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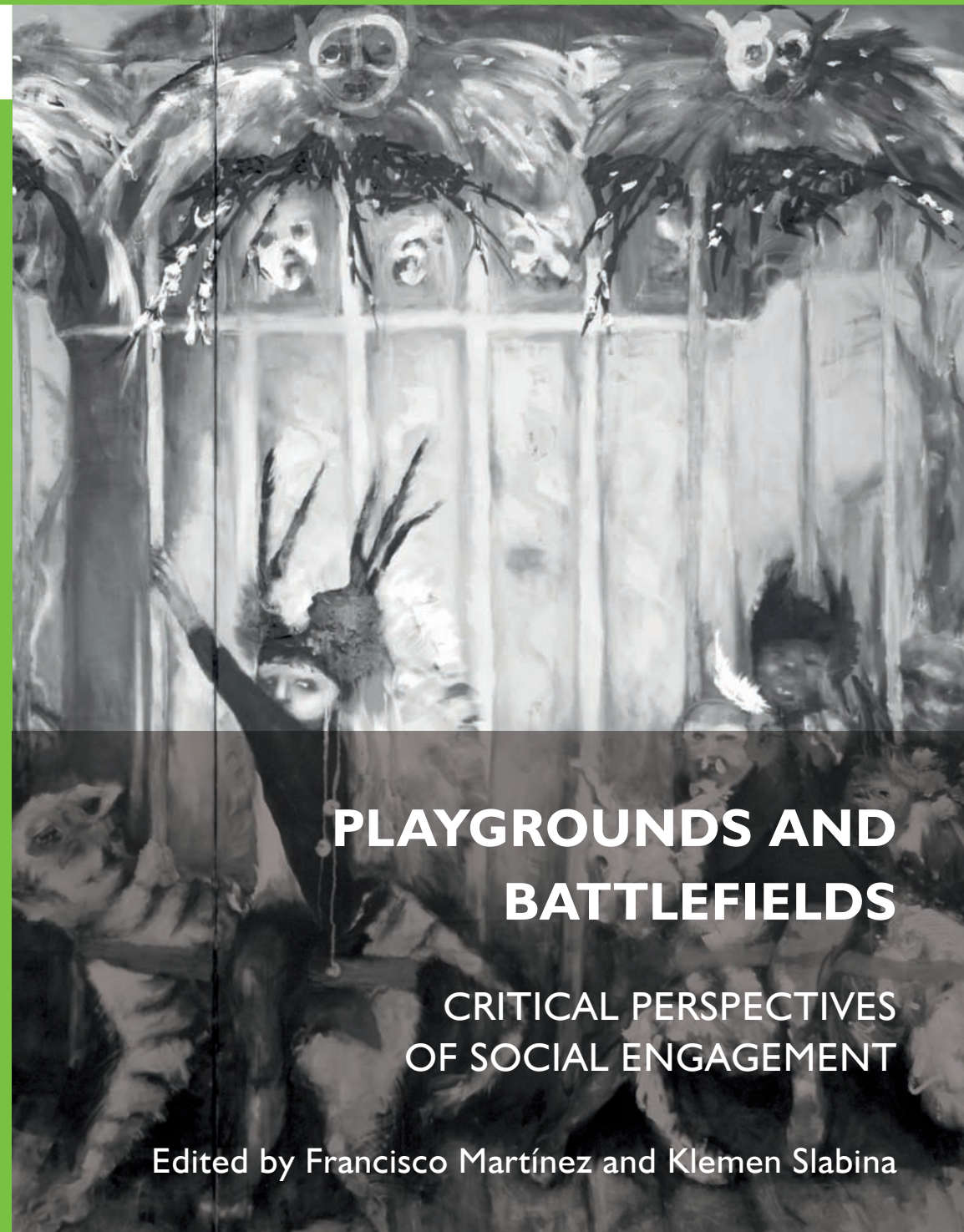
This unexpected book takes a look at the contemporary urban capitalist society in its restlessness, instabilities and precarious life-forms. The authors go out of their disciplinary boundaries to find explanation for complex phenomena, combining in a fresh and clever way diverse professional fields. In several cases it prefers a sideways look rather than a confrontational one; a strategy that turns out to be rather constructive. We could categorise this book under the label of critical spatial theory: critical, in that it aims toward not only an explanation but also real change; spatial in that it sees contemporary processes carefully embedded in the midst of crisscrossing trajectories, local simultaneities and human becomings.

Prof. **Andres Kurg**
Estonian Academy of Arts

This book allows the reader to access to topographies of change. The image of the playground is very accurate and related to multiple typologies of resistance in the actual crisis. It's not only Occupy-movements in the entire world, but the way in which societies deal with their pasts—and their futures. This is the other side of the book: battlefields. Here the authors not only try to explain what their view of a playground is but they are proposing how to use this concept for accessing the rituality of everyday life in a post-shock global society as ours.

Prof. **José Maria Faraldo**
Complutense University of Madrid

PLAYGROUNDS AND BATTLEFIELDS
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT



PLAYGROUNDS AND BATTLEFIELDS

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

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**PLAYGROUNDS AND
BATTLEFIELDS**

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Humaniora

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PLAYGROUNDS AND BATTLEFIELDS

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES
OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

Edited by Francisco Martínez
and Klemen Slabina

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I WILL NEVER BE YOUNG AGAIN

Jaime Gil de Biedma¹

*That life was serious
one becomes aware later:
like all youth, I came
to take life by storm.*

*To leave a mark I wanted
and depart at the moment of applause
to grow old, to die—were only
the dimensions of the theatre.*

*But time has passed
and the ugly truth
raised its head:
to grow old, to die
is the only plot of the play.*

¹ 'No volveré a ser joven', Jaime Gil de Biedma. *Poemas póstumos* (1968). Translated by Francisco Martínez.

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PREFACE

THE 'PLAYGROUNDS AND BATTLEFIELDS' PROJECT

As humans, we are concerned about social changes, how they affect our everyday lives and what reflective tools we have to approach them. The conception of this book came up in an informal context, where the playground was described in relation to one of the editor's children and evolved as an allegory to analyse social phenomena. Very modest in its origin, the project grew over our expectations, involving academically well-established participants in compiling high quality scientific writings.

In total, the volume reveals 25 contributions: 18 chapters, the introduction, foreword, and five art works. In the process of selection of the material, we have given preference to contributions aiming towards refreshment of thought (even if departing from the dogmatism of the various literatures and standards of established disciplines) and having a seminal potential. This is related to the final aim of the editors, which is to expand the epistemological toolkit in the studies of contemporary social phenomena and to find meaningful connections, motivations, or influences of their contemporary occurrence.

The background of the contributors is rather diverse and different authors have followed different methodological principles. We originally encouraged the authors to observe the contemporary reality via the optics of playgrounds and battlefields, to use these concepts to access to contemporary ritualities, dominations and topographies of change. The goal of the volume is to broaden the interpretative scope of humanities and establish, mark and design new metaphors able to encapsulate social expressions which are occurring at the time of the analysis. The manoeuvring freedom led

all the contributors (philosophers, anthropologists, social scientists, and artists) towards exploration of alternative approaches, and the effort is depicted sharing a fresh and trans-disciplinary glance over the studied phenomena.

In a way, it is in the books's function to map the field of 'Playgrounds and Battlefields' in humanities and social sciences. Also, the volume stands as a cry for terminological, scientific, and political re-engagement of diverse fields within humanities. We believe that resetting the discussion about engagement and responsibility in modern social settings is possible only through new concepts. Thus 'Playgrounds and Battlefields' have been used as a trigger to deploy a fresh approach on contemporaneity, yet a contemporaneity highly influenced by the way in which societies deal with their past and their futures. In this sense, the 'Playgrounds and Battlefields' volume is a thematic one, as 'playground' and 'battlefield' might be analytically establish-able terms. The duality of playgrounds and battlefields is understood as a space of becoming, related to the recreation, domination and experience of a place, as well as to humane practices of excess, interaction and enjoyment within it.

The assembled contributions, the difference in scientific and/or artistic approach to the metaphors and the discrepancy in the academic value of the contributions is a consequence of the terminological set-back in the humanities, where established terminology cannot or at least hesitates to react to the contemporary events and faces severe problems, when the claims made expire due to quick social changes. 'Playgrounds and Battlefields' is therefore not only a call for the re-thinking of terminology, but also a re-call to think the extent to which scientific criteria in humanities limit the analysis of the social events as they occur, when/where they occur.

Therefore, the eclecticism and trans-disciplinary approach of the volume are in the editors' opinion not only of positive value, but also stand as a symptom of responsiveness of humanities in general. Even if eclecticism doesn't lead automatically to the refreshment of

thought, we believe it helps to reduce the gap between academia and society, the gap between the method and the event.

After all, the fresh views that the authors provide on contemporary phenomena is probably the most attractive feature of the volume. Clearly oriented to problem solving and the production of critical approaches to everyday practices of people, the volume depicts how far the humanities can (and/or ought to) go in explication of events that take part in the present, without (needed?) temporal distance that would make the humanities more comfortable in their claims about recent social events. This is a very provocative task for the humanities. On the other hand, accepting the consequences of being immersed into changeable practices while trying to describe, enables humanities to improve both theoretical knowledge and practical tools in the study of dynamics and patterns of cultural space and their recent political context(s).

We, colleagues and friends, have cooperated with great confidence and passion, though not always in an harmonic way or with lack of tension. The working process was flexible and always dependant upon the availability of both. We managed due to our will, good communication, trust in each other, and productive combination of Mediterranean and Central-European empathy, which is latent between the lines. The "Playgrounds and Battlefields" volume bears the fingerprints and scratches of many who affected and were affected from the suggested metaphors, expressing and exercising their understanding of contemporary social events and movements through it. Beyond the contributors to which gratefulness is to be acknowledged for their altruist dedication to the idea, many of those involved in the creation of this volume carried the project back and forth between work and home. Hence they delivered their advice and support out of their excellence of academic skill and good will of their hearts.

Thanks are owed to Siobhan Kattago and Patrick Laviolette for their numerous tokens of advice on the editorial work and unconditional involvement with the project. Marika Agu, Ksenia Berner,

Carlo A. Cubero, José María Faraldo, Andres Kurg, Rebekka Lotman, Daniele Monticelli, Hannes Palang, Pille Slabina, Helen Sooväli-Sepping and Marek Tamm, are thanked for their advice on the paths and traps of academia. The advice and encouragement of all of the above are cherished and highly appreciated. Additionally, Tiina Ann Kirss, is to be thanked for creating the intellectual environment where the editors were able to confront their unconventional understandings of communal life.

We are also grateful to Ehti Järv, Flo Kasearu, Kristina Norman, Pille Runnel, Emeli Theander, and Anne Vatén for allowing their artwork to hermeneutically contribute to the volume. The three mysterious reviewers are to be thanked too, after their sharp and severe scrutiny of the manuscript and helpful comments. When it comes to patience, Tuuli Piirsalu never ran out of it. Thank you for that! In this adventure, research support has been kindly provided by EHI's research fund, the project 'Culturescapes in transformation: towards an integrated theory of meaning making' (IUT3-2) and the Centre of Excellence in Cultural Theory (CECT) through the European Union Development Fund.

To conclude with the one who took the biggest risk; we thank Tallinn Publishing House and especially Heli Allik for having the good will and courage to stand strong with this project from the very early stages. We are grateful also to all, who were not able to participate in this volume with their writing, but found lots of energy to encourage our efforts. By the end, many discussions took part in informal settings and lots of anonymous interferences are to be thanked for creating the volume as it appears in front of us.

Tallinn – Ljubljana – Murcia
Klemen and Francisco

FOREWORD

PLAYGROUND

Mihhail Lotman

It is exactly 4 pm CET on July 3rd, 1974. At Waldstadion in Frankfurt am Main a World Cup football match is supposed to be held between West Germany and Poland. A crowd of 60,000 people have filled the stadium and are waiting for the game to start. The main referee of the game, Erich Linemayr, steps carefully to the football field, touches it with a similar gesture to ladies entering cold water, shakes his head and leaves. Indeed, it has been raining for almost 24 hours and the ground is not suitable for a football game. As a sports commentator of the Soviet television noted: only water polo could be played here. This might have been an exaggeration; it seemed to me, as a spectator, that it might have been an appropriate field for mud wrestling. But let us return to football. It took an hour to dry the field, using mechanical and manual devices, and the game started at 5 pm (not 16:30, as *Wikipedia* claims). Nevertheless, a field suitable for the game was never achieved and the ball was constantly caught in rain puddles. It worked better for the style of the German team, whose trump cards were athleticism, technical dribble and precise short- and medium-distance passes. For the Polish team whose trump cards were swift counter-attacks and long passes to free positions, these conditions were fatal. In the case of volleys it was not possible to take into account their bounces and as for the ground kicks, the ball simply would not roll. The victory of the German team in the most important game in qualifying group, which opened their way to the title of the world champions, was to a great extent the result of the condition of the playground.

This year (2012) the tennis tournament of Mutua Madrid Open was for the first time played on the blue clay (sand ground). The blue

clay became one of the most important players of the tournament. Already before the beginning of the contest it was the subject of daily news, even on CNN it was considered not just sports news, but news. Blue clay is something new, original and, to my mind, beautiful. To view the game—at least on television—was also meant to be better on a blue background: the ball is more discernable and the bounce spot more clearly visible than on the traditional orange-red surface. But not everybody liked it. After the world's first seed Novak Djokovic and the second seed Rafael Nadal did not even make it to the finals, they decided to boycott the tournament in Madrid in the future, at least until the traditional playground is restored.

Let us return to the football, but now in a philosophical perspective. Commenting on the Italian team becoming the world champions, Mario Corti, the then director of Radio Liberty's Russian Service, said that from antiquity, it was in Italian blood to play on rectangular fields. Rectangular was the legion; rectangular was the encampment. For my own part, I can add that in planning the course of battle, the Roman commanders, first of all, had in mind a square or rectangular field.

We will return to football later, but now let us make an excursion to the Roman art of war. Ever since the ancient Greek practitioners and theorists of war, including such remarkable philosophers as Plato, the leading ideologeme of European military affairs had evolved: order beats chaos, organised Hellenes defeat the barbarians even when they are outnumbered, and that is the very consequence of being organised. The state of chaos of barbarians caused deadlocks and lacunas in their battle lines and it became possible to push into the gaps, tear their ranks apart and destroy them. The ideal form of organisation in Platonic and Post-Platonic philosophy are geometrical figures, and geometrical thinking permeated all spheres of the ancient world, from the architecture to the art of poetry, the art of war being in between these two poles. The art of war appeared to be typologically similar to oratory: both have similar rhetoric—building up one's own arguments, overruling opponent's arguments

and winning the opponent with one's own arguments. Both in war and in debate the rational argumentation was to win. This was the ideal. Yet in actual warfare there was always an additional component: stratagem, the origins of which were in prehistoric military practice. Thus, on the one hand, the issue was of who would defeat whom with rational arguments and, on the other hand, who would outwit whom. The ideals of the first were wisdom, force and bravery (what later formed the conception of *virtus*), which ruled out dishonest means, betrayal, etc... On the other hand, these nefarious qualities were the very properties to be relied upon.

Every Roman, as well as Greek, knew how the protowar of all wars—The Trojan War—ended. After ten years of honest but futile battles the mastermind Odysseus devised the lousy trap that brought victory to the Greeks. The curtain falls.

Nevertheless, there was another important difference between strategy and stratagem: rational warfare was taught and constantly practiced, while stratagems always came *ad hoc*, and began to be systematized as late as after the fall of the Western Roman empire. The confrontation of the two tactics in question is most clearly seen in The Punic Wars. Romans were constantly trying to defeat the Carthaginians with the right strategy, while the latter, especially Hannibal, were skilful in using stratagems. Most dramatically it was demonstrated in the battle of Cannae. The Romans under the leadership of Gaius Terentius Varro and Lucius Aemilius Paullus did everything right. Besides, their numbers were considerably larger: Rome had an army of ca 86,000 men against Hannibal's 54,000 men. This should have assured the victory. The battleground seemed suitable for Romans too: it was level and Hannibal could not use his customary mean tricks, hiding part of his troops to ambush. Since Romans outnumbered Carthaginians, it seemed that it was not difficult for them to create cavities in the enemy's battle lines and thus to destroy them. Therefore they drew their troops up in wedge formation with a particularly strong centre. Simple and logical. What Hannibal did, seems hard to even comprehend: he executed a unique manoeuvre

in the history of war by besieging and destroying a larger army with a smaller one. The Roman onslaught felled, if not a completely empty spot, then the weakest spot of Hannibal's army, which was retreating as planned, decoying Roman soldiers along with them. At the same time Hannibal's stronger troops, especially his cavalry, compressed the Romans from the flanks. The compact, that is, 'right' alignment of the Romans turned out to be a trap: being compressed, the legions could not fight: they became the object of massacre. Romans lost ca 60.000 of their men, that is, more than in Hannibal's army together. Until now, the battle of Cannae is considered among the most sanguinary battles in the history of war in terms of the numbers killed in one day. It was especially frustrating to the Romans that Hannibal managed to turn their strength against them. Two different cultures and two different rhetorics encountered in this battle, and rationality was defeated by stratagem.

In sport it is essential that participants in contests are clearly distinguished from non-participants. When, in football, the ball is played against the referee or even kicked by the referee, then these things simply do not count: physically, the referee is on the ground, but his physical presence does not become the reality of the game. Similarly, the football players are distinguished from the viewers: when an enthusiast from the attendance joins to help his team, this episode is a criminal, not a football event. It has to be mentioned that such distinction is not at all self-evident. In the fourth modern Olympic Games (London, 1908) a dramatic contest took place in the marathon. A famous Italian runner Dorando Pietri collapsed not fifty meters from the finish line in the struggle for the first place, after that the ladies attending the contest from the stadium started to demand that some gentlemen should help him. And indeed, two gentlemen helped him up and walked him over the finish (according to the legend, one of them was a writer Sir Arthur Conan Doyle). During professional boxing matches it was common that the attendance insulted an athlete and even pretended to attack him. Verbal assault was a natural part of a sport competition. Professional boxers

are still using it and do it even in a ring (an unsurpassable champion in this realm was Muhammad Ali, who was one of the best boxers of all time).

