual who he claims are different types of people produced at different moments of time, the first one in Medieval Europe, and the second one in the nineteenth century Europe. The trouble with such a distinction is that it ignores the reality of desires that form cumulatively *over* time. The homosexual shares more in common with the sodomite than not. Even though the two terms might connote different degrees of oppression, and even as they create different objects of knowledge—the homosexual is more of an identity category than the sodomite—they share an investment in desires that are deemed to be non-normative. Drawing this temporal and terminological distinction is, however, very much in keeping with Foucault’s cultural distinction between East and West: the *ars erotica* belonged to the past, while the *scientia sexualis* is now.

In order for the *ars erotica* to be relegated to the past, however, Foucault has to act as though Western colonisation never happened in India and the Arab world. Perhaps the text simply chooses to ignore the colonial encounter since acknowledging it would also force it to face the reality that the apparently once pristine locations of the *ars erotica* are now infected with the germs of *scientia sexualis*.

But—and here’s the rub—the ancient traditions of the *ars erotica* in the East were no strangers to the attractions of the *scientia sexualis*. Contrary to popular belief, the *Kamasutra* can for large portions read like an utterly dry sexological treatise, citing authorities with whom Vatsyayana either agrees or disagrees. Suvarnanabha, Gonikaputra, Auddalaki, and Gonardiya are some of the many authorities to whom he refers while making his points about *kama*. Arguments are arranged rather tediously with pros and cons from various authorities gathered, sifted, and analyzed. In turn, Vatsyayana becomes an authority for subsequent sexological treatises like the eleventh century *Kokashastra*, and Kalyanmalla’s fifteenth century *Anangaranga*. From this evidence, sexology in ancient India seems to have been a flourishing study in what was known as the *kama shastra*, or the science of desire. Along with the science of religious law (*dharma shastra*) and the science of material power (*artha shastra*), the *kama shastra* formed the three great fields of scientific endeavour in classical Sanskrit writing.

For Foucault’s distinction between *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis* to work, then, Indian understandings of sex must have had nothing to do with sexual classifications. But as all the *kama shastra* texts reveal—and there are plenty of them—the fabric of desire in India is woven with threads drawn from both the erotic arts and the scientific temperament. To pretend otherwise seems to partake of a colonial mindset that relegates “the East” to a primitive and backward moment in relation to the developed “West.” In fact, so fully did Foucault seem indebted to such a model that in an interview later on in life, he even removed Rome from the roll-call of societies practicing the *ars erotica*, leaving only “China, Japan, India, the Arabo-Moslem societies” (57)—the East—on his list.

While Foucault is absolutely correct to suggest that India, and the Far East (and South America, and Africa, and Melanesia, and Polynesia too, for that matter) smiled more appreciatively at a multitude of desires, it seems wrong to argue that there is an absolute distinction between the art and science of sex or that this difference can be mapped spatially onto East and West, and temporally onto

then and now. Equally, it is not true that “Eastern” societies did not punish sexual deviance, even if they did so far more mildly than did the Europeans. If Foucault’s basis for distinguishing between art and science rests on the idea that science conduces to discipline while art fosters a more liberal attitude, then texts like the *Manusmriti*—the book of social rules as formulated by Manu—more than belong in the former camp. Manu’s text provides punishments for various forms of pre- and non-marital sexual deflowering, as well as homosexual sex. The fact that these punishments can be rather mild (the prescribed punishment for an upper-caste homosexual man, for instance, is a ritual bath) does not mean that the idea of discipline itself is absent from the consideration of sex.

Similarly, let us look at the summary of the book to follow that is provided in the first chapter of the *Kamasutra*:

The second book, on Sex, has seventeen sections in ten chapters: sexual typology according to size, endurance, and temperament, types of love, ways of embracing, procedures of kissing, types of scratching with the nails, ways of biting, customs of women from different regions, varieties of sexual positions, unusual sexual acts, modes of slapping and the accompanying moaning, the woman playing the man’s part, a man’s sexual strokes, oral sex, the start and finish of sex, different kinds of sex, and lovers’ quarrels. (5-6)

The very first of these chapters is an exercise in scientific classification: “Sexual Typology according to Size, Endurance, and Temperament” (5). This chapter then goes on to classify the male partner in a heterosexual act as “a hare, bull, or stallion, according to the size of his sexual organ,” while a woman is termed “a doe, mare, or elephant cow” (28). There are thus “three equal couplings” (28) between heterosexual partners of commensurate size, and “six unequal ones” (29) between partners of different sizes. According to Vatsyayana, there are “nine sorts of couplings according to size.” These are not esoteric observations of a secret society. The *Kamasutra* was a widely-disseminated text (among the upper classes), and it does not treat sex as a secret. Foucault is partly right to note that in *ars erotica* societies there is no shame attached to talking about and teaching sex. But rather than learning from a master, the *Kamasutra* presents sex as something to be studied from a textbook of rules and recommendations. And like these other textbooks, the *Kamasutra* too

classified sex into “scientific” categories of knowledge.

What happens, then, if we think about desire as both art and science: *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis*? The *Kamasutra* in fact describes itself using both terms. An early chapter is titled “Exposition of the Arts,” thus situating the text firmly within an *ars erotica* that will outline the artistry of sex. But the opening sentence in that chapter describes itself in terms of a science. Laying down the ideal conditions under which one should embark on reading the *Kamasutra*, Vatsyayana writes that “a man should study the *Kamasutra* and its subsidiary sciences as long as this does not interfere with the time devoted to religion and power and their subsidiary sciences” (13). Despite the use of different words (science is *vidya* and art is *kala*), the interchangeability of the domains of art and science ensures a close bond between pleasure and practice, curiosity and classification. Towards the end of that same chapter, Vatsyayana refers again to the “sixty-four arts of love” that he extols in a poem immediately following:

The daughter of a king or of a minister of state, if she knows the techniques, can keep her husband in her power even if he has a thousand women in his harem. And if she is separated from her husband and in dire straits, even in a foreign land, by means of these sciences she can live quite happily. (16)

The technique of science cohabits happily here with the art of eros, which is more than one can say about the “thousand women” in the poem’s harem.