Winning against the opponent depends on the rules of the game. The winner in tennis is not the same as the winner in boxing: an opponent may still stand pretty firmly. There are sports where victory is obtained by pushing an opponent out of the playground. A good example of this is sumo—an amalgam of religious ritual, sport and entertainment. A winner of the match is the one who forces his opponent to step out of the ring or forces him to touch the ground with any part of his body other than the bottom of his feet (touching the playground equals leaving the playground). There are certain rules on which devices are allowed, there is a list of forbidden devices, but there is also the strange phenomenon of the rules that are allowed but not honourable to use. One of these is the so-called *henka*: an opponent exits the ring or touches it not as a result of honorary struggle, but because a stratagem is used against him, where the contestant jumps away, while the opponent misses him and hits emptiness. *Henka* is completely in accord to the regulations but only approved for weaker contestants to compete with stronger ones. It is not something that a *yokozuna* could allow himself.

While the techniques and tactics of athleticism could be compared to war strategy, the invectives and other mean devices are stratagems in their own way. Nevertheless, these are often an inseparable part of a contest and competitions with contestants who have scandalous reputations and are often attended just due to interest in their “stratagems”. A famous tennis player, a former long-term first seed John McEnroe admitted that his extravagant, if not to say scandalous behaviour on the playground, is to a great extent due to the public’s expectation of such behaviour from him.

Joseph Brodsky devoted a sixth poem from his cycle “*Post Aetatem Nostram*” (1970) to the preparations of the gladiatorial combat. First the acoustics: “Great acoustics. The builder has not fed the lice in Lemnos for seventeen years in vain. The acoustics are great”. Then

the audience: “The crowd that has been poured to the mould of the stadium listens torpidly and holds its breath...”. And now finally the protagonists: “These invectives, which were lavished against each other, heating themselves up to clutch the swords”. And after that a philosophema: “The aim of a single combat is not to murder, but a just and logical death. The laws of drama go over to sport”.

A situation containing contempt seems altogether interesting. Here too are inherent rules and stratagems. For instance, in contemporary sport, especially in football, verbal assaults with a racial subtext are very carefully observed, while as concerns other insults, the attitudes are much more lenient. In the 2006 World Cup, Marco Materazzi made an insulting comment towards Zinedine Zidane’s sister (which, by the way, is one of the most common and at the same time most “terrible” insults in Italy: which footballers use it all the time to taunt each other), to which Zidane responded with his famous head-butt. Yet in this incident he was the only one to be sentenced. Thus, remarks about the skin colour are at this point a far bigger breach than to taunt one’s sister’s chastity. It is an important social convention, which is characteristic to our time but a couple of decades ago the balance would have been the other way round.

Therefore, on the one hand, we can see a clear tendency to distinguish participants (players, soldiers, etc) from the non-participants (spectators, civilians, etc) and to draw clear lines for the playground or battlefield. On the other, there is a contrarious tendency to dissipate these boundaries and to involve in the game such participants who themselves do not have the slightest idea of it. We are not even always aware of what games we are participating in as players, we may be even less conscious of where we participate as pieces or even as grounds, on where cultural, political, etc... games are played.

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS YOUR OCCUPATION? PLAYGROUNDS AND BATTLEFIELDS OF OUR TIME

Francisco Martínez

Over the fence

What is your occupation? This is the question of the current moment, or even the question of our era. Indeed, the particular anxiety and hopes related to Western societies might be illustrated by depicting the different meanings of 'occupation', which exposes how to seize a territory, in what we spend time, which are our labour conditions and with what are we concerned (preoccupied). In this volume we propose the metaphors of the playground and of battlefield as triggers to critically approach these matters and as concepts to analyse contemporary topographies of change and disagreement. Moreover, we use game and child metaphors as expressions of new power relationships, pointing at repressive incapacitations, the tutelage of subjects and discursive formations of the space and time. We explore how social transformations depend upon a spatial referent, metaphorical language and the intuition of a new historical time to occur. Hence the main concern in this volume is not exactly about spatial changes, but rather the study of transforming settings and how alternatives might be fabricated (unfortunately they cannot be downloaded).

Playgrounds and battlefields refer to order and community, entailing rules and flows, as well as encompassing intense and risky experiences. These are spaces of a continuous becoming as well as places that encompass a multiplicity of trajectories and stories. One

of them is failure, getting lost, stepping out of the track. As pointed out by Judith Halberstam, under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, undoing and unbecoming offer more creative and cooperative ways of being in the world... “Failure preserves some of the wondrous anarchy of childhood and disturbs the supposedly clean boundaries between adults and children, winners and losers” (Halberstam 2011: 2–3). This volume offers grammar of possibility, looks for a way out of binary formulations, seeks to involve rather than to explain. In this sense, it favours an active spatialisation, opposed to a static and isolated occupation of the space and time. In his study of the chess game, Wittgenstein (1986) evidenced how actions might be reflexively oriented towards ‘grammars’ and relations. The authors included in this book also go for the study of bounded interactions, developing critical spatial theories and elaborating new discursive frames and gates. Still, many fixities and borders confine and configure the choices done in our everyday lives, as ‘networks of concrete becoming’ (Simone 2002: 24). Both societies and spaces are a product of interrelations—connections and disconnections—formed by internal processes as well as through interactions with the beyond (Massey 2005: 66–67).

Current social processes appear increasingly fragmented and discontinuous, thus more complicated. For instance, rigid and fluid frames not only coexist but also change their state in highly unexpected ways. In spite of the increasing fluidity of societies (Bauman 2000), duration, trajectories and occupations are still embedded in concrete locations, dynamics and connections.¹ The study of the situated agency and social sense-making activities pose not only planning and conceptual problems but also political ones. Material and symbolic considerations condition our capacity to envision alternatives and redefine the realm of possibility. As pointed out by Martina Löw (2008), particular arrangements in the city generate

¹ Globalisation literature in general describes the production of space as less relevant than virtual networks and mediums.

specific meanings, make certain experiences and narratives more viable, divide up and draw symbolic boundaries. Even if these social infrastructures are contingent and dependant upon temporarily produced entanglements, the way we interact relies to a great extent on the available tools to imagine and produce other orders and interconnections.

Clifford Geertz describes this battlefield as ‘the struggle for the real’ (1973: 316); meanwhile Boris Buden calls it ‘the dimension of critique’, exposing that preoccupations with ‘community’ and ‘culture’ have replaced ‘society’ in contemporary politics (2007). Moreover, Buden suggests that late-modern hegemonies do not only depend upon seized territories and treasures of the existing world, but also upon configurations of the future, thus what might have place in the possible. In his view, neo-liberal discourses of ‘creativity’ have colonised utopias not only by diffusing alternatives but also by translating how we think of them to neo-liberal terms. The outcome is an absolutist framework in which the contestation appears already pre-written and battlefields for the beyond and long-term politics seem obsolete, confined to the now.²

² David Harvey relates this domestication of all possible criticism to a new production of spatial configurations and their restructuring. In his view, Western societies transitioned from a rigid (Fordist) economic system to a more flexible accumulation of capital in the second half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, developments in transportation and communication technologies shifted the qualities of space and time; changing the manner in which people adapt and making collective experiences more disruptive. He presents this process as generated out of the pressures of capital accumulation, and finds, among the implications, an excessive ephemerality and fragmentation of politics (Harvey 1990: 284–306). Two decades after the publication of Harvey’s book, we observe the intensification of this process of time-space compression, which has economic consequences and provokes also a crisis of experience. By ‘flexible accumulation’, Harvey refers to “a direct confrontation with the rigidities of Fordism. It rests on flexibility with respect to labor processes, labor markets, products, and patterns of consumption. It is characterized by the emergence of entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and, above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation” (Harvey 1990: 147). David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge: Blackwell 1990.

In this volume we combine the pessimism of analysis with the optimism of the will. Both progress and obsessions with change have shown their limitations in the twentieth century. Therefore, we move forward by putting the focus on our occupations—the way places are inhabited, in what we spend time, the relations between production and consumption, and what preoccupations distract us.³ These matters are widely reflected within this volume yet we haven't got any straight answer to that. Herein probably lies the richness of this book: this multi-angled and non-dogmatic study of how the rules of the game are played out.⁴

³ According to Michel Foucault, medieval space was constituted as a hierarchic ensemble of places. This space of emplacements resulted conceptually opened by Galileo, who put forward that things in space are no other than a point in its movement. Localisation was therefore replaced by extension and time became more important than space. In the twentieth century this primacy has been challenged and the site took up the previous relevance of extension. This site is constituted throughout relations of proximity between its elements as well as with other sites, entailing interactions that are no longer hierarchical or temporal but rather flexible and fluid (Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', a lecture given on March 14, 1976). In opinion of Anthony Giddens, modernity has produced the collapse of the time/space coordinates. John Agnew (2005) explains that the discussion of space as opposed to place is a very modern concern, introduced in the seventeenth century by Descartes, Leibniz and Kant. Agreeing with Casey, Agnew argues that place became subordinated to space and time by then, and only in the twentieth century there happened attempts at rehabilitating it. Doreen Massey claims that radical politics have traditionally focused on time rather than on space, following the credo that it's time what brings the possibilities of progress and change (D. Massey, 'Politics and space/time'. – *New Left Review* 1992, 196, 65–84). Meanwhile Boris Buden presents space as the 'dried up riverbed of historical time, the fossil of a movement that has long since been halted. Its meaning is archaeological, not political' (2007). I find all these descriptions as thought provoking and arguably symptomatic of late-modernity. However, I still believe that the study of how the sense of space is produced as well as the use of spatial metaphors are crucial to understanding contemporary phenomena.

⁴ The contributors to this volume are rather varied, yet there is a basis that we seem to share (*Basis*: 'stepping', denoting a base or pedestal. Via Latin from Greek). First of all, a certain proclivity to adventure... Secondly, the assumption that we live in an era that calls for heresy, scepticism and irreverence; thus an attempt to abolish borders in thinking and avoid any dogmatism. Then we eventually agree about the need to overcome post-modernism and bring back possibilities to the present. The last point might be a critical attitude, which problematises traditional understandings, in this

David Bowie rhetorically sings ‘Where are we now?’⁵ This ‘where’ refers to location and to occupation: examining his trajectory and revisiting his past. According to John Stuart Mill (1831), the ‘spirit of the age’ emerges when changes occur and society recognises them. The feeling of living in a particular era presupposes a *Zeitgeist*, a collective belief of inhabiting a time that is clearly distinguishable from all the precedent ones. Nonetheless, and as in any other belief, the separation of eras has quite an arbitrary and unrealistic character; or as Johann Droysen put it, eras are just useful fictions, very much like the lines of longitude and latitude traced on the Earth’s surface (Droysen [1857] 1977: 371).

Many centuries ago, Aristotle defined time as ‘the amount of movement from before to after’. Kant added causality to this succession, arguing that ‘preceding Time determines what follows’. More recently, quantum physics proclaimed the existence of ‘orders of causal chains’, also confirming that certain directions of time increase ‘entropy’. Time in itself has therefore become ‘a structure of possibility’, a process related to our moving towards the future (Eco 1984: 112).⁶ As we learn from the artworks here included and the poem that opens the book, life has a spatial thickness and a temporal unfolding, rather than plane continuity and sequencing. Also, time is a crucial battlefield of our era, and its availability a way of regulating contemporary togetherness. For instance, Francisco Martínez argues that breakdowns and the radical intensification of speed are an organising principle in late-modern societies. Current politics

case of space, participation, scale and human transformations. All the rest is game and struggle.

⁵ In the single of his last album—see D. Bowie ‘The Next Day’ (ISO-Columbia 2013).

⁶ Likewise, social types are not natural categories, but rather fabricated. Following Geertz: “The everyday world in which members of any community move, their taken for granted field of social action, is populated not by anybodies, faceless men without qualities, but by somebodies, concrete classes of determinant persons positively characterized and appropriately labeled. And the symbol systems which define these classes are not given in the nature of things—they are historically constructed, socially maintained and individually applied” (1973: 363–364).

render of braking turbo-accelerations impossible; a late-modern phenomenon that produces ecological irreversibilities and, ironically, augments social desynchronisation.⁷

Indeed, there is an increasing awareness about the blind following of a technological dogma of innovation, the intensive destruction of the natural environment and the increasing global economic inequality. In this line, Patrick Laviolette claims that some paradoxical form of counter-entropic acceleration is necessary. Therefore we aim at exploring excessive regimes of modernity and how knowledge is forget through relations of production, culture and personal encounters. The present analysis of bounded processes point on that direction and intends to query who has the power in the battlefield, who is able to define the rules for whom, and who is left out of the playground. Hence, we pay studied attention to decipher how domination is enacted, its irreversible array of effects, as well as the changing character that it entails in Western societies.

Historically, a way to denigrate sovereignty, limit recognition and domesticate contestation has been to convert battlefields into playgrounds; first of all, by presenting certain actors as ‘infantile’, making them politically marginalised and in need of care (see Ferreira in this volume). A second strategy to turn battlefields into playgrounds is isolation, as if they were not socially embedded and the agents functioned in an atomised mode. The third form is to reduce political realities to technical problems awaiting solution by ‘experts’. This assumption puts forward that the constitution of the social has a biological existence and only becomes political as an object of knowledge and technical intervention. James Ferguson

⁷ It is convenient to remind that urban agglomeration cannot be separated from industrialization and environmental damage. Current accelerating rates of technological evolution, urbanization and consumption are not only unprecedented; they have the effect of dramatically extending humans impact within the ecological system. Indeed, late-modernity turns Western societies increasingly bipolar: we seem to have more control and scientific development than ever before, and nonetheless feel fragile and don't hold responsibilities.

calls such on approach the ‘anti-politics machine’ (1994), suspending politics from even the most sensitive political operations and presenting certain measures as ‘apolitical’ and ‘impartial’.

In a relevant reflection, Marcos Ferreira presents humanitarian strategies and politics of pity as an elegant exercise of power in which the certain communities are objectified and presented as vulnerable and the professionals of help take a privileged position. Let us connect this to Tom Frost’s contribution in this volume, in which he ponders the complicated relationship between truth, history and transitional Justice by studying how universal values are imposed in particular circumstances. Also to *The Great Transformation*, Karl Polanyi’s classic, in which he traced how British liberalism presented economy as disembedded from society and distinct from the state, yet regulated through political directives, which secured control over activities, visibility and regimes of knowledge (Polanyi 1957: 120–121). In a similar move, Benjamin Noys displays the art industry as a subtle form of politics, whereby artistic practices mesh with precarity, flexibility and fluidity; in this way, “the artist becomes *the* figure of contemporary labour”.

By recovering and stressing politics as a grounded possibility we go back to the original meaning of equality, as a referent and as an assessment of contingent social relations. Politics are able, on the one hand, to re-draw maps of social, sensual, and meaningful connections; and on the other, to give opportunities to those who are silenced or ignored, becoming therefore actors (not only victims). According to Jacques Rancière, the prevailing political order works by particular forms of exclusion, making invisible and marginalising the uncomfortable elements of that order. These elements exist, but they don’t matter or are presented as irrelevant, thus they don’t have a part in transformations and the bases of the society remain intact, never questioned on grounded matters. In this sense, Rancière presents political equality as the catalyst for the appearance of a collective subject (2004). This principle displays the contingency of the social order, since those who are on the top have no more right

to be where they are than to be anywhere else in the social order. Therefore, to dissent entails both: the revelation of this contingency and the expression of a disagreement.

Sharing a world with equal others (who both recognise us and our place in that world) ensures ultimately that we acquire a sense of reality: “the presence of others, who see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and of ourselves” (Arendt 1958: 50). Helena Holgersson presents in the volume a seminal case study of a local geography of exclusion, relating the everyday life of the undocumented immigrants to the urban space and presenting the stateless refugee as an exemplary non-citizen, since they cannot participate in public space. According to Hannah Arendt, human dignity is not brought about through attaining social visibility and justice alone, but it requires the freedom to participate as well. Therefore, the meaning of political freedom entails the right to be seen and heard and to access to the life-world.

The ambiguities of participation reveal the importance of in-depth exploration of means of bringing back politics and making institutions more inclusive. Hence it is not as simple as to participate. By analysing the Spanish 15M, García Espín & Fernández García explain how this horizontal civic movement put the discussion of politics back on the table beyond the mere technical management of public affairs. They also address the ‘democratic deficit’ by urging politicians to listen more to those who elect them and celebrate civil activism as a feasible alternative. In this sense, to re-establish mechanisms of social articulation seems to be crucial to make democracy more democratic. It doesn’t consist however in creating a domesticated heterogeneity, but practicing horizontality and enabling a lively plurality of engagements.

It is paradoxical that in an age in which we are compelled to work more than previous generations—with less social support and stability—the collective conscience of labour and the occupational identity seem to be vanishing. In recent decades, the search after cheaper labour involved spatial movement. Nowadays, the cheaper

labour is created and found too within the global north, producing a spatial restructuring that not always entails movement. We can indeed observe how a new poverty is emerging without having resolved the former one; this provokes not only a lack of homogeneity in poverty, but also entropy (manifested as fragmentation, precarity and incertitude). Indeed, rather than to plurality, contemporary societies are moving into a deeper complexity, anxiety and confusion. Likewise, the depiction of contemporary societies as assembled by small pieces not only separates and distances individuals (as if the collective dimension of living became obsolete),⁸ yet concedes too the growing importance of intermediary faceless connections.⁹

Don't mention the cage

Elderly gangs might evoke the safe old times in the sandbox, meanwhile the little kids, ignorant of the risks, will look up waiting for the day when they will be grown enough to join the rough game. The promised future has been delayed for them and they have been quite overseen in the infant playground. This has created two problems, however. First, we have been reproducing promises of future that were not ours, but their promises. We even believed them, enjoying some of the benefits (see Maruste in this volume). Second, circumstances and conditions settled beyond the playground disabled the chances to come out from the garden. And then, those infants who managed it (with a proper occupation), encountered a quite different future than the one promised and expected.¹⁰

⁸ Here I don't mean 'collective' as being always public or blocking self-consciousness; quite the opposite, I understand being social as having the chance to find the own distance between the public and the private realms, to move between them, beyond barriers related to ownership, privacy rights, networks, discourses...