What is fascinating about this history of desire in India is that it endlessly complicates Foucault’s distinction between an *ars erotica* and a *scientia sexualis*. Foucault’s compulsion to divide and separate is met here by an equally compulsive desire to mingle and complicate. Desire in India dips into traditions of both ecstatic sensuality and stern asceticism; both an embrace and a shunning of sexuality, both pleasure and punishment. The ascetic tradition in India was extremely judgmental about the “excesses” of desire, and based its philosophy entirely on renunciation. But equally, the renunciates and the sensualists were not so far apart that they could never meet. Instead, as Vatsyayana himself points out, he remained chaste during the entire period of writing the *Kamasutra*: “He ... made this work in chastity and in the highest meditation, for the sake of worldly life; he did not compose it for the sake of passion” (171). The taxonomy

of sexual types and positions is placed within a larger framework of aesthetics from which renunciation is not absent. In fact, Vatsyayana here highlights what was later to become a commonplace even for Foucault: that disciplining sex might itself be a pleasure rather than its opposite. This coming together of different strands of being, thought, and desire is evident in every chapter of the *Kamasutra*. It is perhaps most distinctive in the final verse, when the text circumscribes the pleasures it has delineated in the rest of the text: “The unusual techniques employed to increase passion, which have been described as this particular book required, are strongly restricted right here in this verse, right after it” (171). As Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar note in their recent translation of the *Kamasutra*: “the *Kamasutra* has characteristics of both ‘procedures,’ thus posing a challenge to Foucault’s taxonomy” (XV). And as Lee Siegel notes about the *Kamasutra*: “all phases of experience ‘are catalogued and categorized, subcategorized and sub-subcategorized compulsively and obsessively,’ suggesting that ‘to name is to know’” (163). Both permission and restriction, exuberance and repression, art and science.

In India, desire has never easily been recognisable as one thing in opposition to another. But for Foucault, the project of separating East from West seems to acquire more importance than the challenge of studying the complications of desire. Some awareness of the fact that he was flattening desire seems to have crept in at a later stage when he admitted that European *scientia sexualis* did not in fact banish *ars erotica* altogether, and that even the disciplinary project of classification has its erotic pleasures. But even as he noted that pleasure might exist in science—the *ars* in the *scientia*—he was never able to move his thinking in the other direction to note the many echoes within the *ars erotica* of the *scientia sexualis*.

Despite pronouncing on India, then, *The History of Sexuality* does not grapple with the messy histories of desire that are to be found all over the Indian subcontinent across different periods of time. Indian sexology has always refused to draw the line between art and science. This refusal of categorical clarity extends also to a refusal to separate the here from there, the now from then. If the *kama shastra* texts in India provide the starting point of this categorical confusion among Indian sexologists, then the present-day *hakim*, or “native” doctor, straddles the same divides. The *hakims* use patently unscientific “cures” for sexual diseases that have been classified scientifically. From the famous Sablok Clinic in Delhi’s Daryaganj to Dr. Promodu’s Institute for Sexual and Marital Health in Edappally

in Kerala, the *hakim* draws from both art and science. Autorickshaws advertise *hakim*'s remedies for lost "vigour" and "strength," while clinics promise to cure everything from homosexuality to erectile dysfunction. All cures offered are for *guptrog* or secret maladies. Such a secret sounds like Foucault's idea of the *ars erotica*—an art into which the disciple has to be initiated. But the category of *guptrog* also partakes of the *scientia sexualis* in which sex is shrouded in secrecy and becomes a thing to be cured rather than celebrated. From Vatsyayana to the *hakim*, then, Indian sexology has been steeped in categorical multiplicity.



An autorickshaw in Delhi advertising products that will "increase your youth and strength" or will give "your money back."

Let us also consider, for example, “scientific” Indian sexologists. The late nineteenth/early twentieth century saw the feverish rise of sexology as a science around the world, thanks in large part to European colonial expansion. Indeed, it is *against* this rise of sex as a science that Foucault writes in *The History of Sexuality*. But his desire to separate both chronological periods and geographical spaces blinds him to the fact that twentieth century Indian sexology bears the mark, not only of Enlightenment rationalism and British colonialism, but also of ancient Sanskrit sexological treatises and their medieval Persian translations. In fact, sexologists in India—the practitioners of what Foucault would call *scientia sexualis*—saw themselves as an utterly international, intertemporal, interlinguistic, species.

Indeed, one of India’s most famous sexologists, Alyappin Padmanabha Pillay, seems to extend in the twentieth century the *Kamasutra*’s insights from the third century. Pillay was the Bombay-based editor of *The International Journal of Sexology*, which he started in 1947; according to Sanjam Ahluwalia, “while Pillay himself was the Editor-in-Chief, for both the earlier *Marriage Hygiene* and the *IJS*, these two journals also drew editors from America, England, the European Continent, Soviet Russia, China, Mexico, Japan, and Australia” (27). The journal changed its name in 1947 from *Marriage Hygiene* to the *International Journal of Sexology*. This change in name emphasizes the sex in sexology: “after what seemed to have been a long conversation among members of the editorial board, the title of the journal was changed in order to ‘place the emphasis where it properly belongs—upon sex rather than marriage’” (26). The emphasis on sex rather than marriage suggests also a focus on pleasure rather than duty. Even though many of the conversations of sexology focused on the space of the marital bed, there was a clear understanding that sex needed to be studied for and by itself. The science of sex therefore also understood itself as an art that was not entirely utilitarian in its intentions. The journal’s change of title also announced its international scope. Not that it was being published simultaneously in different parts of the world, but the editors understood sexology itself as being an *international* endeavor rather than something bounded within narrow national borders.

Another embodiment of such a multi-layered sexologist in India is someone called Nalapat Narayana Menon. The grand uncle of renowned novelist and poet, Kamala Das, Menon wrote the first sexology treatise in Malayalam in 1934. Menon is also related to me, as

the last name suggests, though like Foucault, he too is a writer I have never met. He and my paternal grandmother belong to the same matrilineal clan. Born in the late nineteenth century, Menon was an Indian sexologist who rubs against the grain of Foucault's theory of segregated lands and times. His book is called *Rathi Samrajyam* (*The Empire of Sex*, now in its tenth edition) and is written entirely in conversation with the ideas of English sexologist Havelock Ellis. Well, perhaps not *entirely*. Menon is very indebted to the Western sexual tradition, and so his list of references at the end of the book is almost entirely from Europe. However, he also includes Indian books in his list, including the *Manusmriti* and some works in Malayalam. Despite the disparity in numbers, this set of readings points to a *conversation* between East and West, old and new, art and science, out of which his book emerges. Menon works with the assumption that sexology has never been only one thing or another: it has always been complicated and various and multilingual. The book—written in Malayalam and based on texts written in English—is as much a mixture as the traditions out of which it is written. If the *Kamasutra* translated a variety of earlier sources, then it was in turn reconceived in the *Kokashastra*, which was then translated into Persian as the *Laddat-al-Nisa*, which was in turn unseated by the British Penal Code, all of which produced a twentieth century sexologist in India writing a Malayalam text titled *The Empire of Sex*. And as we know, the sun never sets on that particular empire.