⁹ In this sense, we propose to give back human faces to the in-between articulations and enhance the social and inclusive character of institutions.

¹⁰ We unequivocally find new hegemonies, patterns, rules, frictions, tensions... and once we come back to enter the playground we meet some gorilla who says: 'if you wanna play, you gotta pay!' or 'Not in my backyard'.

As Pille Runnel and Ehti Järv remind in their contribution to this volume, it is in our youth when access to the world and are educated in life. Also Kevin Ryan proposes to study the playground as a biosocial technology and school of conduct. He points out how playgrounds co-produce social situations and structure the possibilities of coding and acting not only based on material barriers, but also relying on bio-social configurations of power and knowledge. Notions of being and becoming are intrinsic in how individuals are depicted in the playground. Being a child is commonly seen as a life without responsibilities, dedicated to play and enjoying the period of 'childhood'. However, it's convenient not to forget that the child is an adult in the making, hence entailing responsibility and referring to a constructing process, rather than to a plane aseptic transition. Therefore, and as we use it here, the playground is not a metaphor about the future, but related to contemporary politics and social transformations.

Metaphors disclose possibilities not immediately discernable, opening options otherwise unconsidered. The alleged contraction of the present is partly produced through an over-focus on being and a simplification of the becoming, not leaving any possibility for risking and the erring beyond the borders of the playground. In this sense, the importance should be given not to what the child is, but what s/he tries to do or be. We intend therefore to explore the idea of becoming. It is the purpose of this volume not to over-value the potential for social change that play by itself may bring; rather we find more interesting to reflect upon the self-consciousness and awkwardness that play entails; the learning to live with one another and the recognition of the social and political nature of education.

As an engaging activity that requires several players, play unequivocally teaches us to lose; indeed, who doesn't accept this possible outcome is not welcome to peacefully join anymore. Otherwise play is also related to self-creation and risk, thus demonstrating that failure has a non-obsolete character. As Puusalu, and Slabina &

Martínez describe, being active in the playground also involves the very risk of falling down and getting hurt. Yet, even if all the participants play in the same ground and follow the same rules, some of them will go home without bruised knees and grazed elbows. It serves therefore as a convenient reminder that participation is neither equal nor fair and that failure cannot be separated from human existence.

Let us thus imagine a common situation: someone invites us to play. The immediate response that comes to our mind is ‘to what?’ We cannot play in abstract terms or forever; we always play at something, in a concrete place and for a certain while. The second spontaneous answer to the ludic—and apparently innocent proposal—is ‘how should we play?’ For taking part in any game we have to acknowledge certain rules, often established outside the playground. Further on, the question ‘What is to be done’ demands at first the answer of ‘by whom?’ and ‘in what circumstances?’ Then we can assess what degree of responsibility is hold. In this case we talk about how we access to the playground, the ways we get hurt and who is watching to provide us ‘security’ and ‘flexibility’. In other words, forms of precariousness and risk in which certain patterns are encoded as normal.

Rules of the game translate all forms of uncertainty to mutual uncertainty and pre-write the payoff conditions for players. Actors then begin to calculate probabilities, rather than to construct possibilities. In a way, contemporary battlefields are made to obey the logic of Hollywood films, in which good, evil, victory and defeat are comfortably clear. Likewise, European style notions of maturity, discussion, and cultivation have given way to American-style celebrations of the ‘Forever Young’, hand by hand with the discrediting of non-utilitarian expressions of culture (Sontag 2000). In opinion of Thomas H. Eriksen (2001), this cult of youth is caused by the tyranny of the moment, which has as a practical consequence a simplification of knowledge, an assembly line effect in the everyday pace and a ‘Lego brick syndrome’ within personal experiences.

With an Internet connection everything seems equally accessible with a click; basically depending on our ability to download and decipher information. Agreeing with Bourdieu, contemporary mediated culture has created a society of fast thinkers, thinking faster than speeding a bullet yet offering ‘banal, conventional, common ideas’. Bourdieu finds a ‘negative connection between time pressures and thought’ (1998); whereas James Gleick reminds that ‘forming an opinion is one process. Stating it is another’ (1999: 95).¹¹ Moreover, Robert Hassan concludes that abbreviated thinking is also affecting the capacity of liberal democracies to reflect, control and govern the ‘empire of speed’ (2009).

In general, there is an increasing manufacturing of human spaces (both by extension and intensity), and therefore of human relationships. Less and less things are left out from social intervention and the ubiquity of late-modern interference might look satanic. Here we talk not only about shifts in the way we are interconnected but also refer to a new ‘connected time’ and domination. Battlefields are discredited as a chin-to-chin or hand-to-hand situated process, presented rather as an activity done beyond bodily, temporary and geographical constrictions.

The use of metaphors implies duration and not a straight answer, being more experiential than categorical. Metaphors sustain relationships of resemblance, pointing at what is similar and what is different; likewise they refer to a non-evident ‘something else’ and constellate an intermediary space. The collection *Playgrounds and Battlefields* helps us to reflect on the emergence of events that are heterogeneous to the established political order. Additionally, it presents alternative ways of viewing social transformations, awaking

¹¹ Gleick refers to how George Steiner mocked the instant explanations and the ‘sound-bite mentality’: “Imagine Dostoyevsky. There are some incidents like this, two boys killing other children, in his famous diary. Imagine what Dostoyevsky would do with that. He would deal with the transcendently important question of evil in the child. Today the editor would say, ‘Fyodor, tomorrow, please, your piece. Don’t tell me you need ten months for thinking. Fyodor, tomorrow!’” (Gleick 1999: 97–98)

us to challenges and several opportunities for action that are related to our era.

Accelerated fluidities on the one hand and intricate stoppages and fixities on the other have provoked the emergence of new scales of social action and domination, as well as reconfigured the relationships among the scales within (Gille and Ó Riain 2002). As a consequence, group divisions, the vocabulary of consensus and social interactions in general are becoming more complicated (See Maruste in this volume). We even face several challenges that question the own sustainability of the modern project¹² and by extension the welfare of societies. For instance, the speeding forces move so rapidly that seem liberated from the social control (Rosa 2013; Hassan 2009). Likewise, the exhausting domination of certain economic agents has reached irreversible ecological consequences.

Throughout this volume these issues are tackled, not by advocating a normative standpoint but by showing conditions of possibility and contextualising apparently unrooted phenomena. These key themes in the political are explored in various ways in the chapters making up this book, analysing what's happening now and looking for alternatives. Nonetheless, current events occur so quickly that what is written today may be considered obsolete by the time of publication and beyond, as Tom Frost notes in his contribution.

STREET LEGAL

The present volume works as a kind of thick description of means and manners of experiencing engagement and it aims to query how social rules are reproduced, localised and contested. Also the interpretations of 'playground' can be extremely varied, from a cage (lack of outside) to a stage (a place where to act publicly), referring as well

¹² Late-modern processes have been intensified in Western societies during the last decades but also deeply penetrated into other parts of the world. Yet still we live in a world of many worlds whereby various multidimensional changes collide.

to a *kindergarten*, a pretty designed recreation area or even a bullring (where to risk). Additionally, the metaphor of a bounded space is here employed to describe socio-cultural structures and to express the limited range of possible human choices in a sort of ethics of confinement¹³ (See Kattago; also Slabina, Martínez).

Participatory alternatives have gained ground during the last years. However there is a need to ask which kind of participation and what for. In order to understand how and why people participate, avoid participation, or are prevented from participating, a closer look into its practice is required. Participation itself might be taken in quite different ways: as a tool of political legitimisation (outlawing responsibility); the practice of involvement; enjoying the right to dissent; or being capable to query and transform core matters.

Participation does not necessarily imply dissociating actors from their everyday or working lives, displacing them to a dedicated political location. Rather, participation is performed in the workplace, the home and the market and cannot be separated from everyday choices and social bounds. In fact, every political theory has historically dealt with that issue, and the radical separation of labour and deliberation, effort and voice, assumed in liberal democracies is an example of the matter. This notion argues that politics can only occur in a few select spaces uniquely suited to this purpose, the Greek ‘agora’ being the paradigmatic form of this space. These assumptions serve as a legitimisation of the restriction of the where and when we participate.¹⁴

The re-appropriation of public spaces converts the city into a non-transparent communication zone between society and public

¹³ This term was actually suggested by Marcos Ferreira during the intensive seminar ‘Playgrounds and Battlefields’ organised in Tallinn University in February 2013.

¹⁴ Nonetheless, public space—in spite of an evident need to be constructed, defended, cared after and contested—is never totally controlled and ultimately defined. I believe public space is undefinable. In an attempt to describe its character, I suggest public space is an urban, collective, non-domestic place (frequented by people). Nonetheless, this definition talks only about some of the features of the public space, for instance not touching the way people interact or how it is materially designed.

authorities. Public space then becomes a terrain where one voices the needs and right to be included in the process of communal decision making. For instance in Russia the official discourse has tended traditionally to avoid any notion of ‘public space’ (in official documents authorities use the neutral term ‘open urban space’ instead). As Anna Zhelnina points out (2013), the Russian concept of ‘open urban space’ presents the public as a ‘postcard’, as a nice view rather than human dwelling. This is also related to the Soviet idea of open urban space as a stage for communist rallies and parades; in this sense, the public space belongs to the officials rather than to the city inhabitants.

We can see this in two different examples from Moscow. In his first two years as mayor of the Russian capital Sergei Sobyenin has managed to tear down around 6.000 kiosks, mainly situated nearby transportation hubs and selling food, alcohol or newspapers. In fact, one of Sobyenin’s first measures after he substituted (his polemic predecessor) Yuri Luzhkov was to approve a plan to erase all of them from the cityscape, as a surgeon amputating parts of a body. Still there are around 8.000 kiosks yet probably not for long. Luzhkov already threatened the kiosks ‘for creating a bad image of the city’ yet never dared to start a campaign against them. The reasons presented now are quite similar; they want to ‘encourage more civilised forms of retail trade’ and expect to bring new big investments that small-business entrepreneurs cannot afford. But do common inhabitants of Moscow benefit from this?

Kiosks were not extremely beautiful and were reminiscent of a complex time in Russia, namely the perestroika and early nineties in which thousands of citizens abandoned their professions and opened a kiosk to survive.¹⁵ However, the current plan to slash street

¹⁵ This has changed; since some years ago most of the employees were immigrants working in very bad conditions. Recently, the mayor of Moscow has stated that “People who speak Russian badly and who have a different culture are better off living in their own country. Therefore, we do not welcome their adaptation in Moscow... Moscow is a Russian city and it should remain that way. It’s not Chinese, not Tajik and not Uzbek”. For more on the topic see: <http://themoscownews.com/local/20130530/191560550>.

businesses coincides with other ambitious policies such as to concentrate the retail trade in few chains (the number of street markets in the city has been reduced in the same period from 77 to 53), moderate the consumption of tobacco (the 175.000 kiosks of the country have been forbidden to sell this product in January 2013), recover the monumentality of the streets (paralleled with a conservative turn of the official discourse, for instance in regards to religious offenses, sex practices and migration),¹⁶ and to regain the control of public spaces in the aftermath of several unexpected demonstrations against Putin. This relates to the second example.

In May 2012, thousands of people wandered through the centre of Moscow. To avoid breaking the law on protest authorization, the participants had no banners or slogans, only white ribbons and songs. They strolled around the city centre, organised picnics, cleaned parks, played badminton and read out passages from the Russian constitution. Initially, the demonstrators exerted their right to enjoy the city without breaking any rule and no one knew when and where they were to appear. Likewise, the empathic impact to the common citizen grew, since the demonstrators reproduced the same behaviour as the normal dweller yet channelled the message against the Russian president with a small—a priori neutral—symbol and a massive promenade.

This way of protesting was actually called *narodnye gulianya* (people's festival) and *dobryi mobil'nyi lager* (good mobile camp). They reassembled in several places in the city centre, unexpectedly staying in *Chisty Prudi* square. However, the events were not clearly intended as a Russian version of the worldwide Occupy movement (i.e. OWS, 'Tahrir' in Cairo or 15M in Spain). Indeed, 'Occupy Wall

html, http://rusiahoy.com/blogs/2013/06/20/los_quioscos_de_moscu_una_especie_en_extincion_29127.html and http://www.regard-est.com/home/breve_contenu.php?id=1404&PHPSESSID=6510368ae89b104860ebc5dfa54b3702.

¹⁶ See for instance: Francisco Martínez, 'The Erotic Biopower of Putinism: From Glamour to Pornography'. – *Laboratorium: Russian Review of Social Research* 2012, 4, 3, 105–122.

Street' has been referred in Russian as *Zakhvati Wall Street* ('forcible take over'), whilst the *okkupai* transliteration (окуппай) appeared as a humorous rhyme created for a Twitter hashtag: #OkkupaiAbai (#ОкуппайАбай), borrowed from the statue of the Kazakh poet Abai Kunanbaev as a symbolic meeting point (Grigoryeva 2012).

Political visions and power relations within the movement were not clearly defined, and thanks to that, the gathering result was extremely inclusive. The logic was: 'if you feel you have been made powerless, join us; we are the 99%'. Being in one place together was an event in itself. Friends were made, contacts exchanged, and there was the feeling of organising democracy bottom-up, of having the power (*ibid.*: 184–185). But the Hollywood ending didn't happen (if we call it an ending): controversy and divisions emerged among the protesters and a few days police forcibly dispersed the camp. People then moved to *Barrikadnaya* (so named to commemorate the unsuccessful 1905 uprising in Russia), but police dispersed them again. A few weeks later, the reckless Russian government increased the fine for organising protests without official sanction above 150%.

Russian people appeared and stayed in places where they weren't supposed nor allowed to be, thus bringing the public space to the political agenda. As Zhelnina concludes (2013), the unprecedented occupation in Russia has led to the discussion of the concept of public spaces itself (2013). This example shows how the re-appropriation of the urban space might become an exercise of democracy, yet an incomplete one: even if spaces of convergence had a sufficient common ground and affinities as well, individual differences would always arise. This case forces us to think to what extent participation requires consensus.

To David Harvey, the 'Occupy' wave manifests one of the essential contradictions of the current *Zeitgeist*. On the one hand, he asserts that "the collective power of bodies in public space is still the most effective instrument of opposition when all other means of access are blocked" (Harvey 2011); On the other, Harvey concludes that: "It is simply naïve to believe that polycentrism or any form of

decentralization can work without strong hierarchical constraints and active enforcement” (2012: 84). In Harvey’s view, politics require hierarchy: “in some sense ‘hierarchical’ forms of organization are needed to address large-scale problems... Unfortunately the term ‘hierarchy’ is anathema in conventional thinking... and virulently unpopular with much of the left these days. The only politically correct form of organization in many radical circles is non-state, non-hierarchical, and horizontal” (Harvey 2012: 69). Here he re-politicises participation but in a narrow sense, praising only a particular way of contestation.

Harvey paradoxically ignores that any structure and sensibility of hierarchy may be against the will of people, of those who are suppose to reproduce it through complicity.¹⁷ In this line, Tarmo Jüristo illustrates how the Occupy Wall Street daily practices and processes were ultimately an attempt to balance and counter such emergent and ‘natural’ hierarchies, by creating conditions whereby all power would be ephemeral and ad hoc in nature. For him, power relationships and hierarchies are self-emergent and practically unavoidable in any community. Accordingly, Jüristo presents as vital to generate counter-hegemonies and new practices of democracy, beyond the institutional activity.

ANOTHER SIDE OF FREEDOM

We observe a transformation of social sensibilities and practices of autonomy in Western countries. Human interactions seem to be less obvious and more distant, political power more nominal and society compounded as a mosaic of microdynamics. For instance, street protests experienced in 2012 did not have any clear social agenda and did not produce a new political unity expressed in class, labour or ethnic representation. The people participating in demonstrations

¹⁷ Despite being originated in the Greek hierarkhēs and meaning ‘sacred ruler’, hierarchy fleshes out in a mimetic way; thus the direct way to undermine it begins with self-consciousness and ends with multiple scars.

had nonlinear social trajectories. Besides exposing their frustration and claiming against certain measure or politician, the alignment among the demonstrations was somehow less substantial and exposed as a countless miscellanea: ‘I came to listen to the speakers’; ‘to see how many people turn out’; ‘to feel engaged’; ‘to dream about change’; ‘to produce a continuation’; ‘because of being tempted’ or ‘in the mood’... (Bikbov 2012).

There are also millions of people without a job, freelancing, or working in call-centres with titbit contracts, what presents traditional accounts of working class, middle class, intellectuals, specialists, experts... in need of being updated. Likewise, our experience of public spaces is increasingly mediated and conditioned by money and function. Short-term macro-economic criteria produce a disaggregated city, based on an exhausting connectivity rather than connectedness; in other words, organised around standardized transmissions that impede further dialog and communication. Everyday life therefore appears as a battlefield in which rival conceptions of freedom and legitimacy are played out. As Alastair Bonnett exposes in his contribution, everyday space, and people’s movement within it, seems to be a topic that a lot of people have recently become intrigued by: “It’s as if people are anxious to talk about everyday space but don’t yet quite know how”.

Spatiality occurs as an integral part of a larger concern, being one of the arenas wherein processes and inter-relationships are manifested and actualised. For instance, it is not by hazard that we find in many Eastern-European societies massive shopping malls in the city centre,¹⁸ mirroring and reshaping the notions of public and

¹⁸ Tallinn has 2 square meters of shopping floor space per inhabitant, so far appearing within the top 4 in Europe, yet with new malls expected to be opened (ie. in Lasnamäe) and extended (ie. Ülemiste) For more on the topic see ‘The Phantom Sutures of Post-socialist Tallinn (Estonia)’ (F. Martínez, *Forthcoming*). Also Tallinn has been called ‘The Promised Land of Shopping Malls’. See *Baltic Business News* 25.10.2013. <http://www.balticbusinessnews.com/article/2013/10/25/tallinn-the-promised-land-of-shopping-malls>.

private as well as conditioning social behaviour and access. Indeed, the transformation of the city into a compartmentalised playground deepens into the breach between areas of privilege and subjection, and confirms, once more, that space could be produced based upon personal insecurity and disorganisation (see Martínez). Moreover, the proliferation of standardised spaces of consumption says about the contemporary turn towards a fake naturality and alienating togetherness (see Puusalu).¹⁹

Siobhan Kattago argues in this volume that we seem to be witnessing dramatic social changes in the name of freedom, transformations that rise to new interactions and institutions, blurring old boundaries and creating new configurations of power and resistance. This idea is also considered in the contribution of Laviolette, who refers to reflective urban explorations as a way to uncover the density and interwovenness of contemporary societies. In his view, “forms of deep and dangerous play are enactments of epistemological and ontological awareness. No longer are they simply about hedonism or performing identity”.

We have once again to remember that the field of politics is wider than the institutional system and thicker than management. Several chapters of this volume reflect upon the art and activity of ruling and producing domination; for instance Ryan studies how communities renew themselves by educating and training its children. Other authors focus however on the new forms of disciplining, which bound the possibilities of political engagement. For instance, Jaanika Puusalu identifies alienation within contemporary freedom to choose between available tools of self-deception. In her provoking contribution, she uses examples from ‘Apple’ products to demonstrate supposed false-belongings and self-realizations through consumption.

¹⁹ Shopping malls seem to breed, as do fast-food, plastic-fantastic flowers, eco-capuccinos, fair trade chocolate and beauty salons (caring properly after our feet nails). Even civic resistances have become a coffee & cake issue.

The word choice is perhaps too redolent of both the market place and its shopping mall consumer culture, since to choose also entails responsibility and freedom. For Kattago, this question is still as important as it has been in previous time periods. She examines the conflict between being an individual and a citizen by asking whether the political ideal of freedom has been reduced to virtual existence and consuming capabilities. Yet should walking in a supermarket be considered a self-journey? As Bonnett points out, the effective alienation of the modern supermarket encourages shoppers to take a certain bored pleasure in casting themselves as perfect clients, busy, focused and willing. As a way of breaking this pattern, Bonnett puts the focus on routine transgression and the things occurring that haven't been legislated by spatial scientists.

Public spaces encapsulate a tension between determinacy and vagueness, order and disorder, the familiar and the strange. To think about playgrounds and battlefields is also to be reminded that physical spaces are lived in; in other words, the sense of place is something that people do through multiple encounters and embodied imagination. Space becomes public not only through laws or discourse but also through corporeal practices and embedded routines that manifest the way subjects feel about the world.

Genealogy of the future

The way social transformations are approached in this volume is highly diverse, what ultimately questions the existence of privileged points of penetration into contemporary sociation. For instance, Martínez puts the focus on forms of 'normality'; whilst Oleg Pachenkov and Lilia Voronkova pay studied attention to flea-markets as urban scenes and Alessandro Testa invites us to contemplate on super-social moments such as festivals. The *homo ludens* dances, sings, makes bombastic gestures, gets dressed up, celebrates ceremonies... Testa claims not to disregard these distractions and activities of enjoyment, since in any collective gathering there

is a manifestation of power, a discourse of normality and a group instruction.

Playgrounds and battlefields are certainly a school of conduct, yet also a faculty of possibilities. Institutions and social infrastructures provide a situated set of options and constraints, which, nonetheless can be suffered, profited, re-articulated or co-adapted once in practice. To a great extent, our response to opportunities involves a choice between narratives as well as of ways of dealing with the past and the future. In these cases, what to remember becomes as important as what to express (see Lotman). Dita Bezdičková explores in this volume the idea of (not taken) alternative trails, paying attention to the ways by which we are driven to places and positioned.

Agreeing with Foucault, change comes when “critique has been played out in the real, not when reformers have realized their ideas” (1981: 13). There is something adventurous and risky in changes, in setting forth on without necessarily knowing the result. Transformations require multiple acts within partly sought partly contingent realities. Think here of Ishmael in *Moby-Dick*, Marco Polo, Columbus, Orellana, Alessandro Malaspina or Livingstone; they thought without a banister, holding nothing back, throwing themselves into whatever engagement that made contingent sense. Fear tends to lead to redundant protections, which eventually turns against oneself. Hence a first step to move forward could be to limit the scope of our bulwarks (stigmas, segregations...) and pull the world into ourselves.

Social transformations occur without a clearly palpable endpoint, they evolve as the product of triggers. Quite often the best is not to give reasons for undertaking a project but to pursue the idea and see where it leads. As Todd May points out, hope breaks with the present in the name of what might come, but will certainly not be achieved if we lack the courage, precisely, to name it. This attitude incorporates the contingency of hope not only as a break from, but even as a direct challenge to, the seemingly inescapable weight of the present: “Since who we are is largely a result of a contingent history,

there is no necessity that we be this way. We can be otherwise than we are" (May 2010: 256).²⁰

Western societies seem to be in an anti-dialectical moment. Horizons have been renamed and paralysed. It became harder to imagine alternatives to global capitalism and any critical move against such economic praxis is pre-empted and contained to serve capitalism (see Noys and Homer). During the recent years, debates about social transformations have migrated from politics to markets; we are currently encouraged to think of ourselves either as consumers or as entrepreneurs and expect a utilitarian return. Against that tendency, Sean Homer presents utopias as a way of thinking in the long term as well as a negative judgment on the present.

Moves forward cannot be totally foreseen or planned, since it is the responsibility of the generation living at the time. As Ryan remarks, the playground of today will be the society of tomorrow. Every political process manifests itself as a quasi-organised agency in which power is constantly issued forth. It is however contestation that stands at stake, emerges unprotected, just as a possibility. In this sense, the way that a society stands its internal disagreements talks directly about its democratic quality.²¹ Participation is an unprotected term that very often appeared twisted. Therefore,

²⁰ Indeed, the prevailing consensus is imposed through three ideological assumptions that cause alarm about contingency, namely a decaffeinated involvement, limited to a procedural participation; a fear of moving beyond the borders, or even a call of defending the supposedly 'under attack' castle of the status quo; and an insistence that there is only what there is, reinforced nowadays through shocks and new forms of alienation "The consensus that governs us is a machine of power insofar as it is a machine of vision. It pretends to verify only what everyone can see by adjusting two propositions on the state of the world: one which says that we are finally at peace, and the other which announces the condition of this peace: the recognition that there is only what there is" (Rancière 2005: 8; also in May 2008: 164). J. Rancière, *Chroniques des temps consensuels*. Paris: Seuil 2005.

²¹ The intention to participate and the existence of open ways of entering such engaging terrain are no less important than any hierarchy or rules of the game of participation. Hence revolts against desertification of public sphere as well as resistances to faceless controls are particularly relevant to recover the social control over transformations.

society is better cultivated through horizontal arrangements and inclusive compositions whereby rival conceptions of freedom, politics, responsibility and engagement might play out.

Ironically, the social *imaginaire* promoted by modernity entailed a simultaneous process of loss of certainty and a search for its restoration. Its distinct shifts in the conception of human agency, experience of autonomy, and the reflection upon the place of communities in time were very much based on social contestation. Processes of urbanisation, communication and economic commerce helped to provoke the breakdown of traditional politics and legitimated new ways of social organisation. Tensions were recognised as a value, as a consequence of discussions and negotiations, as the manifestation of different visions of collectivity, as an acknowledgment of social heterogeneity (Eisenstadt 2005).

Contrary to the optimistic visions of modernity as inevitable progress, the crystallizations of modernities were continually interwoven with internal conflict and confrontation, rooted in the contradictions and tensions attendant on the development of the capitalist systems, and, in the political arena, on growing demands for democratization (Eisenstadt 2005: 51).

We observe how the growing civic mobilisations around the world stem from a desire to regain a terrain that has been depoliticised. Is it sufficient to resolve the continental deadlock? It depends if we see a half-empty or half-full glass. Still, the extreme right wing fills part of the vacuum resulting from post-socialist and late-modern process.²² Not long ago, however, Eastern-European public figures were manifesting their political resistances through personal ‘authenticity’ and

²² As Rancière and May point out, the contemporary citizen lives in an era of ‘passive equality’, whereby many of us vote, hold political opinions and have expectations of our governments; but we hardly engage in political actions. “We partake in politics as we do in sports, as fans rather than participants, and at times with rather less enthusiasm” (May 2008: 1). Todd May, *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière*. Edinburgh UP 2008.

‘corners of freedom’ (Gille 2010: 11), from where the ethical character of their visions transcended. In the last twenty years, this ethical contestation evolved however towards *disengagement*, as if it would be possible to create personal authenticity without a collective idea. For example, Václav Havel, who had been the hallmark of political activism both before and after 1989, declared that his dream was to live in a small boring European country, expressing normality as living without any communal involvement, in a country with less politics.²³

This had the effect of over-valourising everyday quiet routine and market calculability, otherwise presenting a life without politics as normality. It doesn’t surprise, therefore, that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and intensified by the extension of the EU and the establishment of the Eurozone, that substantive political and cultural criteria seep into procedural norms and institutions. This has prompted the acceptance of voting mechanisms as the only way of getting critically involved within a community, assuming that just by reproducing norms and institutions we will progress and be democratic. This sort of normality however is not much different from Havel’s famous description of communist Czechoslovakia as ‘living in a lie’ (1985), yet a different kind of lie, justified by new Western terms and material and technological advances.

Still, involvement in our disjointed politics looks like the purchase of an iPhone, setting out our singularity without any critical horizon and a minuscule concern of responsibility. This has ultimately contributed to the ongoing process of atomisation in which the empathic link within communities turns to be thinner and thinner. Likewise, social engagement has been shaped by an over-focus on the procedures of participation (i.e. e-votes) and increasingly mediated interactions, (more individual and determined by

²³ The same hobbyhorse has been repeated by the Estonian President Toomas H. Ilves: “I want to live in a boring Nordic country”. <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2012-06-18-ilves-en.html>

consumption, setting out the identity by the number of luxurious items that one possesses). As a consequence, political agreements seem to have turned into an individual decision of buying or rejecting, therefore promoting a fragmented and de-contextualised vision. Also technological innovations are presented as a way to compensate for anomie, ironically accelerating the process of social atrophy. In this sense, Martínez presents post-socialist modernity as a distinct form of togetherness and way of being social. In his contribution, he describes the anxious coexistence of multiple regimes of modernity.

We seem to be thrown into a period of perplexity, des-occupation, spiritual dissatisfaction, turbo-distraction, post-utopia and infantilisation of politics; however there are also signs that announce an awakening multiplicity of engagements and political confrontation. The constellation of collective discourses of future, the ability to answer emerging concerns, and the implementation of agendas that confront inequality and environmental challenges are here presented as a vital issue for democracy.

In order to move back to the future, bring new social possibilities and enable the existing ones, we propose a reflection upon engagement, willing, and embodied imagination. Opportunities are not always defined within structural procedures, but rather conditioned by material and symbolic constrains, as well as fabricated in battlefields for the beyond. In itself, the publication of this volume has been a struggle over possibility; it is just an example, among many others, that supports a change from education of limits to one of possibilities.

Tomorrow burns the fingers. Tomorrow we encounter closed doors, thus doors to be opened. Today we fail, but learn how to fail better.

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A.

DON'T MENTION THE CAGE

PLAYGROUND: THE RANGE OF A METAPHOR

Klemen Slabina and Francisco Martínez

*Life is a carousel,
spinning around by the greyness of time,
yet for us it is all new and beautiful,
for young we are,
holding hands,
when music is playing, lights are sparkling...*
(Gregor Strniša, Carousel)¹

The carousel wheels, the entertaining music goes on and the beautiful, magic white horses loop up and down, up and down... Suddenly, the carousel stops for one of the riders to step down and look around. Will s/he return and sit on the white horse again? Maybe s/he will, but, in a different way? Is s/he retrieving from the playground? Does s/he, in her/his choice to stop, consider others who wish to spin around and around? Is s/he moving to the margin to observe both, insiders and outsiders? If so, what is her/his position regarding the ones still spinning?

Every power relation, every wish, choice, and political standpoint (or the absence of it), is inevitably localised and enacted. The playground as a semi bounded and socially legitimate space for activity allows us to bring abstractions onto the flesh of the world as well as to explore the texture wherein engaged human experiences occur. Grounded playfulness is commonly not related to cultural spaces of political practice. Even more, the playground has not been used as a metaphor for such a setting within which the wish and choice of those participating and the outsiders come to light. As such, the playground is a unique metaphor to describe the process of (non) distribution of power among social agents.

¹ Translated for the purpose of this chapter by Klemen Slabina.

In fact, playfulness is, as the activity of the playground, commonly related to loose responsibility, or even to Kant's notion of indolence (1900), which creates an environment where risks are easier to undertake and thereby joyful playfulness becomes the rate of actions. Hence, a picture of childhood is depicted in a very Hegelian sense (1975), with all the irresponsibility, carelessness, and absence of moral sensibility. And yes, Rousseau (1979) reminds us that with child's growth not only freedom, but also responsibility rises.

Presenting play as a mode of human experience and a way of engaging the world brings the question of what is distinct than play in human activity. For instance, Thomas Malaby distinguishes two features of games (also applicable to playgrounds): Firstly, games are socially condoned arenas in which one or more sources of contingency are carefully calibrated. Secondly, games have the capacity to generate shared meanings and are subject to interpretations (Malaby 2007: 106). However this understanding of play might sound domesticated to us, unlike Georg Simmel notion of adventure, presented as a 'third something' (1997: 225) beyond the logics of leisure and work.

Offering freedom, the playground stands as a reason for the agony through which, in a wish to join, we make risky choices. Here, as playful as one might be, people stand *alfresco*, observing the side of the game they are allowed/want to see, yet never to participate in. If wish to participate leads to agony of those, who stand on the other side of the fence, the choice to participate is related to taking risks, where the possibility to be defeated evokes responsibility.

Engagement also breaks with the absolute determinism, querying hegemonic patterns and opening the possibility of being with others. Likewise, play leads to self-knowledge in a Socratic way, entailing irreducible excess as well as agreements and bounded practices. Here, it is difficult to estimate about the habitus of the wishing ones, yet one could suggest that they are obviously aware of the benefits their participation would bring about. The aura, surrounding the promised benefits ought to be one of most commonly shared origins of agony of the wishing, yearning ones. The ones who

chose to participate can and do fail, carrying the burden of responsibility, which leads them to experience agony, if not resulting in a traumatic experience of participating in a playfulness of decision making which follows their choice.

Risk is not a completely individualised process; it has also a collective and identity value, being entangled within class, gender and family relations. Indeed, a normative gaze is present in the recreational/ (re)actionable facility, a gaze that disciplines the playground from outside but also within, through the present playing agency. Eventually, the playfulness within and outside the playground evokes taking existential risks, which shape the normative gaze. It is a fact that not all players can withstand the Bourdieu's triangle of economic, social, cultural and emotional pressure (Bourdieu 1977); perhaps some choose not to play by the rules of the game, while others may be the victims of circumstances beyond their control. A spin upon a spin upon a spin...

The working class as well as the (intellectual) middle class have been dismissed as methodologically workable categories used to analyse contemporary phenomena, since marginalised mass and former middle class have been set at the same social level or platform. As we have seen during the 2011 riots in Britain, most of the values of the marginal 'rebels' (however non-British they might seem to the currently governing establishment led by David Cameron) evoked some sympathy of the masses in Europe and found their canalisation when shared by the Occupy Movement. Furthermore, both agendas were and are queuing for legitimacy of the hegemonic power by persisting in the playground, even if the exertion of the right to enjoy the city has been demonstrated in a different way.

Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens claimed in the nineties that the process of modernisation has spawned a unique collection of humanly produced risks. In their view, late-modern societies have moved away from ontological security towards personal risk. Paradoxically, they present the risk itself as distinct from danger and hazard, arguing that 'our' risk society is a positive stage of modernity.

According to Giddens, active risk-taking is a core element of a dynamic economy and an innovative society, so the risk has only to be disciplined (1999).

However, risk is not as neutral, clean and transparent as it is desirable; neither can it be fairly well calculated—particularly from outside. Responsibility and agony are rather exhausting characters of wish and choice. Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom according to Søren Kierkegaard. The Danish philosopher uses the example of a man standing on the edge of a tall building. When the man looks over the edge, he experiences a focused fear of falling, but at the same time, the man feels a terrifying impulse to throw himself intentionally off the edge.

“Pleasure disappoints, possibility never. And what wine is so sparkling, what so fragrant, what so intoxicating, as possibility!”
(1992: 56)

Here, risk, dread and anxiety are related to the experience of consciousness. In this sense, existence in an uncertain world is a constituent part of human experience. Doubt brings up anxiety because of our freedom to choose to either throw oneself off or to stay put. Thus, consciousness is inherently bound with existential concerns as well as with the notion of discovery. According to Kierkegaard’s idea about anxiety, this sensation is the consciousness of lived possibility that involves reconciling the existential experience of death as a termination of life, with the awareness of death as a stage of life.

Such awareness provides limitations to actions that produce anxiety and hence provide an opportunity to truly experience life as transcendental. The mere fact that one has the possibility and freedom to do something triggers immense feelings of dread. Following Kierkegaard, when deciding on qualities of the philosophical notion of the decision, anxiety makes us conscious of our choices and personal responsibilities. For the Danish philosopher, the only way out of despair (just another name for the Weberian cage) was to will deeply and to take possession over one’s existence.

From falling in love to failing in life: freedom reacts as intimately related to desire. In *Either/or*, Kierkegaard sets a primordial antagonism between the experimental 'aesthetic' life and the subjective 'ethical' one: the former is concerned with the outside world, the latter with the inner. By a process of dialectics, he brings about the synthesis in the 'religious'. With this superior character he refers to faith and irrationality beyond all possible justifications, besides a teleological suspension of the ethical and beyond certainty. Giving the example of Abraham, he concludes that achievement depends on the necessity of sacrifice. This sacrifice is usually irrational and may conflict with previously made ethical choices.

The choice, before it is made, is no more than a possibility of its own actualization, a possible becoming, more or less tangible and comprehensible. As pointed out by Hilary Pilkington, individuals are forced to choose without the support of close social ties, often failing in making risk decisions in their social and cultural context (2007). The authentic map of the playground is a labyrinth and the player is a pilgrim. The participation here is to be understood as engagement; in other words, an experiment that expedites life to one of its potentialities. To adventure suspends time in space, getting ready for the future—even if it is to be a funeral.