While *The History of Sexuality* deals only with the geographical West, including classical Greece and Rome, the title of the book suggests a universality: it calls itself *the* history of sexuality. When I was thinking about a title for the book I am currently writing, I wanted both to speak about desire in Foucault's tongue *and* write back to him in Menon's voice. I too would plot a history, but it would be *a* history of desire over time and space and category rather than *the* history of sexuality within rigidly segregated periods and times and classifications. Equally, it would locate itself in a land that has no fixed location. Not only because India has been determined by Foucault to be the place and time before sexology, but also because desire in "India" has always been cast in a mix of languages, arts, sciences, and even countries. What counts as "India" now was not "India" when Vatsyayana wrote the *Kamasutra*. "India" under the eleventh century Cholas included Sri Lanka but not present-day North India; British India included Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. "Desire" in "India" thus dabbles in two multiply and endlessly unstable catego-

ries. A history of desire in India, then, written by multiple Menons, rather than *the* history of sexuality, challenges Foucault's reign of epistemological singularity. *The History of Sexuality* is both a critique and a consequence of the *scientia sexualis*'s need to classify and categorise. But in matters of desire, such distinctions cannot hold.

Works Cited

- Ahluwalia, Sanjam. "Scripting Pleasures and Perversions: Writings of Sexologists in the Twentieth Century." *Sexuality Studies*, edited by Sanjay Srivastava, New Delhi OUP, 2013, pp 24-45.
- Dehejia, Vidya. *The Body Adorned: Dissolving Boundaries between Sacred and Profane in India's Art*. Mapin, 2009.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Penguin, 1978.
- Menon, Nalapat Narayana. *Rathi Samrajyam*. Mathrubhumi, 2013.
- Vatsyayana. *Kamasutra*. Translated by Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar, Oxford University Press, 2002.

Rodolphe Gasché

interviewed by Gudrun Elsa Bragadottir,

Natalia Pamula & Doruk Tatar

OF THEORY, AND ITS AFFECTS,
POLITICAL, OR OTHER

GEB, NP & DT: Numerous thinkers you have written about, such as Arendt, Derrida, Benjamin, and Bataille, are known for their analysis of the relation between theory and violence. The title of our journal issue is 'doing theory,' which could be interpreted as implying some sort of violence to theory, be it lethal or sexual. How would you describe violence implemented towards theory? On the other side, is violence inherent to theory? Does theory inflict violence upon itself and its outside?

RG: Let us for a moment reflect, in a very schematic way at least, on what it is that one does when one is 'doing theory.' It can mean to apply an already constituted theory to a corpus of texts or facts, but also to develop on the basis of an analysis of the texts or facts in question a theory that can account for them; that makes them intelligible in a verifiable manner. According to this latter sense of doing theory, the theoretical approach of texts or facts is based on hypothesis-driven work, as is the case in the theoretical sciences or in the humanities when they seek to emulate the latter. But doing theory has also come to mean doing 'just theory.' The history of this relatively recent development of 'doing theory' has still to be written. For the time being let me just say that since 'theory,' in the expression 'doing theory,' apart from laying claims to being philosophical (as if all philosophy were 'theoretical'), is also held to be something other than

philosophy in that it pretends to read philosophy the way literature is to be read, the history of the expression has to be retraced to the claim that originated in the seventies, when French thought became known in North America, that doing theory is no longer an interpretation of literature understood as the sum total of canonical works, but an exploration of the very nature of literature itself; a reflection on its 'essence'—that is, literariness.

If the expression 'doing theory' suggests at all a critique of such doing, a putting into question of theory and hence a violence against doing theory, in the name of what would such violence be exerted? Tentatively, I offer three possible reasons. First, to do 'theory' could be taken to mean to indulge in inconsequential speculation, in an approach to the real that has no actual application in that such an approach would only be concerned with generalities about things rather than what can be practically done about them. Objections against doing theory are based on understanding theory as intellectualist, impersonal, aloof from the practical realities of life, and so forth. Second, with its universal thrust, with issues that are of general and therefore seemingly only abstract importance, doing theory could be understood to threaten an individualistic, uniquely personal approach to issues that privileges intuition, psychological empathy, and, when it comes to literary texts, a freedom that does not shy from taking liberties with the texts, going beyond what they actually say. Doing theory puts the divinatory senses so many are proud of into question, and is thus experienced as a curtailment of freedom and creativity. Third, the violence that doing theory invites can also have its origin in theory's exigencies: namely, the requested discipline and rigor of thought that many who privilege the practical or the creative believe to be a discriminating elitist demand. In making these three points I had a history of doing theory in mind that began in literature departments in North America as a result of the introduction of French structuralism and the beginnings of post-structuralism, especially French and English. Following an ossified tradition of literary interpretation and the running out of breath of New Criticism (which, it must be said, also made the introduction of a variation of French thought in the U.S. possible to begin with) this was, indeed, a refreshing moment in the early seventies which caused enthusiasm especially among the younger faculties and students, but also a strong adversity in academia.

Now even though, broadly speaking, theory implies "saving the phenomena" by explaining their seeming arbitrariness (such as

the seeming irregularities of the movements of the planets) on the basis of hypothetical laws, thus doing justice to them, a certain violence is also intrinsic to it (such as finding fault with appearances, common sense beliefs, cherished illusions, and so forth). Since theory seeks explanations that are universally valid, an overriding of the particular can also be seen to be involved in theory. But here it is necessary to distinguish between a violence of theory that is inevitable if its insights are to be, in principle, intelligible to everyone without exclusion, which is possible only if its objects are rationally determined, and a violence in which theory engages—but is it then still ‘theory’?—when it raises particularities (race, ethnicities, gender, and so forth) to principles of intelligibility.

GEB, NP & DT: In *Of Grammatology* Derrida writes about Levi-Strauss and the aggression of writing and naming. The act of naming is supposed to be the first act of violence. In what ways does the violence of language and naming enable interrelationality? Would that mean then that violence is both productive and necessary? Do you think there is a relationship between this originary violence of language Derrida writes about and violence of theory?

RG: Yes, at least in the precise context of socio-cultural relations, naming is, perhaps, the first act of violence, because the name is a mark that integrates a human being into a differential social whole with all its relations to one another. Through the name the others determine who the newcomer is by means of an arbitrary token, and thus naming is a violent act, because the proper name is not unique to the person and does not identify him or her in what or who he or she purportedly is as regards his or her unique essence. But it is not an aggression! On the contrary, through this violent act, one is made a member of a community, that is, a someone to begin with, a someone who counts. It is a violent act because the identity bestowed by a name on an individual takes place in abstraction from his or her so-called natural ‘identity’ and inscribes him or her into a network of relations. More precisely, it is a violent event because it opens up the difference between natural identity and social identity. Indeed, before this violent act the to be named has not even a natural, pre-social, pre-linguistic self; a self to which violence in the ordinary sense can be done.