The argument then is that although the city is not a neutral space of toys, it permits the impulse of freedom. The city is therefore understood as an example of contradictory space for subjectivity, always articulated and articulating, and nonetheless providing distance and heterogeneity enough to liberate from certain social constrictions. In a sense, the city allows agency to break with the disciplinary identity. Here the playground depicts a terrain of cultural (pro) creation, confirming that frontiers and rules are nothing but not malleable frameworks. Simultaneously, it stands in front of us as a system of fear, anxiety, experienced by facing the in-between of falling or staying put, and as a mode of regulating the Occupation/less-ness.

But are we engaged in our personal lives? For Kierkegaard authorship and personal life are not identical. In his view, anxiety

is not related to authorship (a task) but to personal life, as the dizziness of freedom that takes hold of the individual. There is also a *topos* of anxiety, a phenomenological awareness that calls for attention and therefore cannot avoid facing the possibility of freedom. Anxiety, as practically experienced interdependence of freedom and responsibility, compels us to take notice of the venture, as a journey of inwardness and discovery.

Such a journey is trapped in the localization of its actualization. How is it with dizziness of freedom, if the latter persists in the topography so beautifully described by Luckmann and Berger (1969)? In a very Foucaultian manner of analysis, they suggest the comparison between the architecture of a church and the one of a shopping mall. The penetration of natural light (or the absence of it), the forced focus of the public to the something, which is to be found inside rather than outside, the height of the compared buildings, where the ceiling escapes the view, all indicate the sacral dimensions of a church where they are found as expected. However, when it comes to a shopping mall, they are there as a surprise, yet following the same purpose: to tight the agency to temporal and spatial qualities, within which s/he is to make a (existential) decision on her/his participation in the grounded play.

When meditating on the character of grounded play Camus' Sisyphus invites to see repetition as strictly related to the future and eternity. There are expectations, and there is existence, but the habitus overshadows or is the reason for any possible nostalgia or desire. Thus falling is reduced to a mechanical repetition, whilst expectations and existence are knitted with the wool of absurd. However, the fullness of time is made of moments—of hesitation. Kierkegaard irremediably assumed that there is also doubt in the Cartesian subject, and that the building of consciousness requires the red-coloured bricks of doubt (choice and paradox).

For Camus, it goes so far as to be human beings only when we rebel, yet as long as rebellion does not turn us against the comprehension of humanity that we try to reach. If the playground is a

gathering spot for rebels (and all who have an issue with legitimacy being recognized to their own doings by the ruling establishment are not necessary the rebels that the playground shall tolerate), than how to rebel in the age of shrinking resources, increasing privatisation of public space, political consensus and accelerating rhythms of life?

In that way, our understanding of the playground is focused on the cultural space where exploitation of wishes, undertaking the burden of social and individual responsibility, and taking risks are all manners of playing, and hence signifiers of political practices. The wish to actively participate in decision-making is localized and hence culturally specific, provoked and expressed within the specificity of its own economic, social, and cultural context, always dependent on a particular here and now. Choice, as a practice of possible engagement in the interplay of private and public, is essentially an individual deed, which can (intersubjectively empowered by the habitual dispositions) articulate out of a need for changes in the contemporary world. Hence the metaphor of the playground stands for all temporal and spatial dimensions of cultural settings, within which freedom is used to take the needed risks and break with the established order to participate in the flow of playful (political) debate and action. Even when the debate and action (re)gain their prior structural framework, the playground remains as a risky possibility of a structural break.

The wider control over danger and risk paradoxically produces a stronger obsession with fears and the inability to deal with them (Pinker 2002). Individuals intimately shoulder the risks of human existence, as they are, at the same time, socialised. Here a need to address the scale of individual action and its (new) intersubjective articulation outside of the already established democratic institutional frame is evoked. Yet, locality comes hand-in-hand with culturally specific. Therewith, we are to witness a dynamic interpenetration of old and new and terrace how it carves the rocks of our communally shared reality.

Obviously, it is not self-evident how social changes occur. The effort of many (among others: Giddens 1990, Beck 1992, Virilio 1995, Appadurai 1996, Boym 2001, Pinker 2002) resulted in society obtaining several risk(y)-metaphors for describing its characteristics ('risk society', 'late modernity', 'nostalgia', 'new social risks'...). Everyday interactions and biographical dimensions of risk have been nonetheless considered by Horlick-Jones (2005), Tulloch and Lupton (2003), and recently developed by Patrick Laviolette in *Extreme Landscapes of Leisure. Not a Hap-Hazardous Sport*. Here, Laviolette acknowledges the increasing need for individuals to integrate uncertainty into their lives. Agreeing with Jens Zinn, biographical experiences of risk demonstrate a general need to transform uncertainty and contingency into "patterns of expectations which reduce complexity into something more manageable" (2010: 3). Playfulness obtains its framework in the interplay of risk and expectation. Personal political (dis)engagement then depends on the manageability of personal risk through expectation. However personal, taking or abandoning risks occurs within the shared landscape, in (bodily) interaction.

For Simmel, space, and the spatial positioning of social actors, is a form in which "real energies are manifested", it is where interactions are realised and happen, and also a form that limits and sets some preconditions for them, thus space has sociological significance as influences 'sociation' (1997: 137–138). Sociation indicates any type of interaction between individuals through encounters that are also influenced by individuals' positioning in space. In order to gain knowledge about sociation, one must separate the 'forms' and 'contents' of social life. What he means by 'contents' are the subjective, psychological intentions, interests, beliefs and motives; 'forms' are instead material, objective phenomena (shapes, configurations and densities) created by the social and material positioning of the individuals involved in the interaction (Simmel 1950).

Aside of the influence of landscape on our interaction, the playground is, as an interpersonal occurrence, also a linguistic

phenomenon. For Walter Benjamin, language has been informed by the mimetic faculty (1978) and Gadamer's hermeneutics puts the emphasis on human finitude. In his understanding, history and language come into play as two origins of our knowledge (1975). Gadamer considers that we never fully comprehend these conditions and, nonetheless, shape and make our apprehension of the world. On the one hand, language is always in front of us, on the other, effective history emerges in the analogies and metaphors we imply. Lakoff and Johnson put forward that our conceptual system is partially grounded and structured by metaphors. They argue that metaphors have a central role in bridging everyday practices and abstract concepts by correlations that link our subjective experiences and judgements to our sensorimotor experience (1999: 128).

The question of authenticity within a metaphor is thus phenomenological rather than purely semiotic. To play with a metaphor is an exemplary task of the individual in which will and serendipity are required. Hence, the figurative quality of any metaphor comes after the awareness and anxiety that yield self-consciousness, what, however, does not imply that the metaphoric operation is subjected to sensory limitations. If any, metaphors find actuality as their own limitation. Matter and senses are their current possibility. Thus metaphors emerge and die in this terrain whereby the flesh of the body meets the flesh of the world.

Despite its minimalistic occurrence, the playground appears to be a transcendental terrain within ordinary life while, at the same time, caught in network of meaning that the same transcendence empowers. The attractiveness of a concept rarely correlates with its precision (Kocka 2004). Using a word in a context radically different from its normal sense helps to understand the rules of social occurrences and is simultaneously de-familiarising them. Also terminology needs to acquire some playfulness, if for no other reason than for the sake of precision in depicting one's experiences!

José Ortega y Gasset defined metaphors as 'the atomic bomb of the mind' (1946). He also considered games as the 'champion of

the superfluous' (1916), yet as the source of vitality and creativity, in contrast to utilitarian and practical logics. Playfully, metaphors are understood to be innocent; a kind of bridge between two realities; a rhetoric operation that translates abstract concepts into sensory experience. In their attempt to grasp reality out there, metaphors impose and condition meaning unequivocally. They are irreproachably incomplete and do not end into a concrete here and now. They leave traces and produce ruins. Metaphors are not biodegradable wooden tools.

The playground works as a catachresis or misapplication of a word: the playground as a simultaneity of processes, the playground as a paradox of 'detachment' in an embodied activity, the playground as encapsulating interplay, the playground as play with, play against, play according to the Other and me, play grounded in the Other and me.

Overall, the playground is a broad social allegory on adventure and/in life, where the games of power and control are played out in miniature. Grounded play is the break with the so far established structural ground, and it as such, expires with acts of re-establishment of the structure. The paradox lies in the fact that to fulfil the seriousness of play, the player, on a risky journey, has to approach to the players without seriousness. In this sense, play/game imposes itself as "the very figure for a kind of transformation of thought. It announces something (the absence of rules or a new set of rules) while also holding it back, marking a kind of limit" (Wallenstein 2002).

It was Johan Huizinga who first suggested that play is the primary condition of the generation of culture and that it has permeated all cultures from the beginning. Huizinga puts forward the idea that there are three play-forms in the lawsuit: the game of chance; the contest; the verbal battle; and that these forms can be deduced by comparing practice today with "legal proceedings in archaic society" (1949: 84). In this line, Huizinga concludes: "Human civilization has added no essential feature to the general idea of play. Animals play just like men" (1949: I).

As we all know, one of the most significant (human and cultural) aspects of play is that it is fun. Something fun always implies a gust of freedom, regardless of the constellation of play grounded within the local settings. Even if it is socially mediated and experientially guided, play is not only about assimilation or submission but remains related to experimental creation of norms and emergent patterns.

The very existence of play ultimately confirms the supra-logical practice of the human being. The paradox, however, is that play is only possible if a break with the absolute determinism of rules and rulers takes place. Standing over the limits of the playground might be described as exercising the own capacity of freedom. Such a borderline practice and detachment from the ordinary cannot occur everywhere or always, but in a suspended time which is located and inhabited by adventurous people. To enter the playground brings to us the possibility but the way we participate is vital; it is the adventurous practice of the game what re-establishes the rules. Therefore, the playground has to be authored as a flourishing space with mutually exclusive endings, not as a legacy.

In a way, the ubiquity of games and playgrounds converts late modern togetherness in a 'society of play', whereby risk, engagement and meanings are carefully calibrated and packaged. According to Henri Lefebvre, colonisation takes place whenever abstracted forces and representations have asserted order and control on the imagined and the perceived space. Contemporary Western societies seem to turn into 'colonised' democracies: a system whereby political parties, economic vectors and institutional agencies dominate public debates, converting the citizens in democratic subalterns, institutions in employment agencies, and the State in a source of 'raw' income that has to be ruled in a state of exception (like in the Algerian case).

Hence our focus on the playground is a chance to examine the articulation of one's plans, as a way of taking risks or as an attempt to check if one is simply lucky this time. Such a usage of grounded

play introduces a terrain of freedom within the ordinary, which eventually influences or at least challenges the established political discourse of “political professionals”.

In *The Man Without Qualities*, Robert Musil distinguishes between “the sense of reality” (*Wirklichkeitssinn*) and “the sense of possibility” (*Möglichkeitssinn*), introducing an elastic sense of the possible and the faculty to think what it could be as well.

“To pass freely through open doors, it is necessary to respect the fact that they have solid frames. This principle, by which the old professor had always lived, is simply a requisite of the sense of reality. But if there is a sense of reality, and no one will doubt that it has its justification for existing, then there must also be something we call a sense of possibility” (Musil 1995: 10–11).

Failure is also one of the possibilities of human existence. But even in failure, we become aware of our freedom. It is doubt what bounds up with the experience of transcendence. The core challenge to our existence is thus the risk of failure as a constant question of the available possibilities. As spin upon a spin upon a spin... Rather than as an option, risk and failure are therefore understood as an opportunity to live.

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ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE... OR A CAGE?¹

Siobhan Kattago

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.*

As You Like It, Shakespeare

For all the rhetoric about freedom and the expansion of democracy in the twenty-first century, one wonders whether the ideals are a bit tarnished. Judging from the amount of time many people prefer to sit alone watching television or surfing the Internet, one cannot help asking whether the political ideal of freedom has been reduced to freedom to live in a virtual world and the economic freedom to consume. Shopping malls dominate most suburban landscapes in American and Europe. Twenty years after the fall of communism, Eastern Europe is catching up with its turbo capitalism, crass oligarchs and glittering shopping centres. Beyond the shiny new malls and hyper stores, lie the old Soviet suburbs and social institutions in various degrees of disarray. With teachers and doctors working for a fraction of a Western salary, one cannot but wonder how long such inequalities are sustainable. The transition to democracy and a liberal economy has been a remarkable success and yet, economic divisions between rich and poor, coupled with the internal retreat to consumerism indicate a growing conflict between the individual and the citizen. With shrinking and aging populations, East European

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citizens in particular face the hard realities of how to combine some sort of welfare state with economic competitiveness. Future choices lie between the rugged capitalism of non-interventionist liberalism and a softer social democratic version with its corresponding high taxes and large state. Even without mentioning the rise of populism throughout the European continent, the internal retreat of civil society does not bode well. At the same time, the Arab Spring and Russian demonstrations against Vladimir Putin are testament to the enduring desire people have for political as well as economic freedom. We seem to be witnessing dramatic social change in the name of freedom *and* passive retreat away from politics. The question of freedom, though, is as important now as it has been in previous time periods. Indeed, it is one of the most important re-occurring themes throughout the history of philosophy.

In Plato's allegory of the cave, most people are portrayed as sitting comfortably in the darkness, watching the shadows on the wall. In the eighteenth century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau boldly proclaimed that "man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains." Later, Max Weber diagnosed modern man's rational progression to an iron cage of his own making. All three thinkers use the metaphors of confinement: caves, chains and cages. If Plato argues that the philosopher-king can find a way out of the cave by himself, Rousseau's *Emile* requires the proper tutor for his enlightenment. Weber though does not see a way out of the cage, aside from leadership under a charismatic leader. Most of us seem doomed to passably comfortable confinement. It was Hegel, who earlier championed the idea of universal history culminating in freedom by presenting the grandest of grand narratives. If we follow his nineteenth-century argument, contemporary Europe has reached the apex of historical achievement because the majority of people are freer economically and politically than ever before. There has never been a time when so many in Europe and elsewhere were as free as they are now. However, today's mass society that is oriented increasingly towards individual consumerism and virtual reality seems to suggest the very opposite. Has

Weber's vision of the iron cage expanded to become an impersonal journey on the Internet and shopping malls, softened by Facebook chats, television and passive withdrawal from the world? Are the criticisms of Plato, Rousseau and Weber simply too pessimistic or do their stories of blindness and confinement provide an apt description of contemporary society?

Plato's dream of the cave

In many ways, Plato's allegory of the cave is one of the most enduring metaphors of European philosophy. From the dualism of light and darkness to the image of knowledge and ignorance, we seem to be forever locked into a world of preferred blindness. The shadows on the wall are more comfortable and familiar.

Imagine human beings living in an underground, cavelike dwelling, with an entrance a long way up, which is both open to the light and as wide as the cave itself. They've been there since childhood, fixed in the same place, with their necks and legs fettered, able to see only in front of them, because their bonds prevent them from turning their heads around. (Plato 1992: 186–187)

Only the curious prisoner will take off his or her chains and leave the darkness of the cave for the warm light of the real world. Plato's metaphor of confinement in the *Republic* is an alluring one that offers the combination of curiosity, reason and enlightenment. In response to Glaucon's comment, "It's a strange image you're describing and strange prisoners," Socrates replies, "They're like us." (*Ibid.*: 187) The prisoners in the cave prefer the shadows on the walls and do not question their condition of confinement. And yet it was Socrates who tirelessly asked questions and was unable to simply accept custom or tradition. He embodied the freedom to think for oneself and the freedom to dissent against the ruling elite. As Socrates famously proclaimed in the *Apology*, "an unexamined life is not worth living." (Plato 2003: 45) Only by constant and free self-examination of

our prejudices and opinions, can one truly and fully live. Otherwise, one remains a mere shadow. “And if I tell you that no greater good can happen to a man than to discuss human excellence every day and the other matters about which you have heard me arguing and examining myself and others, and that an unexamined life is not worth living, then you will believe me still less.” (*Ibid.*: 45)

The cave is a comfortable space of conformism, tradition and hearsay. The mind, though cannot free itself without the physical journey outside. It is necessary to physically free oneself, stretch one’s legs, stand up and leave the cave towards an unknown light. Outside, one needs to experience the blinding light of the sun and the accompanying dis-orientation of such brightness. Moreover, when going back to the cave, one will once again experience a temporary blindness in adjusting to the darkness of the cave. It is not only the mind but also, the eyes of the thinker, that are disoriented and in need of physical adjustment. From the rich tapestry of interpretations surrounding Plato’s allegory of the cave, there is one motif that repeats itself throughout the story of philosophy and that is the struggle for the freedom of the self from ignorance. Even before Kant popularized the motto of the Enlightenment as *sapere aude*, the ancient Greek Delphic Oracle admonished the necessity to “know thyself.” Knowledge of the self requires a free public space in which citizens can think and act.

At his trial, when Socrates was asked whether he would be willing to give up his freedom of thought and freedom to discuss ideas with other people, he preferred death. Life could only be truly life if he was able to think freely. Before the modern language of rights and freedom of expression, Socrates understood his freedom to think and discuss publicly as part of his very self.