But this is not just any violence. If Derrida refers to it as arche-violence, or originary violence, this does not mean that it is

a violence in the common sense, or even more violent than it. Some may even resist understanding it as a violence to begin with. But that would also mean to blind oneself to the fact that the marking in question by a name that inscribes someone into a differential system of identities takes place without taking into consideration what or who someone properly is, even though the assumption that one has a unique identity before one is named is a retrospective illusion. The violence involved in naming therefore precedes, as I said, the opposition between a natural and a social identity; between a virgin or innocent body which subsequently is exposed or subject to violence in the common sense. In short it is a violence with which everything begins.

The violence involved in naming is an enabling violence that makes it possible for a self to relate to others to begin with, and that breaches the self's relation to itself, its presence to itself, opening it to the possibility of being with others.

Is there a relationship between this inaugurating violence and the violence of theory? An answer to this question would require a number of mediating steps. So, as a first response I would venture the following. If theory consists in identifying within phenomena theoretical objects to subsequently explain them scientifically by means of hypotheses, then theory is, undoubtedly, violent. Theory violently reworks the perceived to be able to shed light on it; to make it intelligible, universally intelligible. But such preparation of the phenomena through selection or experimental manipulation cannot be carried out successfully without, at the same time, carefully heeding the phenomena themselves. Thus the violence involved in theory is also the condition to faithfully account for the phenomena in the first place. In the same way as human beings cannot become part of a social network (and communication) without a certain violence, phenomena cannot reveal their true nature without some violence that has to be done to them.

GEB, NP & DT: In Hannah Arendt's notes on Kant, she points out that aesthetic judgment is a form of action. This raises the question of affect and relation to theory. How does doing theory feel?

RG: I am not sure if I understand correctly, but if, according to Arendt, aesthetic judgment is a form of action then action, as opposed to theory, contains affective qualities. Is something similarly the case with doing theory, or is such doing, because merely a theoretical ac-

tivity, devoid of all feeling, emotions, or affects? Right?

I cannot not take up in detail here Arendt's interpretation of Kant's judgment of the beautiful. This would require lengthy developments. I have done this elsewhere.¹ Let me only say that for Kant an aesthetic judgment is not a theoretical performance, even though it involves all the faculties of cognition, the understanding, and the imagination (in free play). But it is not, therefore, of the order of the practical. It certainly concerns the whole *Gemüth* of the human being in that it animates the powers of the mind, but it is not an action in a practical sense. For Arendt, by contrast, aesthetic judgments, and non-logical judgments in general, are an intrinsic part of action in the public domain. Furthermore, one can assume that for her they have an affective component. Let us also keep in mind that, for Arendt, action is not the application of some theory to practice. Action, in a way, is for her not only beyond the classical theory / practice, but also beyond the intellectual / sensible divide. Since action for her is both of the order of deeds and words, 'theoretical' interventions in the public space are of the order of political actions as well. Action is certainly oriented toward actions that have the common good in view, but that includes as well certain 'theoretical' reflections. And if this is so, then, doing theory is not without an affective dimension.

More directly, in response to your question I would say that theory even when purportedly dispassionate has an affective component – a dispassionate affect at least. But even the most technical elaborations of theory can prove to be highly emotionally charged, or emotionally rewarding for the thinker himself, no doubt, but also when the intervention that a theory represents in a given field proves to be successful. By contrast, when theory is overtly interlinked with feelings, or when it becomes feel-good theory, caution is required. Something other than theory is then at stake in such a theory.

GEB, NP & DT: 'Humanities in crisis' has been a pressing topic in the last decade. First of all, do you think that the humanities are, in fact, in crisis? If so, what do you think is the reason for this crisis? And if not, what do you think caused this ongoing discussion?

RG: 'Crisis' is a word that one needs to use carefully. Apart from the fact that it is used whenever there is a problem, this very notion suggests that what is in a crisis is produced by that which is threatened itself and can lead to a renewal through a return to the foundations of what is in jeopardy. Just think of the crisis of the foundations in

mathematics at the turn of the last century! Yes, I think that the humanities are in a very precarious state today, in a situation not simply of crisis, but, perhaps, even of something much worse, and from which it is difficult to see how they could recover. Undoubtedly, there are multiple reasons for this phenomenon which are not easily exhausted. Let me begin by pointing out that the dismal state of the high schools and colleges in the U.S. forces the universities to make up for the learning deficit of many of its undergraduates. As a consequence, there is less time left in a university education curriculum for the humanities. But then there are other reasons, such as, first and foremost, economic pressures that drive the commodification of the universities, and that are progressively eroding the autonomy (itself a fundamental concept of the humanities) on which the university as a whole has been founded. Within the university the humanities are now sidelined by the sciences and all the disciplines that are invested in the gestation of society and its economy, and that, furthermore, draw outside financing. The idea around which the modern university was founded at the beginning of the nineteenth century—higher education—has taken a back seat and is dominated by the professional schools whose preparation and training for specific professions does not require much knowledge regarding the humanities. The standard is no longer how educated one is after leaving the university, but how skilled one is to be a successful functionary of a profession. The humanities, for their part, threatened as they are by these trends and forced to demonstrate that they still have a significant role to play, are progressively becoming institutions involved in the study and professional management of cultural, social, and identity related problems. Now, please, understand me correctly: I am far from advocating the isolation of the humanities from society. Such isolation only leads to their ossification, but the current market-driven proliferations of -isms, of studies, such as cultural studies of increasingly tinier issues, that proliferate in the humanities, no longer provide students with the general intellectual background and the critical tools required to be informed enough to address issues, including social and political issues in the first place, in larger contexts and beyond the myopic views that dominate much of these trends. Rather than offering the students the critical skills and comparative horizons to deal with the outside world (or more generally with complex situations for which the humanities can prepare you by providing you with the tools of critical thinking so as not to take your own beliefs for granted, and is that not what, precisely, learn-

ing should be about?), some academic institutions systematically isolate their students from the world. In order for students to feel 'safe'—not simply from brute violence as it should, but from teaching materials that they find uncomfortable, or even offensive—some institutions, as you know, prefer to purge such materials from their courses. This is certainly an extreme example, but as is commonly the case, pathological examples sometimes shed light on what is the rule. An education of this kind, because avoiding all exposure to what's not of one's own creation, not only prevents the individual students from maturing, but effectively reinforces their resistance to change. It is a trend in education as a result of which students are made unable to think in terms larger than their own identity group.

The current depoliticization of students is clearly a result of this increasing particularization and personalization of the studies in the humanities. The good feelings that they provide relieves them from the burden of politicization.

GEB, NP & DT: Considering the time you have spent in the Department of Comparative Literature at UB, you have probably witnessed times of mobility as well as times of inaction; times when politics is more central to people's lives and times when it is abandoned or forgotten. Do you remember specific moments when theory was explicitly influenced by significant changes happening in the social, political, or economic lives of the people?

RG: No, when I came to the U.S., first to Johns Hopkins University and then in 1978 to Buffalo, the student movement was over, and it has never resurged ever since then. But I remember vividly the times when politics was an issue in students' lives. I studied in Berlin and arrived in Paris after May '68. I still feel the fist of a CRS policeman on the Place Soufflot in Paris in my face just because I was attending the *École Normale Supérieure*, at the rue d'Ulm, whose students that day had participated in a demonstration. However, even though I was actively involved in the student movement in Berlin I had very ambivalent feelings about it, and that was also the reason I left the movement at one point. Rather than based on an analysis of a revolutionary strategy possible in the context of the specifics of late capitalism, the majority of the students in Berlin, and elsewhere in Germany, fell back upon early models of organization and experiments in the workers' movement. The rationale for this was the assumption that in the present situation lost, repressed,

or betrayed revolutionary opportunities could finally be actualized, and that hence the legacy of the early hopes associated with the workers' movement could finally be redeemed. I am referring to the short-lived attempts and promises of early communist organizations and their objectives (such as Spartakusbund, the Munich Räterepublik, not to speak of the experiments in free love early in the Soviet Union by the feminist Alexandra Kollontai), before being replaced by orthodox Marxist-Leninist party politics. In short, the movement was driven by a Romantic turn to modes of by then already obsolete forms of political organization and objectives aloof from the contemporary conditions that demanded radical change, no doubt, but on the basis of inventive 'pragmatic' or 'realist' means by which the changes in question could have had a chance of being realized in Germany at the time. By contrast, the student rebellion in the Bundesrepublik was motivated by a desire to realize political programs and social forms of organization that the radical left had dreamt of in the early stages of the communist movements, and that were repressed not only by the forces of the establishment, but by the leftist parties themselves. May '68 is a different situation. Here some theoretical attempts to articulate a revolutionary strategy specifically addressed to late capitalism emerged, especially Debord's International Situationism, that provided ideas about forms of resistance, or of transformations that took the specifics of late capitalism into account, but these efforts were unknown in Germany, and, in any case, would have been ignored if they had been known, not entirely without reason, for their surrealist and utopic dimension, but they could at least have served as a point of departure for a more complex approach.

In short, over the last fifty years I have not seen "specific moments when theory was explicitly influenced by significant changes happening in the social, political, or economic lives of the people." But today, under a government that is rolling back the precious few changes that the previous administration undertook to bring the U.S. onto a level equal to that of all the other developed nations in the world, overcoming its backwardness in several crucial areas such as universal healthcare, ecology, and so forth, it is not excluded that we may experience a renewal of political engagement that could influence the way we do theory. At least this is what I hope will take place. Unfortunately, for the time being, it is not the young people who are showing signs of resistance, but only the older generations, who were active in the sixties.

In answer to your question: I do not remember occasions when significant political events have changed theory. On the contrary, I have only witnessed changes related to theory—primarily against theory—as a result of market driven forces in academia. This began with New Historicism, the many multiculturalisms, identitarianist studies, and so forth, which claimed to represent cutting edge approaches because they pretended to be more concrete than theory, involved in social issues, though they themselves are also informed by ‘theories,’ just that these theories are not well thought through—soft theories more often than not. I do not mean to say that some of the issues pursued by these movements are not real; on the contrary, some are extremely real (and should be pursued by going into the streets), but I think they are pursued more for academic advancement than for social and political reasons. However, because these new trends produce huge amounts of secondary literature, they can, of course, claim to be scholarly significant, to be taken seriously, and, therefore, they are not easily to be discounted. I think that one of the tasks of theory today is to resist the watering down of theory; that is, primarily to heed the injunction of being vigilant and to account for what one is doing and saying not just to your singular audience but above all to the community at large. The threat to theory today is that it is reduced to appeal to an exclusively ‘interested’ audience, rather than to appeal to everyone.

GEB, NP & DT: Are there any theoretical approaches you find interesting or fascinating that have come out in the last decade?

RG: There is a lot of interesting solid scholarly work being done today, but if it is not just of the order of further developments of possibilities within phenomenology, which after all has been one of the (few) major breakthroughs in philosophical thought during the last century, it consists primarily in commentaries, philological contributions, or extrapolations of implications within this field of research. More specifically in response to your question I would contend that there is nothing comparable today to the Frankfurt School which emerged in the thirties, to hermeneutics, structuralism, or to so-called post-structuralism of the sixties or seventies of the last century. No breakthrough, no terrain changing approaches since then! But let us face it, such things only happen rarely. All the current -isms are the result of market competition in academia. One can even easily predict what the next cutting edge will be and when it will be

replaced with another. After years of emphasis on the fragmentary, one can already witness the first signs of a return to system-building. In reaction to the preeminence of “critique” in much of scholarship over the last two or three decades, such an approach is now considered by some as a disfranchising tool of the academic elite, and thus the call for post-critical and affirmative methodologies has arisen. After prolonged interest in the question of finitude, fatigue has set in, and Quentin Meillassoux’ advocates a return to the Absolute. It is all old hat if I may say! Always predictable! Speculative materialism, New realism, Empathy theories, that is, theories that return to the Diltheyan emphasis on ‘understanding’ (*Verstehen*) as opposed to explication (*Erklären*)—all these things are not new openings. At best, they are, if not just opportunistic developments in reaction against previous movements, responses to what are perceived deficits or long neglected issues in current trends, and as such they are justified to some extent, but that does not make them into major innovative movements. Nonetheless, these new approaches are the result of impatience, and above all of intellectual fatigue with the discipline that is required in any given approach to produce new insight by pushing further. Marketwise it is far easier, less demanding, and more immediately rewarding to pretend to have invented a new domain and new issues, especially since in academia institutional memory has not a long life. Until someday a new breakthrough happens, it is necessary to continue working within the current approaches rather than run away from them. In any event, this is the condition under which alone something new might eventually happen.