As long as I have breath and strength I will not give up philosophy and exhorting you and declaring the truth to every one of you whom I meet, saying, as I am accustomed, ‘My good friend, you are a citizen of Athens, a city which is very great and very

famous for its wisdom and power—are you not ashamed of caring so much for the making of money and for fame and prestige, when you neither think nor care about wisdom and truth and the improvement of your soul?’ (*Ibid.*: 40)

So began and ended one of the greatest stories of European philosophy. As part of Western tradition, Socrates’ defence of the freedom of the mind against the stiff conformism of the masses embodies philosophical reflection as a way to go beyond customary opinions and prejudice. Socrates, like the philosopher in Plato’s allegory of the cave seeks contemplation of the eternal forms and things in themselves. Freedom is found in thinking and speaking with others in the public space of the Athenian polis. The image of the cave and Plato’s dream of the soul freed from the constraints of an ever-aging body are given a new twist on the theme of captivity with the colourful imagination of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Rousseau’s reverie on chains

As one of the great readers of Plato, Rousseau continues the metaphor of confinement by reflecting more deeply on the paradoxical nature of our social chains. From his *Discourses* to *Emile* and the *Social Contract*, Rousseau presents the human desire for individual freedom by contrasting modern society with the small romantic community of Geneva. He shows the conflict between the freedom of the individual and the corrupting influence of society. If the *First Discourse* (*Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*) diagnoses how society takes away our natural freedom, the *Social Contract* provides the type of community that can encourage the development of citizens who are morally free. Likewise, his book, *Emile* presents the tutor as a kind of legislator who cultivates and educates young Emile. Living together in a small village, isolated from the corrupting influence of society, the tutor teaches Emile how to become a mature citizen and adult, who is able to cope and live in society. Ultimately for Rousseau, the trade-off or price of civilization is loss of freedom

and individuality. “Nature commands every animal, and the beast obeys. Man feels the same impetus, but he realizes that he is free to acquiesce or resist; and it is above all in the consciousness of this freedom that the spirituality of his soul is shown.” (Rousseau 1964: 114) Unlike Hegel’s blithe narrative of progress, Rousseau envisions the darker side of modernity. Progress is accompanied by the loss of freedom. The *First Discourse* answers the question of the Dijon Academy: “Has the restoration of the sciences and arts tended to purify or corrupt morals?” (*Ibid.*: 34) In many ways, the question is paradoxical because the very academic institution that posed the question will reward Rousseau for his sharp critique of the arts and sciences. For Rousseau, the path is clear: “The more advances in sciences the greater the corruption of morality.” (*Ibid.*: 39) Scientific progress means that people become increasingly selfish. Against the smug and confident optimism of the Enlightenment, Rousseau presents the corruption of morality and enslavement to false needs and desires. “But here the effect is certain, the depravity real, and our souls have been corrupted in proportion to the advancement of our sciences and arts towards perfection.” (*Ibid.*: 39)

It is in the *Social Contract* that Rousseau develops his idea that men can be both ruled and free if they rule themselves. “Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains. Those who think themselves the masters of others are indeed greater slaves than they.” (Rousseau 1968: 49) Man is naturally good but becomes corrupted by society. The social contract forms a kind of community where vanity and inequality could be minimized. “To renounce freedom is to renounce one’s humanity, one’s rights as a man and equally one’s duties.” (*Ibid.*: 55) With Rousseau, there is a transformation of the quality of freedom. If one was completely free in the state of nature, it is only in society that we can become morally free. “The passing from the state of nature to the civil society produces a remarkable change in man; it puts justice as a rule of conduct in the place of instinct, and gives his actions the moral quality they previously lacked.” (*Ibid.*: 65) But are we really getting rid of our chains or just trading

in the old ones for something new? Does the qualitative change from natural to moral freedom entail an expansion of individual freedom or simply an update of a new software program? “What man loses by the social contract is his natural liberty and the absolute right to anything that tempts him and that he can take; what he gains by the social contract is civil liberty and the legal right of property in what he possesses.” (*Ibid.*) It is precisely this “civil liberty” that fascinates Rousseau. By being forced to be free, we internalize moral codes and are responsible, mature individuals. “We might also add that man acquires with civil society, moral freedom, which alone makes man the master of himself; for to be governed by appetite alone is slavery, while obedience to a law one prescribes to oneself is freedom”. (*Ibid.*)

Rousseau presents the paradoxical relationship between the individual and society. As he writes in *Emile*: “Human institutions are one mass of folly and contradiction.” (Rousseau 2007: 54) Yet, one cannot live isolated from society; one has to learn how to become a citizen, who participates in their community. Wavering between adoration for the savage, who can live freely apart from society and for the romantic citizen of Geneva, Rousseau, like Plato before him, recognizes that we can only develop a moral sensibility in the company of others. Social institutions are Janus-faced; they both confine and enable us to become ourselves.

Weber's nightmare of the iron cage

If Rousseau argued that society takes away individual freedom, Max Weber proposes a more sinister picture. It is the faculty of reason itself that causes lack of freedom. Weber's diagnosis of modernity both deepens and darkens Plato's metaphor of confinement. At least Plato offered the chance to escape the dark cave into the light. With Weber, possibilities for even the desire to escape from the “iron cage” seem increasingly remote. (Weber 1958: 181) In his *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber argues that rationalization is the destiny of Western life. A rational way of life, originally motivated

by Protestant religion has fostered the environment in which capitalism has become the dominant force of everyday life. “And the same is true of the most fateful force in our modern life, capitalism. The impulse to acquisition, pursuit of gain, of money, of the greatest possible amount of money, has in itself nothing to do with capitalism.” (*Ibid.*: 17) The individual sense of a calling (*Beruf*) and hard work have their own internal logic of rationalization. Combined with the rational bureaucratization and administration of every aspect of life, the individual feels increasingly lost. This is not to say that the fault for modern loneliness lies solely with the Protestant Church, rather that the original values of the Protestant Reformation created the ethos and way of life in which capitalism as an economic system could flourish.

As far as the influence of the Puritan outlook extended, under all circumstances—and this is, of course, much more important than there mere encouragement of capital accumulation—it favoured the development of a rational bourgeois economic life; it was the most important, and above all the only consistent influence in the development of that life. It stood as the cradle of the modern economic man. (*Ibid.*: 174)

The very rationalization of social life, which was based on the economic system of Western capitalism, also undermines individual creativity and action. The Protestant ethic and Puritan outlook or worldview became “the cradle of the modern economic man.” The elective affinity between the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism is distinctively modern and has its origins in Europe, rather than elsewhere. Weber, of course was fascinated by the fact that a way of life that began in Europe had consequences for the entire world. Hence, the question that he posed in his Introduction:

A product of modern European civilization, studying any problem of universal history, is bound to ask himself to what combination of circumstances the fact should be attributed that in Western civilization, and in Western civilization only, cultural phenomena

have appeared which (as we like to think) lie in a line of development having universal significance and value. (*Ibid.*: 13)

The spirit of capitalism brings about the disenchantment or loss of magic in the world. Moreover, Weber sees that people simply want to make money for the sake of making money—not for the sake of pleasure or status. Money becomes the means to the end of making more money. Rationalization is both the strength and curse of modern man. The logic of rationalization created the iron cage of capitalism that we have built and cannot escape from. At the end of his *Protestant Ethic*, Weber raises the rhetorical question of who will live in this cage: “No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance.” (*Ibid.*: 183) The images of “mechanized petrification” invoke the industrial age of machinery from the early nineteenth century, but are still appropriate today in the twenty-first century. Likewise, rational bureaucrats and administrative office workers can have a maddening sense of “convulsive self-importance.” It is perhaps the combination of these two traits that Weber finds so frightening. In his famous last pages, he quotes Goethe while reflecting on the peculiarity of the modern world. “For of the last stage of this cultural development, it might well be said: ‘Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved.’” (*Ibid.*: 182)

Given the fact that we are even more specialized than when Weber was writing in the early twentieth century, does his diagnosis of modernity have any relevance today? As contemporary readers of Weber, we also have to ask whether and where one might find freedom within the rational picture of modernity that he paints. He himself asks this very question in a conference speech. “The central question, therefore, is not how to support and accelerate this trend

even further, but rather what we have to oppose to this machinery in order to preserve a *remnant of humanity* from this *fragmentation of the soul*, from this absolute domination of bureaucratic ideals of life.” (Weber quoted in Löwith 1982: 55) It is precisely Weber’s plea that one needs to “preserve a remnant of humanity” that rings very true today. Although mass society furthers rationalization and disenchantment, there is still the possibility for spontaneous action and creativity. But, where and how can we cultivate creativity, spontaneity and freedom? Unlike Marx, who saw a bright way out of the capitalist cage, Weber did not. We cannot smash the cage and form a new way of life based on the communal fraternity of a classless society. Nor can we destroy capitalism as a system or way of life. We are stuck in the capitalist cage. Weber presents a Kafkaesque portrait of the sweeping culmination of reason into a cage of its’ making.

From Weber’s cage, it’s only a small step to Foucault’s Panopticon and Marcuse’s one-dimensional man. As Marcuse wrote in 1964: “A comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom prevails in advanced industrial civilization, a token of technical progress.” (Marcuse 1964: 1) If one does not agree that modern rationalization provides a one-way ticket to a self-made iron cage, what are the alternatives? The fall of communism has revealed what Weber predicted. Real existing communism in the Soviet Union produced the largest bureaucratic state imaginable and the violent deformation of individual freedom. Fascism, with its dangerous allure of national community and glorification of war lurks behind populist ideology, but it is also discredited. Fundamentalism, while on the rise in many places throughout the world undermines the central message of solidarity that is common to religion. So, are there alternatives to the capitalist cage or have we reached the Hegelian culmination of world history and can now close the book and go quietly to sleep?

If the modern capitalist world with its grand narrative of rationalization has only produced a cage that we can never leave, the entire project goes against the grain of historical and scientific progress leading to greater freedom. It was Hegel, who most dramatically

portrayed both philosophy and the self as historical and social. “The History of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom.” (Hegel 1900: 19) The consciousness of freedom first emerged with the Greeks and developed to its culmination with the German or European world. “The consciousness of Freedom first arose among the Greeks, and therefore they were free; but they, and the Romans likewise knew only that *some* were free—not man as such.” (*Ibid.*: 18) The Greek life of a free citizen was based on the economic foundation of slavery. If the Greek ideal of freedom was embodied in the figure of Socrates, it was not until Martin Luther that freedom began to extend to all citizens through the ideas of the Protestant Reformation. Thus, it was the ideas of Socrates and Luther that lead to historical change and the expansion of freedom to more and more people. “The German nations, under the influence of Christianity, were the first to attain a consciousness, that man, as man, is free: that it is the *freedom* of Spirit which constitutes its essence.” (*Ibid.*: 18) The boldness and elegance of Hegel’s claim cannot be underestimated. Are not most of national history books, particularly schoolbooks written from the perspective of the unfolding and enduring desire for freedom? Both individuals and nations wish to be free. Francis Fukuyama’s *End of History* captured the confident mood of the early 1990s before 9/11. The triumph of Western liberalism and capitalism after the initial fall of communism was portrayed as Hegel updated for a twentieth century audience. Whether one agrees with Hegel’s grand view of the theatre of world history—he is unparalleled in his beautiful story of the long march to freedom. The question though remains whether History with a capital H is indeed over? In all fairness, Hegel imagined that the individual subject would overcome his alienation in the community of the state. But what about people living in societies fragmented by consumer capitalism? Can we even imagine alternatives to the capitalist cage that Weber described? Such alternatives do not mean the extremes of communism or fascism, but of a revitalized

civil society and citizenship, rather than internal retreat and Stoic indifference.

Looking for an exit sign ...

All of the images of confinement: caves, chains and cages share the spatial metaphor of an inside and outside. The complexity of the world is reduced to the smallest possible space so that the range of choices is minimized for dramatic purposes. This theatrical presentation of the problem of freedom is akin to Shakespeare's "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." Of course, one hopes that life is more than the appearance of a drama or comedy. Yet, once again the metaphor of a bounded space is employed to express the limited range of possible human choices.

Is it possible to leave the iron cage of capitalism without falling prey to the totalizing utopias of communism or fascism? Hegel's grand narrative of history and Weber's leitmotif of rationalization present individuals within the tide of greater historical processes. Large macro structures dominate and the individual seems to simply drop out. Capitalism, as an economic system operates under the rational logic of accumulation, calculation and efficiency. And yet, as Weber noted in his "Politics as a Vocation" there are two patterns of conduct that compete with one another: one guided by the ethic of responsibility and the other by the ethic of ultimate ends. If modern capitalism is oriented towards the latter and secularization involves the disenchantment of the world, how can one cultivate an ethic of responsibility for others and a sense of solidarity in a secularized world?

This is not to say that an ethic of ultimate ends is identical with irresponsibility, or that an ethic of responsibility is identical with unprincipled opportunism. Naturally nobody says that. However, there is an abysmal contrast between conduct that follows the maxim of an ethic of ultimate ends—that is, in religious terms, 'The Christian does rightly and leaves the results with the Lord'—

and conduct that follows the maxim of an ethic of responsibility, in which case one has to give an account of the foreseeable results of one's action. (Weber 1946: 120)

Alternatives to Weber's lacuna of instrumental reason can be found within the faculty of reason itself. Jürgen Habermas' plea for a more nuanced understanding of reason that privileges the rational capacity for dialogue and communication over Weber's reduction of reason to strategic ends points towards a possible exit from the cage. From his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) to *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981) and most recent writings on the European Union (2011), Habermas consistently argues that reason is both instrumental and communicative. The colonization of the lifeworld by the systemic structures of the economy, media and bureaucracy can be resisted by reasonable dialogue. The Internet and digital technology mark yet another structural transformation of the public sphere—from computer games, Facebook, e-mail, live chats—virtual life has added another dimension to the publicity of eighteenth-century salons and cafes. Like an usher in a darkened theatre, Habermas illuminates a way out of modern confinement. We do not have to completely accept Weber's cultural pessimism because language itself is oriented towards both instrumental ends and communication. By fostering dialogue and discussion, the promise of democracy is kept alive. Influenced by Kant's insight that enlightenment means the public use of reason, Habermas is able to return to the positive legacy of the Enlightenment that Weber so harshly dismissed. "The *public use* of man's reason must always be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among men; the private use of reason may quite often be very narrowly restricted, however, without undue hindrance to the progress of enlightenment." (Kant 2009: 1–2)

In effect, Habermas' communicative action redirects rather than abandons the project of the Enlightenment. Refusing to reduce the complexity of human reason to instrumental ends, Habermas is able to offer a way out of the impasse of Weber and the Frankfurt School. Hope for liberation from the darker side of modernity is found in

one of the oldest of ideas, that of language or *logos*. Similar to Hannah Arendt, Habermas revitalizes the magnetic power that discussion between people has for social and political change. Democracy is based on debate among equals in the public sphere. Weber's pessimism, on the other hand, resulted in a singular cage without the chance for emancipation. "A monolithic picture of a totally administered society emerged; corresponding to it was a repressive mode of socialization that shut out inner nature and an omnipresent social control exercised through the channels of mass communication." (Habermas 1989, 82) If Frankfurt School thinkers, such as Adorno and Horkheimer were resigned to confinement in an iron cage, Habermas represents a paradigmatic shift away from the philosophy of consciousness to communicative action and intersubjectivity.

I want to maintain that the program of early critical theory founded not on this or that contingent circumstance, but from the exhaustion of the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness. I shall argue that a change of paradigm to the theory of communication makes it possible to return to the understanding that was interrupted with the critique of instrumental reason; and this will permit us to take up once again the since-neglected tasks of a critical theory of society. (Habermas 1981: 386)

Language as such is not only oriented towards coercion, but to communication and consensus. Language is the very medium through which we think and act. Habermas' theory of communicative action argues that language provides the normative foundation for critical theory. Modern capitalist society both enhances and deforms free speech. "The communicative potential of reason has been simultaneously developed and distorted in the course of capitalist modernization." (Habermas 1990: 315) Seen from this perspective, Weber's cage has the possibility to transform into a public sphere or café of interested conversationalists. The discontents of modernity are not solely rooted within the structure of human reason, but rather in the failure to develop and institutionalize different dimensions of

reason in a balanced way. As Habermas himself noted in an interview reflecting on what theories can and cannot accomplish: "Since then I cast about, sometimes here, sometimes there, for traces of a reason that unites without effacing separation, that binds without unnamable difference, that points out the common and shared among strangers, without depriving the other of otherness." (Habermas 1994: 119–120) Unlike Weber, Habermas does not give up the promise of emancipation and a better future. If anything, he provides a reconstruction of reason and continues the Kantian unfinished project of the Enlightenment.

Emancipation means something like the liberation from a confinement (sic) into which we imagine we have fallen, but for which we ourselves bear the responsibility, since it results from the limitations of our understanding. Emancipation is a very special kind of self-experience, because in its processes of self-understanding link up with an increase in autonomy. (*Ibid.*: 103)

Habermas emphasizes the rational capacity that individuals have for debate with one another. By arguing for the manifold structure of reason, he is able to criticize mass society without resigning himself to a lack of possible alternatives. Yet, even if we live in a world of instant and virtual communication—one wonders whether Habermas is simply too optimistic about the emancipatory potential of speech.

The captive mind

At this point, we might ask to what degree virtual communication makes us even more captive to the ideology of consumer capitalism. In his last writings, the historian, Tony Judt suggested that our contemporary predicament mirrors the metaphor of the captive mind that the Polish poet, Czeslaw Milosz used to describe the situation of East European intellectuals during communism. *The Captive Mind*, originally published in 1951, describes how and why

many intellectuals were attracted to the ideology of communism. Judt suggests that two of Milosz's images are appropriate not only for people living under communism, but also for those of us living in a capitalist world. These are the images of the Murti-Bing pill and Ketman.

As Milosz wrote: "Any civilization, if one looks at it with an assumption of naïve simplicity (as Swift looked at the England of his day), will present a number of bizarre features which men accept as perfectly natural because they are familiar." (Milosz 1990: xiii) The human mind can get used to many things and provide reasons for their "naturalness." *The Captive Mind* presents fables of how people and intellectuals in particular adapted to the violent ideology of communism. The idea of the Murti-Bing pill comes from a Polish novel, *Insatiability*, in which people are unhappy and lead lives of decadence in the shadow of the advancing Sino-Mongolian Army. Milosz uses the analogy of the Murti-Bing pill as one that soothes and calms individual anxiety. Named after a supposed Mongolian philosopher, Murti-Bing, the pills promised a philosophy of life. They took away worries and made the person serene and happy. "A man who swallowed Murti-Bing pills became impervious to any metaphysical concerns...He no longer considered the approach of the Sino-Mongolian army as a tragedy for his own civilization. He lived in the midst of his compatriots like a healthy individual surrounded by madmen." (*Ibid.*: 4–5) Murti-Bing pills enabled one to accept and rationalize communism as the natural progression of history. The questions and criticism of society vanish after taking Murti-Bing pills. Milosz's image of the captive mind puts the metaphors of confinement within the historical context of communist ideology. Similar to Plato's cave, Rousseau's chains and Weber's cage, Milosz asks why people do not wish to think for themselves. What made communism dramatically different from the other metaphors of a captive mind was the totalitarian climate of fear and ideology. "This chief characteristic is his fear of thinking for himself. It is not merely that he is afraid to arrive at dangerous conclusions. This is

a fear of sterility, of what Marx called the misery of philosophy.” (*Ibid.*: 11)

Ketman is the state of mind where one outwardly shows belief in something, but inwardly disagrees. Taken from Gobineau's *Religions and Philosophies of Central Asia*, Ketman is the state of being able to internalize the contradiction of saying one thing and believing another. Ketman is an actor playing a part.