Notes

1. See my *Persuasion, Reflection, Judgment: Ancillae Vitae* (Stanford University Press, 2017)

Elizabeth Grosz

interviewed by Gudrun Elsa Bragadottir,

Natalia Pamula & Doruk Tatar

THE PROBLEM OF THEORY REVISITED

GEB, NP & DT: We would like to begin by asking you to revisit the article you wrote for *theory@buffalo* in 1999, “The Problem of Theory.” You conclude the article stating that “theory needs to be regarded more as a kind of functional monstrosity: as that which provokes newness, as that which generates the unexpected.” Did anything surprise you in this way between 1999 and now; has anything in particular created the unexpected, provoked newness? Which fields of study and theoretical works have generated the unexpected for you? Would you still choose to discuss Althusser and Deleuze and Guattari if you were asked to discuss the relationship between practice and theory today?

EG: There is a lot that has provoked and surprised me—indeed the whole world more or less changed since that interview, in both good and bad ways—9/11, the Bush years, the Trump years (!) on the negative side—all events, all unpredictable, all moments whose ripples are still unknown but global in their implications; on the positive side, we have seen the social, political and intellectual liberation of ‘difference,’ difference in itself and for itself. This difference manifests itself in the enormous transformation in, for example, gay rights, transgender rights and most other forms of sexual practice; in the growing demographic power of Hispanic populations, and the call for the recognition of ethnic, cultural, religious, class and race

difference as constitutive of subjectivity. And at the level of theory, there has been an intellectual explosion in questions I could only hope to address in 1999—feminist materialism, animal philosophies, philosophies of life, the return of interest in questions of ontology. I tend to restrict myself largely to philosophical texts in my own research—a much narrower field than that which addresses ‘theory’ more generally, so for me, it is usually a strange or obscure but compelling French thinker that I find appealing or attractive. I am of course still interested in the work of Irigaray, as I was then, as well as in the writings of Deleuze and Guattari, and many of their source texts, particularly those of a similar generation to D & G, and Irigaray. Right now I have been working of Gilbert Simondon and Raymond Ruyer, less well known philosophers who are interested in complicating and rethinking the relations between materiality and life.

I think I would still use Althusser to discuss the production of theory: his work was already quite untimely or old-fashioned in 1999. There is a great deal of his work that no longer interests me—his writings on ideology, which were so important when I first began to study philosophy, for example. Foucault made it clear that ‘ideology’ or false ideas are regulated by the same regimes as truth: ideology in Althusser’s work cannot in fact be distinguished from the ‘science’ or truth of class relations. But his theory of theory as productive strikes me as still really important. Researching, writing, debating, presenting work—all the material practices of knowing or thinking—are practices even if their product is conceptual. And I would still need something of D & G’s work to counteract the Althusserian impulse to invoke science as an outside to ideology.

Practice and theory are both practices. The practice of theory is often, though not always, rather dull, commonly singular and solitary, linked to libraries, archives, computer terminals. It is based on small practices—reading, writing, emailing, correcting, arguing. These are all practices, sub-practices, that together constitute the conditions of theoretical production. Political practice is sometimes also laden with this dullness—the dullness of preparations and organization—but it is also collective and sometimes dynamic and explosive. These are linked, but not directly. Theory is not the theory of what practice should be; and practice is never undertaken according to the unambiguous dictates of theory. There is a relation of dislocation, of incommensurability, for they are different orders or means of addressing perhaps similar questions.

GEB, NP & DT: In his talk on cinema (1987), Deleuze remarks that there must be a serious necessity in order for a concept to come to existence. You stressed in your article that Deleuze understands concepts as “one mode of attempted solution, a solution not of the problem, but in its vicinity.” With this in mind, do you think that there are new and more pressing urgencies, be they political, social, economic, or ecological, that are altering the character and role of theory in today’s world, both in descriptive and normative terms?

EG: Well, yes, I think that there are many pressing problems, too many to be able to think about them clearly and separately. Among the most pressing, given we are doing this interview at a time when Trump has been elected president but has not yet been inaugurated, is how to deal with this racist, sexist, xenophobic, right-wing turn in political life, one not only confined to the U.S. but now reaching a global scale; equally pressing but not quite so immediate in time, is the increasing news of ecological devastation, the death of large swathes of the Great Barrier Reef, the decimation of forests, jungles and uncleared land, as well as the imminent deaths of huge numbers of species. These are precisely problems without a clear answer, problems that, even as we may invent ways to address them, do not go away, problems whose ‘solutions’ need to be reinvented many times over. It is no longer an answer to suggest that the state will wither away and class conflict will inevitably bring about change: this is clearly not what is happening. Instead, an ever more powerful, knowing and information-seeking state, and a globally scaled industry, is emerging. What are the answers to these pressing issues? There are none on which people can agree. Which means that we need to invent other ways to address what we can and to live with what we cannot.

GEB, NP & DT: In the article you discuss Althusser’s conceptions of theory and you state that according to him “theory is practice.” Can you think of concrete examples—moments, events, circumstances—when theory and practice are not binary oppositions, but complementary, or when they constitute a continuum?

EG: I don’t think that theory and practice are ever a binary. This is to misunderstand the nature of both terms. There is no practice free of assumptions, concepts, ends and goals (this distinguishes a practice from mere activity)—that is, to paraphrase Thomas Kuhn, there is no

theory-free practice just as there is no theory that does not rely on its own practices of theoretical production. Neither is parasitic on the other, rather, each requires some form of the other. Theory that is, for me, good, does not reflect on, predict or judge practices other than its own; but without a critical self-consciousness of its own assumptions, such theory cannot be creative. Without an awareness of its own conditions of existence and possible effects theory repeats what is already thought. I don't think that theory and practice are on a continuum, because any continuum would flatten out the specificity of different kinds of practice. For me, the production of theory is one kind of political practice among many others, not superior to any of the others nor capable of judging or regulating the others. This gives it a much more humble place than many involved in theory would like. Theory, the practice of the production of concepts, ideas, arguments and frameworks, operates in parallel with other practices, not above them.

GEB, NP & DT: Over the last few decades, the relevance and value of the humanities have been questioned to an increasing degree, resulting, among other things, in humanities scholars leaning towards more scientific fields such as biology and neuroscience. Do you think the Althusserian notion of 'sciences,' which "are scientific before and independent of practice and the empirical," can offer a new and more productive way of thinking about this crisis?