Professional Ketman is reasoned thus: since I find myself in circumstances over which I have no control, and since I have but one life and that is fleeting, I should strive to do my best. I am like a crustacean attached to a crag on the bottom of the sea. Over me storms rage and huge ships sail; but my entire effort is concentrated upon clinging to the rock, for otherwise I will be carried off by the waters and perish, leaving no trace behind. (*Ibid.*: 69)

Looking back, to behave like Ketman may have been one of the only ways to survive during the terror and deportations of Stalinist communism, but what about now? Do we believe Ketman-like that all we can do is cling to a rock, so as not to be destroyed by the tide of capitalism and continual economic crisis? In his discussion of *The Captive Mind*, Judt cautions against swallowing Murti-Bing pills and blindly worshiping the market.

But ‘the market’—like ‘dialectical materialism’—is just an abstraction: at once ultra-rational (its argument trumps all) and the acme of unreason (it is not open to question). It has its true believers – mediocre thinkers by contrast with the founding fathers, but influential withal; its fellow travelers—who may privately doubt the claims of the dogma but see no alternative to preaching it; and its victims, many of whom in the US especially have dutifully swallowed their pill and proudly proclaim the virtues of a doctrine whose benefits they will never see. (Judt 2011: 179)

Judt's point is a good one. Our minds become captive to an ideology when we can no longer envision alternatives and begin to

stoically accept that we have little power for change. To see today or this moment as the end of history is to blindly walk deeper into the iron cage. Our minds will be enchained or captive when we lose the desire to think for ourselves. We cannot get out of the capitalist system, but we can imagine better societies than the ones we now have. Our minds become captive to an ideology when we can no longer think of alternatives and begin to stoically accept that we have little power for change. Perhaps the issue is more than how to soften the contours of the capitalist cage; it entails larger questions of how to maintain civility and a sense of citizenship amidst the overarching egoism of consumerism. Sometimes, the worst enemy of the citizen can be the self-centred individual. The fierce desire for privacy is a modern idea that privileges internal retreat over the ancient ideal of public involvement. Whether termed one-dimensional man or the iron cage, the model of accepting confinement due to forces beyond one's control is troubling.

With the experience of communism, the idea of politics has been understandably associated with violent lack of freedom; hence the comfortable escape into the world of consumption and virtual reality. And yet, it was Ralf Dahrendorf, who wisely predicted that the transition to liberal democracy in Eastern Europe should not be imagined as moving from one "system" to another, but from a closed to an open society. If the first stage of transition was the hour of the lawyers, the second belonged to the politicians, while the third and longest stage is the hour of the citizen. One could grant approximately six months for constitutional reform and six years for economic reform, but sixty years for social reform. "The hour of the lawyer and the hour of the politician mean little without the hour of the citizen." (Dahrendorf 1990: 86) Sixty years means at least two, if not three generations. Dahrendorf's emphasis on civil society, civility and pluralism, coupled with his criticism of the inequalities that capitalism produces are well-worth reconsidering today. The welfare state and social democracy are important European inventions of the twentieth century. They shouldn't be squandered away in the name

of an abstract market. We don't need to simply take our Murti-Bing pill and resign ourselves to the random whim of the market.

The images of confinement illuminated by Plato's cave, Rousseau's chains, Weber's cage and Milosz's captive mind are metaphors from different historical time periods. Yet, they all share the similar spatial trope of the human mind held captive to processes beyond individual control. From Plato onwards, ours is a dualistic world that distinguishes, and sometimes privileges, solitary contemplation from public involvement with others. Rousseau expresses the paradoxical desire to be free from chains that we have bound to ourselves. Likewise, Weber expresses the frustration of being trapped in a bureaucratic capitalist cage. Whether one views the world as a grand historical stage or a virtual iron cage from which we can never escape, it is still the only fragile, public space that we share and are ultimately responsible for.

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GOVERNING THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE: BIOSOCIAL POWER AND THE PLAYGROUND AS A 'SCHOOL OF CONDUCT'

Kevin Ryan

The question of social order becomes most urgent when its apparent stability is swept away by evidence of its ultimate fragility. The civil unrest which seems to characterise the present is a case in point, a concrete example being the London riots of August 2011. As order was being restored, Prime Minister David Cameron delivered a speech where he picked up the thread of his ongoing 'Broken Britain' theme and announced that "the broken society is now at the top of my agenda" (Cameron 2011). But what exactly does it mean to say that a society is 'broken'? According to Cameron, it has little if anything to do with inequality. Instead, it is down to individuals who, Cameron insists, exhibit an "indifference to right or wrong", a "twisted moral code", and an "absence of self-restraint" (Cameron 2011). But this is not the end of the matter, because the question of what should be done to 'fix' the broken society focuses the gaze of political power on children and childhood, and this is so for reasons I wish to further explore in this chapter. For now an example will suffice in illustrating the point: a burgeoning debate on shortening the summer holiday for school children in Britain.

The idea is being piloted in the city of Nottingham, and is framed by the laudable goal of promoting academic achievement, or more specifically, of closing the 'attainment gap between poorer children and more affluent children'¹. But there is a politics to these incoming reforms, and it was by no means incidental that Britain's

¹ This was a point made by Matt Grist, a senior researcher with the think tank Demos, in the Channel 4 news report cited below.

Channel 4 News filmed a report on this issue against the backdrop of a children's playground (Channel 4 News 2012), with the images of swings, slides and climbing frames invoking the ideal of a happy childhood; in tune perhaps with the notion that every child should be given the opportunity to achieve. There is a tension here, between benevolent intentions and strategic objectives. On the one hand is the original purpose of the playground, and I will examine its pedagogical roots in due course. On the other hand is the wider debate on education—these words written by Cameron before the London riots had reignited the Broken Britain debate: “Take any marker of our broken society, and educational failure lies at its root. Four in every five youngsters receiving custodial sentences have no qualifications. More than two-thirds of prisoners are illiterate. And nearly one-third of those excluded from school have been involved with substance abuse” (Cameron 2007). It seems that the problem of the ‘attainment gap’ encompasses much more than academic performance.

The point I wish to make is that there is little here that we have not seen before, and seen repeatedly. Cameron's notion of a social fracture spirals back through the history of modern liberal social orders: it echoes debates on the ‘underclass’ in Britain and the US during the 1970s and ‘80s (Murray 1994, Mead 1993), which in turn resonates with the ‘residuum’ of the late 19th century (see Stedman Jones 1971, Rafter 1988) and the ‘criminal class’ of a century earlier (see Hughes 1986). If we adopt this historical perspective, then we can see how the recurring problem of social fracture precipitates innovation on the part of actors and agencies with a stake in educating and training children. Children have long been positioned between power and freedom; not freedom as an abstract ideal, but freedom as a practice which is born from social technologies which are brought to bear on life, so that life is made into a governable process. In this chapter I examine the playground as an example of this ‘biosocial’ mode of power² (Ryan 2012). It would perhaps register

² The concept of biosocial power, which I claim is specific to children and childhood, builds on Foucault's work on biopolitics (2008).

more clearly with readers if I were to use the word 'socialisation' in place of biosocial power, but it is my contention that the idea of socialisation has long been encased by functionalist assumptions and assertions, and here I am attempting to prise it open by using the concept of power. Furthermore, my aim is neither to condemn nor defend biosocial power. Instead the objective is to reconstruct some of its conditions of existence so that it can be opened out as a problem.

In framing this problem I approach it from two directions. The initial line of approach is political theory, which serves to locate the 'why' and 'how' of biosocial power within a normative frame. The second line of approach situates the ideas and arguments that arise within this frame so that the empirics of biosocial power can be critically examined, and the focus in this section will be on how the public playground was developed and deployed as a technology of conduct at the start of the twentieth century in the US, and for reasons broadly similar to those articulated by Cameron above. This dual approach converges on a single objective: to map the historical and ideological co-ordinates of biosocial power and to show how it attempts to both constitute and govern the liberal democratic subject.

The illiberal constitution of liberty

Within the discipline of political theory, the question of freedom is currently at the centre of a debate which has been described as a 'liberal-republican controversy' (Laborde, Maynor 2008: 1). In this section I take John Stuart Mill and Philip Pettit to be key figures in this debate, but before discussing their ideas I want to briefly explain why I will be focusing on these two thinkers. First, and coming back to the question of social order posed in the introduction, the republican approach to liberty focuses on the freedoms made possible through *constraint*, and Pettit (in collaboration with Geoffrey Brennan) offers a unique way of thinking about this tricky combination.

Secondly, Pettit defines freedom as ‘non-domination’, and yet within the scope of his republican theory, children are assigned a ‘special place’ relative to this way of thinking about freedom. This needs to be explained, and Mill’s writings can assist in this task by historicising the conception of childhood invoked by Pettit. Finally, and to bring these points together, childhood has the effect of diluting, if not quite dissolving, the controversy mentioned above, which is the question of whether Pettit’s view of freedom as non-domination differs in substance from the (classical liberal) conception of negative liberty³. When examined in relation to childhood, both conceptions of freedom converge as a mode of power that aims to take hold of human life so that it can be shaped in accordance with political ideals and social objectives. Upon close inspection, it turns out that freedom is constituted at the threshold of domination, and I will begin to trace this agonistic threshold by looking at Mill’s thoughts on ‘despotism’.

CHILDHOOD BETWEEN DESPOTISM AND ANTERIORITY

In his *On Liberty* (published in 1859), Mill reflects on conditions in England at that time (though he was in fact writing about “civilised communities” in general), and he makes the point that individual liberty is “exposed to invasion” in two ways: coercive interference on the part of government, and “moral coercion” orchestrated through public opinion (Mill 2004a: 11–13). The purpose of his essay was to formulate a principle that would serve to adjudicate on the question of such interference, and Mill did so by dispensing with any appeal to abstract right. His sole criterion, as is well known, was utilitarian ethics, and on this basis Mill declared that “the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others” (Mill 2004a: 14). More important for the present discussion is what

³ Negative liberty is the absence of external interference (see Berlin 1969).

comes next: coercive power cannot be exercised over others for their own good. The agent capable of coercing others might know that such interference is in their best interests but, according to Mill, this is not sufficient grounds to meddle in their affairs. At most, the more powerful agent can “remonstrate”, “reason”, “persuade” and “entreat”; to resort to force is to violate the principle of liberty (Mill 2004a: 14)⁴. However, there are exceptions: classes of person to whom the principle of non-interference does not apply, and we arrive at the crux of the matter as Mill explains that

...this doctrine is meant to apply only to human beings in the maturity of their faculties. We are not speaking of children, or of young persons below the age of which the law may fix as that of manhood or womanhood. Those who are still in a state to require being taken care of by others, must be protected against their actions as against external injury. (Mill 2004a: 14)

Mill is not solely referring to biological immaturity here, but also to “backward states of society”, and he recommends “despotism” as “a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end” (Mill 2004a: 14–15). Of interest here is not the ease with which Mill invokes this notion of backwardness, though that is certainly related to the point I wish to make, but rather the question of *how* Mill extends his exception to the principle of non-interference, because this makes visible certain background assumptions that continue to shape our thoughts and actions today.

Liberty, according to Mill, presupposes an “anterior” state of things (Mill 2004a: 15). In cultural terms, this anteriority is the state of backwardness that Mill refers to; it is also the condition of

⁴ Mill does concede that people may be prevented, against their will, from inadvertently harming themselves, and he uses the example of a person being forcibly prevented from crossing an unsafe bridge, but he adds that if there is time, then the person exposed to the danger of a collapsing bridge “ought...to be only warned of the danger; not forcibly prevented from exposing himself to it” (2004a: 107).

immaturity which obviates the need to reason, entreat, and remonstrate with children. Despotism in the case of children is justifiable on the grounds of its necessity: it is nature that dictates the subordinate position of children, and it is the posited homology between childhood and its socio-cultural equivalent that enables Mill to extend the scope of despotic rule. In this way Mill positions despotism at the beginning of two developmental processes. One is a process of social evolution, so that the need for despotic rule diminishes as the “spring of spontaneous improvement” takes hold (Mill 2004b: 454). The other takes place within the ‘generational order’ (Alanen 2009: 159–174), and it concerns the lifecycle, so that despotic power is exercised over children until such time as they are deemed to be in the “maturity of their faculties”. The logic of Mill’s reasoning suggests that the latter process can be deployed with a view to orchestrating the former, which is something I will return to in detail, showing that there need be nothing spontaneous about the ‘spontaneity’ that Mill refers to—the objective of engineering this apparent spontaneity is the (biosocial) foundation upon which liberal democratic social orders have been assembled. For now it is sufficient to note that despotism is linear in the case of social evolution and recursive in the case of individual development. There may come a time when despotic power exercised over ‘backward’ societies is no longer required, but the same cannot be said of childhood. A ‘civilised community’ has to renew itself continually, and it does so by educating and training its children. Furthermore, children are to be compelled to act not only in the interests of the community, but also to ensure that the individual child does what is perceived to be in her own best interests. Within the generational order, the need for despotism ends only when the child ceases to be a child, so that the passage from childhood to adulthood mirrors the transition from ‘backward society’ to ‘civilised community’, but despotism ends only to begin again as the next child is born. And so it goes.

There are four points to be stressed before proceeding. First is that Mill’s exceptions to the principle of non-interference are not

contingent but constitutive: liberty is born from despotic power exercised over children and child-like peoples (together representing Mill's state of anteriority) (see Valverde 1996). The second point concerns the historical specificity of this conception of childhood. It is of course well known that Aristotle described 'man' as a 'political animal', and it could be argued that Mill's argument is but a restatement of Aristotle's view that "The citizen should be moulded to suit the form of government under which he lives" (Archard 2005: 209). However, while Mill did discuss Greek philosophy in his own writings, his thoughts on anteriority are also in tune with contemporary developments in the natural sciences, more specifically: the emerging theory of evolution, and the way in which this framed the relationship between animal and human as a unidirectional (though not necessarily irreversible—more on this below) process of change and development. Mill's idea of an 'anterior state' would soon migrate to the realm of science, so that childhood became a mirror of humanity's evolutionary past.

Thirdly, while the roots of modern childhood have been traced to Humanism and the Enlightenment, and in particular to figures such as Erasmus, Locke, and Rousseau (Cunningham 2005: 41–72), what is arguably its defining characteristic was established only during the 19th century: childhood as a means of ordering modern 'mass' society; not simply in terms of the present, but more importantly, as a way of acting upon the future. It is in this sense—i.e. with an eye to the future as an improved state of things—that Mill refers to children as the "rising generation" (Mill 2004a: 91), and when he notes in his essay on the *The Subjection of Women* that a child "should be trained in the way he should go" (Mill 2004c: 561), he invokes an idea that echoes across what, at that time, amounts to several generations of innovation in the field of education, in continental Europe as well as in England (see Liebschner 1992; Silber 1960; Stewart, McCann 1967). Detached from its religious roots, this old Biblical proverb was being given a new secular meaning. According to Mill, the correct, which is to say necessary, relation between adults and children

is that of command and obedience (Mill 2004c: 518–519). This was to be a temporary state of affairs, for reasons outlined above, but what it amounts to in practice is that “the existing generation is master both of the training and the entire circumstances of the generation to come” (Mill 2004a: 91). In the idea of training children up in the way they should go, Mill identifies childhood as a living substance to be formed with a view to creating a liberal order. In other words, he envisions childhood as a process whereby the “virtues of freedom”, as a blend of “feelings and conduct”, are habituated by the child and, as a result, later experienced as a “natural” inclination or disposition (Mill 2004c: 518–519). In this way, Mill’s defence of despotism articulates a mode of power that seeks to take hold of life with a view to both constituting the liberal subject and governing the future.

The final point is that the despotism advocated by Mill is not ‘despotic’ solely because it negates the principle of non-interference; it is despotic also because of the background assumptions which are among its conditions of possibility. By background assumptions, I am referring to ideas and meanings that become deeply sedimented in culture and consciousness; they constitute a stock of knowledge which is used to think *with*, but which is not itself the object of thought. Background assumptions are not static, which is why Mill’s reference to ‘barbarians’ is offensive to present sensibilities, but with respect to childhood, the ideas that underpin Mill’s defence of despotism are still more or less intact, and Pettit’s theory of republicanism is one influential example of how they continue to shape the concept of liberty today.

CHILDHOOD BETWEEN DOMINATION AND THE ‘INTANGIBLE HAND’

In developing his republican conception of freedom, Pettit incorporates a theory of power which is the product of ongoing collaboration with Geoffrey Brennan, and which is modelled on the metaphor of a ‘hand’. In fact there are three types of hand that coexist and exert positive and negative sanctions, and ideally these work

in harmony in securing freedom from domination. The most forceful is the ‘iron hand’ of political power, or the coercive power of government and state (i.e. what Mill describes as ‘coercive interference’). In contrast to the iron hand is the ‘invisible hand’ of the market, conceptualised as such by Adam Smith in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, and it is by extending this iconic image that Brennan and Pettit present the novel idea of a third hand—or a “third way in regulation” between hierarchy and market—which they call the “intangible hand” (Brennan, Pettit 2004: 255, 1993). This is what I will be focusing on, because as a subtle mode of power ‘over’, it offers a way of thinking about the ‘how’ of despotism, i.e. the intangible hand is a particularly effective way of creating the habits of feeling and conduct that Mill associates with liberty.