EG: Not really. I have always found his conception of science problematic. The sciences that he claims constitute their own object—psychoanalysis, Marxism—are very difficult for us to consider sciences today. Freud and Marx are, as Foucault described them, 'initiators of discursive practices' (in "The Discourse on Language") but they do not produce sciences as a broad agreement about founding assumptions and methods that can be generalized. You are right to suggest that there is a new attraction for some in the humanities to some of the questions and texts natural sciences—especially to quantum physics (in the work of Barad or Massumi), to biology, to ethology, to cognitive and neuro-sciences. But equally, I would say that the humanities is also drawn to new kinds of arts and art-practices, possibly to the same extent as the appeal of nature or the material. So there has been a proliferation of courses in communications, performance studies, media studies, film studies, music and theatre. I think that this has always been true, to some extent, of the humanities—it

is not entirely separate from the natural sciences nor the arts and has taken from them, as well as added to them. The move to interdisciplinarity is part of this ongoing trend.

GEB, NP & DT: The kind of analysis initiated by the 'initiators of discursive practices' you mention, Freud and Marx, along with Nietzsche, has dominated what we call critical theory. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick described this type of approach as 'paranoid reading' in her work on paranoid and reparative reading. Drawing on Melanie Klein's psychoanalytic theory, Sedgwick discusses the paranoid position as "a position of terrible alertness" towards "a world full of loss, pain, and oppression," while the reparative one arises out of the "anxiety-mitigating" depressive position within that same world of loss, and entails "assembling" or "repairing" the "murderous part-objects into something like a whole." Do you consider the distinction between paranoid and reparative reading a useful one? Furthermore, do you feel that the emergence of new ways of doing theory—e.g. those drawing on the natural sciences—call for different descriptive categories than the paranoid and reparative? What other positions might be the driving force for contemporary humanities scholars?

EG: There are, no doubt, contexts in which this distinction is very useful. But I have not wanted to use psychoanalytic concepts to talk about our modes of reading or interpreting. Sedgwick's work is profound in the context of a theory of politics that begins with reading or readings. It is thus particularly useful in the literary field where subject constitution and the workings of the psyche or psychic investments (of readers, of authors, of characters) are of clear relevance, at least in relation to certain kinds of literary texts. As someone trained not in literature but in philosophy, the question of reading, of how we read, of why we read and of our needs in reading or interpreting texts are more in the background in my work than foregrounded as they are in Sedgwick's work. So although I came to psychoanalytic theory at the beginning of my intellectual career, at a similar time to Sedgwick's writings, it has receded considerably in my work. To be blunt, I am less interested in who reads or how they read than I am in what there is. Writing as the perhaps most singularly important figure in the emergence of queer theory, Sedgwick has a different constituency, not to mention a different political project and different methods: she is precisely interested in subject formation and its

excesses. I am, at least now, more interested in the world and its excesses. What other positions may be driving intellectual forces? Well, there are many driving intellectual forces behind different kinds of writing. I am not sure that the analysis of the reader's or writer's psychical needs is all that relevant to my writings, which have been more directed in recent years to what is beyond and larger than the human. Scholars in the humanities have always had very different kinds of motivating interests: this is no different now, at a moment when study in the humanities is under attack from various quarters, than it has always been. For me, the most interesting question at the moment is the question: what is the inhuman within the humanities? What is the place of what is not-human? In a way, this is the inverse of Sedgwick's question.

GEB, NP & DT: Can we connect the so-called "crisis of the humanities" with the theory/practice binary? What does it say about the conceptualizations of theory and practice?

EG: I don't think that the crisis of the humanities is about the theory/practice split. It is a crisis about the place of the university in the contemporary world of commodity production and wealth generation. This crisis is about financial ends rather than about the robustness or significance of research occurring in the humanities. The crisis of the humanities is the crisis of funding by institutions whose goal is no longer the production of knowledge but the production of wealth. In this sense, the humanities are, at least in the short run, a waste of money. They don't generate money.

GEB, NP & DT: How do you think universities can respond to the swiftly changing political landscape following the recent presidential election, for example on the level of campuses (such as turning them into sanctuaries), structural readjustments (making them more dependent on collectives rather than the logic of corporations), and academic production (as a way of providing cognitive maps, political strategies, effective concepts, etc.)?

EG: If the universities are rapidly approaching a crisis in knowledge production it is not only an effect of the elections, however devastating the results of the last election are and will be for those interested in knowledge. This deterioration has been taking place, slowly, for well over a decade as universities become more oriented

to the production of knowledge related to economic questions than to social ones. No doubt there will be structural responses to this election result, but these are necessarily rear-guard actions, actions that aim to ameliorate or mitigate other political decisions, such as the deportation of illegal immigrants or the provision of protection for women who have been sexually abused, which it cannot stop directly. This, for me, is a kind of reactive politics, a politics that responds to a larger political order by creating a smaller space of containment. I am more interested in seeing the opening up of new kinds of knowledges, new studies of, say, foreign languages (which seem at present the most in danger of closing), of art practices, and new kinds of philosophy to address and respond to political events, not in their own terms, but in other terms, to invent new ways of representing and acting, thinking and creating. It is often the case that the more traumatic the event, the more inventive must be the response. I guess we will now have a chance to test this hypothesis. But let me also add that the time of knowledge is different from and not reducible to the temporality of commodity production, as much as universities and research institutes develop competitions, grants, and the appearance of an intellectual market and the selection of preferred 'products.' The production of new kinds of knowledge takes time, often decades if not centuries, while the transformation of life through commodity production is rapid and thrives on upheaval and opportunism. Although universities are themselves in something of a crisis about their current role in society—as mitigating or critical forces, as forms of extension of the logic of capital, as sites of certain types of resistance—I don't see universities as a political vanguard, or as adequate opposition, to the immediacy and directness of political action. Indeed, universities provide just as much support if not more support for right-wing governments as they do to those oriented in a more collective or left-wing way. There is no one site that can function as ongoing resistance. And in any case, ongoing political resistance requires the support not only of other individuals and groups, but also of other institutions. Universities can be no longer understood as the ivory tower, a place of quiet contemplation for the production of truth; rather, they are implicated in and a part of a larger social order which they help to constitute and complicate.

GEB, NP & DT: You mention “the time of knowledge” and you notice that it “is different from and not reducible to the temporality of commodity production.” The temporality of theory might be different from that of contemporary urgency, but would that also mean that there is no interaction between the two? Or more specifically, does contemporary urgency translate into the temporality of theory, and if so, how? Your answer suggests that practice is more immediate and that resistance requires immediacy. What about theory? Its temporality is different, it resists the contemporary urgency. How can theory and knowledge respond to urgency then?

EG: I think that because the time of knowledge, the time to produce new kinds of knowledges, is not exactly aligned with the rapidity and increasingly frequency of the time of capital, it is often the case that theory can only address political issues after they have occurred. Having witnessed the rise of “President Trump,” to take just one obvious and immediate political example, the production of theory is always too late to be effective as a direct political intervention; but, on the other hand, without the time of reflection, thought and even art, we merely react to political events rather than produce a new kind of politics or a new people to undertake politics differently. Theory and knowledge have their own urgencies, their own rhythms of response, reaction and production: the provocation of other theories and works. How can theory respond to, say, Trumpism? There is no one answer: answers need to be invented and they cannot be invented out of nothing. On the other hand, from the moment the election results were clear, protestors from around the country were demonstrating. I don’t think that ‘theory’ is special in this regard. The same can be said about the production of the arts or the sciences: the time it takes to produce art or new kinds of experiments is not measurable in the ways in which a political event caused or induces a reaction.

Contributors

ELISABETH ANKER is an Associate Professor of American Studies at George Washington University. She is the author of *Orgies of Feeling: Melodrama and the Politics of Freedom* (Duke, 2014), which was a finalist for the Lora Romero Prize for the Best First Book in American Studies. She has published articles in *Theory & Event*, *Political Theory*, *Social Research*, *Politics and Gender*, *American Literary History*, and other journals. She is currently finishing a book titled *Ugly Freedoms*.

REY CHOW is Anne Firor Scott Professor of Literature at Duke University. Before Duke, she was Andrew W. Mellon Professor of the Humanities at Brown University. Her publications in the past several years include *The Rey Chow Reader*, *Entanglements, or Transmedial Thinking about Capture*, and *Not Like a Native Speaker: On Language as a Postcolonial Experience*. With James A. Steintrager, she is the coeditor of *Sound Objects*, forthcoming in 2018-19 from Duke UP. A Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Chow serves on the boards of about 55 journals, book series, and research centers around the world. Her writings have appeared in over ten languages.

CHERYL A. EMERSON is a PhD candidate in Comparative Literature at SUNY Buffalo, with interests in phenomenology, feminist theory, and aesthetics. Her dissertation, "Flesh of Forgetting: Contemporary Women's Poetry at the Intersections of History and Embodiment," brings feminist theory and poetics to an analysis of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophical writings on language, history, and the body. She has published on such literary figures as Claudia Rankine, Erin Moure, William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe, and Robert Penn Warren, in critical engagements with such thinkers as Judith Butler, Hannah Arendt, Jean-Luc Nancy, Charles W. Mills, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

RODOLPE GASCHÉ is SUNY Distinguished Professor & Eugenio Donato Professor of Comparative Literature at the State University of New York at Buffalo. His most recent books include *Europe, or The Infinite Task: A Study of a Philosophical Concept* (Stanford, 2009); *Un Arte Muy Frágil: Sobre la Retórica de Aristoteles*, trans. Rogenio Gonzalez (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Metales Pesados, 2010); *The Stelliferous Fold: Toward a Virtual Law of Literature's Self-Formation* (Fordham, 2011); *Georges Bataille: Phenomenology and Phantasmatology* (Stanford, 2012); *Geophilosophy: On Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's What is Philosophy?* (Northwestern University Press, 2014); *Deconstruction, Its Force its Violence* (SUNY Press, 2016); *Persuasion, Reflection, Judgment: Ancillae Vitae* (Indiana University Press, 2017). His next book *Storytelling: The Destruction of the Inalienable in the Age of the Holocaust* will be forthcoming from SUNY Press in 2018

ELIZABETH GROSZ has a PhD from the Department of General Philosophy, The University of Sydney. She is currently the Jean Fox O'Barr Chair in Women's Studies at Duke University. She works on feminist theory, psychoanalysis, theories of the body and the relations between the mind and the body. She is perhaps best known as the author of *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (1994) and her most recent book is *The Incorporeal: Ontology, Ethics and the Limits of Materialism* (2017).

MADHAVI MENON is Professor of English and Director of the Centre for Studies in Gender and Sexuality at Ashoka University in India. She is the author of *Wanton Words: Rhetoric and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (2004), *Unhistorical Shakespeare: Queer Theory in Shakespearean Literature and Film* (2008), *Indifference to Difference: On Queer Universalism* (2012), and the forthcoming *A History of Desire in India*. She is also editor of *Shakespeare: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare* (2012).

CECILIA SJÖHOLM is Professor of Aesthetics at Södertörn University. Her research is particularly focused on the relation between art and politics in contemporary culture. She has published extensively on art, psychoanalysis and critical theory. Her latest book, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt: How to See Things* (Columbia University Press, 2015) looks at the way in which Hannah Arendt's reflections on art and aesthetics invite us to rethink her political concepts. Other books include *Regionality/Mondiality*, ed. with Charlotte Bydler (Södertörn

University Press, 2014), *Aisthesis, estetikers historia 1*, ed. with Sara Danus and S-O Wallenstein (Thales, 2012), *Translatability*, ed. with Sara Arrhenius and Magnus Bergh (Albert Bonniers Publisher, 2011), *Kristeva and the Political* (Routledge, 2005), *The Antigone Complex; Ethics and the Invention of Feminine Desire* (Stanford University Press, 2005). Her most recent, ongoing project aims to refigure the history of aesthetics through the writings of Descartes. Sjöholm has been active in an international context during many years and has taught at several places in Europe and the United States.

Call for Papers

theory@buffalo 21
[DIS]PLACEMENTS

As the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, ended in a state of emergency on August 12, 2017, the chants “You will not replace us!” and “Jews will not replace us!” rang out loud and clear, hurled as threats against persons of color, immigrants, and non-Christians to know their “place.” Amidst the massive tides of world refugees; of rising homelessness in the wake of natural disaster, unemployment, and urban gentrification; of the ongoing removal of indigenous populations; legislation restricting the place of LGBTQ persons; white racist phobia of being “replaced;” and countless other symptoms of what Zygmunt Bauman, in *Liquid Times*, describes as “the present-day crisis of the human waste disposal industry,” the question of *place* and catastrophes of *displacement* has never been more urgent. The dangers are not only political, but also ontological: at risk is nothing less than the human capacity of being-in-the-world, and of sharing a world in common.

We invite submissions of completed essays up to 10,000 words and book reviews up to 1,200 on any aspect of the topic of [dis]placement. Please send all submissions electronically as a Word document, MLA style with endnotes and works cited. Submissions should be sent to cherylem@buffalo.edu by December 1st, 2018.

Cheryl Emerson and Megan Hirner, Editors
Department of Comparative Literature
634 Samuel Clemens Hall, North Campus
State University of New York at Buffalo
Buffalo, NY 14260