In contrast to the coercive grip of the iron hand, the invisible hand is a decentralised steering mechanism which, according to Pettit and Brennan, has the effect—irrespective of whether this is intended—of rewarding and punishing actors and actions in the market. Though similar to the invisible hand in that it is not attached to the arm of a Leviathan, the intangible hand is an economy of *attitudes* rather than *actions*—i.e. it has only an indirect bearing on actions (Brennan, Pettit 2004: 246; also Pettit 1993: 329). The intangible hand thus provides a novel way of thinking about norms. Importantly, this is not simply a way of understanding and explaining norm-regulated patterns of behaviour; it is also a normative argument in its own right, as the intangible hand is presented as a “reliable social control” which is “subject to certain intentional shaping effects” (Brennan, Pettit 2004: 286). In other words, the intangible hand can be “deployed” in order to “engineer beneficial norms into existence”, or conversely, to “engineer destructive norms out” (Brennan, Pettit 2004: 286).

The difference between beneficial norms and destructive norms is framed by the concept of civility, and Pettit is at pains to point out that even the most perfectly designed republican institutions “cannot walk on their own. They are dead, mechanical devices, and

will gain life and momentum only if they win a place in the habits of people's hearts...the laws must be embedded in a network of norms that reign effectively, independently of state coercion, in the realm of civil society" (Pettit 1997: 241). Suspended within a web of "extrafamilial and infrapolitical" associations (Pettit 1997: 242), this network of norms makes it "a matter of reliable, perhaps unthinking inclination" to respect each others right to enjoy freedom without arbitrary interference (Pettit 1997: 246). Civility thus marks the distinction between beneficial and destructive norms, which is also the difference—and this resonates with Cameron's broken society—between "pro-social behaviour" and "anti-social behaviour" (Brennan, Pettit 2004: 245)⁵.

In illustrating the subtle force of the intangible hand—the ways in which we are moved to act in particular ways by the attitudes of others and our desire for their regard—Pettit uses the example of someone peering through a keyhole: "You are punished for looking through the keyhole, as you smart under the gaze of someone who comes upon you doing so. That person doesn't need to say anything or do anything. She punishes you without having to undergo any costs in the exercise of that role" (Pettit 1993: 330). The example makes the point that, as a "sanctioning system", the intangible hand keeps people on a "virtuous path" through "the pressures of shame and fame, alienation and acceptance" (Pettit 1993: 331), but in policing each others conduct, the intention to do so is largely beside the point. As noted long ago by George Herbert Mead, while the sanctioning force of the intangible hand is external to the subject, the corresponding "structure of attitudes"—or what he called the "generalized other"—is imprinted upon the self (Mead 1962).

The argument then is that although we are subject to laws, and thus to codified constraints which are enforceable (the iron hand), this is insufficient in securing us against domination. We also need

⁵ This contrast is revisited in the next section, where it takes the form of a distinction between the 'team' and the 'gang' in the context of Progressive Era America.

complimentary social norms, and while the intangible hand presses us to conform, there need be no will or intention behind such constraints (Brennan, Pettit 1993: 209). However, to the extent that it can be theorised and explained with a view to producing specific effects—as envisaged by Pettit and Brennan—then the otherwise ethereal quality of the intangible hand is made into something quite tangible. To borrow from Michel Foucault’s way of thinking about ‘government’ (Foucault 1983: 208–28, Foucault 1991), the intangible hand is a means of acting upon the actions of others; it is a technology of power, a way of engineering the norm-regulated associational grid of constraints and controls that Pettit calls ‘civility’. Pettit acknowledges that the combined effects of the iron hand and the intangible hand constrain the scope of permissible actions, and in so doing “reduces the range and ease of undominated choice”, but he insists that this does not amount to domination as long as interference tracks the interests and ideas of the person or group subject to it (Pettit 1997: 23, 146; also 2008: 67–74). Pettit sees this as making citizens “relatively non-free”, but not “unfree”, which is the price of being secured against domination. And this is what Pettit calls “liberty in the proper sense”: not freedom *from* interference, but rather freedom through the sorts of constraints and controls that secure us against domination (Pettit 1997: 39, 93).

In this way Pettit constructs an oppositional relation between freedom and domination (Pettit 1997: 110), and what holds them apart is the decisive question of whether interference is ‘arbitrary’. On the side of freedom is non-arbitrary interference, which is interference that tracks the interests of the person or group subject to it, and in accordance with reasons and ideas that they can hold as their own. Opposite of this is arbitrary interference, which is to be subject to the will and caprice of another. It is within the space of this antonymic relation that children are assigned a “special position”, and this complicates matters. Pettit explains that children

...are in a special position relative to the state and society. Children cannot be given the same opportunities as adults if they are to be enabled, when they become adults, to enjoy the sort of non-domination which a republic would confer: they must be subject to the disciplines inherent, as any parent knows, in fostering education and development (Pettit 1997: 119).

The first part of this quote can be taken as a normatively-neutral statement of fact: children *are* in a special position, and have long been subject to controls and interventions intended to nurture, train and mould them. The remainder however exhibits a normativity that unsettles the posited opposition between freedom and domination. Similar to Mill, Pettit assumes childhood to be an anterior state of things, and it is on this basis that he advocates subjection to the disciplines. Pettit does not call this despotism, and in contrast to Mill, he defends his view on the special position of children by insisting that it does not constitute a form of domination because all such interference must track their interests (Pettit 1997: 119–120). But this does not differ in substance from Mill's defence of despotism. What I am arguing then is this: there is a thread of continuity which can be traced through the modern discourse of liberty, and this connects a despotic mode of power to life; not life in an undifferentiated sense, but life understood as a *governable process*. In developing this argument, the next section emplaces the above reflections within an empirical frame.

The intangible hand of the playground

This section examines how supervised play was conceived of as a way of engineering civility in the context of Progressive Era America. The context is important, for it is both a time and a place where the conception of childhood linking Mill to Pettit was being consolidated. A new science of childhood (developmental psychology) was then emerging—on both sides of the Atlantic—in the form of a child-study movement which was to have a lasting and far-reaching

effect in the way it established what Nikolas Rose calls a “normative expertise of childhood” (Rose 1990: 150). Organised around systems of developmental ‘milestones’—stages of development as we now call them—with the precise content of these markers derived from the study of individual children, a body of norms was constructed which was at once immanent to the group of children studied yet external to any particular child. Furthermore, the knowledge injected into the idea of the ‘normal’ was derived in large part from the study of “the troublesome, the recalcitrant, the delinquent”, or “those children who worry the courts, teachers, doctors, and parents” (Rose 1990: 131). Observation meshes with valuation, with the concept of ‘normal’ operating simultaneously as an objective assessment, a standard against which individual children are judged, and a goal to be achieved through policies and social programmes (Rose 1990: 131–132). The point to be made here is that this normative expertise of childhood emerges as the centre-piece of a biosocial apparatus which was assembled from multiple innovations, and the playground was one such innovation.

At the beginning of the twentieth century there was nothing particularly new in the idea that children could be disciplined and trained while they played; in fact the idea that supervised play could serve social and political ends had flourished throughout the previous century (see Ryan 2008). The lack of novelty is not equivalent to continuity however, and it was in the context of Progressive Era America that the playground was put on a systematic footing and deployed as a biosocial technology. A fledgling playground movement had begun to emerge in the larger cities of the United States during the 1890s. By 1905 thirty-five cities had supervised playgrounds, with the organisational capacity of the movement evidenced in New York, where nineteen private groups with a stake in playgrounds joined forces to create an Outdoor Recreation League (Knapp, Hartsoe 1979: 23–24). Luther Gulick, at that time director of physical education for New York’s public school system, was of the opinion that these efforts would amount to little without a

systematic theory connecting play to moral regeneration and physical development (Cavallo 1981: 35). Such a theory was assembled from the psychology of Karl Groos, William James and, above all, the recapitulation theory of G. Stanley Hall, and it underpinned a new national organization which was the brainchild of Henry S. Curtis, a former student of Hall's at Clark University and a former director of New York City's playground system (Cavallo 1981: 32–35, 55–65). This organisation was the Playground Association of America (PAA), established in 1906 with the objective of guiding the development of a national play movement (Knapp, Hartsoe 1979: 31). What I wish to focus on here is not the detail of the organisation or the history of the movement, but the intersection of knowledge and technique, and I begin with the theory of recapitulation.

While most clearly articulated by Gulick (1898: 803) when he wrote that “play is the ontogenetic rehearsal of the phylogenetic series”, the theory of recapitulation was also prominent in the thinking of Curtis (1910) and Joseph Lee, who served as president to the PAA from 1910 until his death in 1937 (see Knapp, Hartsoe 1979; Cavallo 1981). In his *Play in Education*, Lee explains that “children do not play because they are young; they are young in order that they may play”. According to Lee, the simpler “ready-made” animals are fundamentally different from humans, who are born in an “unfinished” state and are “fashioned in obedience to the great play instincts”, so that just as a muscle grows by exercising it, so too does the “growth” of a child’s “mental ability” and “moral power” come from effort, practice and training (Lee 1915: 5–6). Gulick, who had an M.D. from New York University, gave this a distinctly medical gloss when he published a paper tracing weak minds and morals to flabby muscles (Gulick 1898: 794). Though expressed in different ways, the core idea was that the “play-built animal” was “partly made to order” (Lee 1915: 30–31). And this was the objective of play as a mode of training: the playground would enable biosocial engineers to take hold of life and govern the child’s development.

Lee's version of developmental milestones took the form of seven "play instincts": creation, rhythm, hunting, fighting, nurture, curiosity and team play. Not all were salient at a given stage of the child's growth, so that a correct understanding of "nature's prescribed course" dictated the appropriate mode of play. And here we can see how Mill's notion of childhood as an anterior state was modified in accordance with developments in the biological sciences. During "babyhood" the "creative impulse" was strong, and by learning to grasp, wield and strike, the young child recapitulated the discovery of tools and weapons. The sandbox was the most appropriate play environment for children during this initial stage of growth, where infants would also learn "fundamental lessons in mutual rights" (Gulick 1907: 481). This stage would be followed by the rhythm and co-operation of ring games and singsongs during the "dramatic age". From six to eleven years the child passed through the age of the "big injun", and was in the grip of instincts that pre-date the constraints of "civilization". This was a stage that effectively dispensed with the sociality characterising the dramatic age, disposing the child—boys in particular—to acts of disobedience and law-breaking. As a period of self-assertion, this required careful handling on the part of play instructors in order to prepare the child for what was to follow when the "belonging instinct" took over. Lee characterised this final phase of growth as the "age of loyalty", when self-fulfilment was achieved through membership. It was also the point at which everything hung in the balance, for this instinct found expression in the gang. There was nothing intrinsically wrong with gangs; gang membership was simply part of nature's prescribed course (with its evolutionary root in tribes and kinship groups), but there was an ever-present danger in that a gang could become an anti-social force. The solution was to mould the gang into a team.

At the time, the problem of the gang represented social fracture in a way which is comparable to Cameron's 'broken society' mentioned earlier. In the context of the city, which had become a sort of compressor for the twin processes of accelerating urbanisation and

increasing population density (the latter also related to immigration and the formation of ethnic enclaves), the activities of youth gangs had come to symbolise the many problems associated with urban disorder and moral decay (Curtis 1907; Gulick 1920: 91–92, 1909: 36; Lee 1915: 362). Political corruption, feeble and unproductive workers, ‘immoral’ pursuits in taverns and pool halls, the absence of community spirit: these were some of the problems associated with the city, as was the ‘residuum’ (see Rafter 1988), meaning the ‘dependant, defective and delinquent classes’ (Henderson 1901). Childhood became a way of focusing these concerns. Gangs existed in abundance, but rather than try to eradicate the menace, the playground activists set out to channel, direct, and most importantly, harness and deploy the sanctioning force of the gang. The ‘belonging instinct’ could be steered and directed, and this would have a lasting effect, because, in the words of historian Dominick Cavallo, the playground activists believed that it “would not fade once its recapitulatory force was spent at the end of adolescence” (Cavallo 1981: 92).

As a blend of competition and cooperation, the team was a vehicle to harmonise ideals that might otherwise conflict: loyalty and interdependence on the one hand; individuality and rivalry on the other. Furthermore, the team was a blend of the iron hand (codified rules and sanctions) and the intangible hand (shared attitudes), but it was the latter that held out most potential for training adolescents in the practice of freedom. E. B. DeGroot, director of Chicago’s South Park System, developed a rating system for team games, so that victory was not based solely on scoring the most points or runs, but these in conjunction with honesty, fair play and cooperation. The idea was that individuals would act under the “keen and silent” judgement of team-mates (Cavallo 1981: 97–98), or as pointed out by Gulick, “if a boy plays baseball and does not know the difference between playing for himself and playing for the team, his mates will teach him very promptly and with more energy than any other method could provide...The essential rules are not written in the statute books; they are expressed in public opinion” (Gulick 1920:

193–194). Peer-group sanctions were deemed to be far more effective than either force or fear of authority, with the possibility of being ostracised and excluded from the game the most effective lever in securing compliance (Gulick 1920: 245). Again, in contrast to the iron hand, this was not a demand for obedience which, according to Gulick, could not teach “real freedom”. Gulick was of the view that the command-obedience relation was necessary, and it found its proper place in the school and the home, but only the playground could train the child in the practice of freedom, because to be free is to exercise choice: to willingly submit to constraints and to exercise self-control when it is possible to do otherwise (Gulick 1920: 250). Furthermore, compared to the coercive controls that prevailed at home and in the classroom, the power of play—or, to borrow from Pettit and Brennan, the power of the intangible hand—was invisible. It was indistinguishable from freedom.

As an “ethical laboratory” (Gulick 1907: 483) and a “school of conduct” (Lee 1915: 374), the supervised playground was conceived as the basic “unit” of membership nested within the “larger units” of city and nation, both of which were “but the gang writ large” (Lee 1915: 366). The belonging instinct was to be cultivated and nurtured by surrounding the child with myths and symbols: flags, songs, stories of ancestors and legends of past heroes—the feeling of membership and sense of loyalty reinforced by collective traditions and a shared sense of past, present and future (Lee 1915: 367). The larger purpose of this civil engineering project was to tap into and deploy the “great fusing power” of the gang, so that the team would function as a “pioneer plant” and cultivate the seed of patriotism (Lee 1915: 367, 385; also 1907). According to Lee the problem of the city was in essence the “atrophy of the neighbourhood”, which allowed the individual to act in a manner unencumbered by public opinion as a check on individual conduct (Lee 1915: 382). Beginning with the sandbox and culminating in the team, this would be countered by establishing a “body of opinion” that “squeezed” each child into the “desired pattern”, thus “moulding” the child’s “standard of

behaviour” (Lee 1915: 260, 375). The ultimate objective was that each child would “carry his city and his country with him in imagination”, so that state and nation would be felt and experienced as an extension of the self: “the final apotheosis of the gang against an outside and partly alien world” (Lee 1915: 389).

As noted above, those who championed supervised play were not overly concerned about obedience to authority; the grip of the team over the individual was not the grip of the iron hand; they were not orchestrating a situation whereby compliance was demanded of a subject who knows that coercion waits in the wings as an answer to recalcitrance. This type of power was deemed necessary in its appropriate sphere, but what the play activists were seeking to deploy was a far subtler mode of power ‘over’, one compatible with freedom as a practice whereby the individual experiences social control as self-control, and thus willingly submits to the demands of power. To quote Lee once more, what was envisioned was “the dedication of free, self-directed individuals to a common purpose” (Lee 1907: 487). This was to happen over a period of time: learnt and enacted by children playing together in sandboxes, on swings and slides, in ring-games, by asserting themselves during the phase of the ‘big injun’, and finally by finding their place on the team. Of course, at that time, the playground activists did not have Brennan and Pettit’s theory of constraint at their disposal, but what they were attempting to do was very much in tune with the notion of the intangible hand. The core insight was that the intangible hand *was* present, irrespective of whether the peer group was configured as a team or a gang. But the difference was crucial, and biosocial engineers saw it as the possibility of directing the course of evolution so that the problems associated with the city could be countered. The playground was the idealised republic in miniature, and while this ideal could be symbolised and materialised in the form of flags, pageants, architecture and urban planning (see for example Atherton 1983, Boyer 1978), most important was the associational grid of constraints that Pettit calls civility. As future citizens, children were to be habituated in

democratic ideals of mutuality, cooperation and interdependence, and these in combination with liberal axioms: individuality, competitive rivalry, and specialisation.

As a 'school of conduct', the playground offers an interesting perspective on J. S. Mill's remarks concerning the relation between despotism and 'the spring of spontaneous improvement'. As noted earlier, there need be nothing spontaneous about such apparent spontaneity, and in the idea of engineering a regulated liberty—as the playground activists were attempting to do—we also see a practice that fits with Pettit and Brennan's thoughts on why the intangible should be 'deployed' with a view to cultivating civility. Tracking the child through the course of his or her development, the playground was a biosocial technology configured as an intangible hand, with playgrounds and team games organised as arenas within which freedom could be directed and harnessed to the strategic objective of governing the future. The idea that individual development is a foreshortened repetition of human evolution was a fiction authorised by science so that it took on the character of truth, while the actions of those who wielded the intangible hand were authorised by this truth. But what this truth actually reflected was the type of social order then being assembled: it was the fusion of democracy and market economy that constituted 'life' as an agonistic blend of cooperation and competition. Between the writings of Mill and the child study movement are significant shifts in how this truth was formulated, yet there is also continuity. As a state of anteriority, childhood signifies a time before liberty, and in this sense is 'prior to', but childhood is also constituted in the form of 'not yet', and thus both anticipates and represents a future where the problems associated with human coexistence have been resolved.

Freedom at the threshold of domination

With its key strategic objective that of engineering a specific type of civility, the technique of supervised play exemplifies biosocial power in the context of liberal democracy: exercised through the intangible hand of peer group pressure in an organised setting, the child was to be stealthily recruited into its operation, and insofar as it was detectable, power was to take the guise of freedom. But this in itself is but a partial picture of biosocial power. Playground activists disagreed, for example, on the extent to which the state should be involved in the movement, but such disagreements were staged on the terrain of shared background assumptions: a paradigm of knowledge which had attained the status of 'truth', and as truth, this provided a normatively-neutral support for normative programmes and interventions. This truth concerning childhood—i.e. childhood as anteriority—continues to exert a considerable grip over our thoughts and actions today.

Biosocial power should be understood as involving both the aspect of subtle or stealthy exercise—most subtle when controls are experienced by the subject as freedom—and the force of a shared background consensus. This double opaqueness amounts to an inbuilt resistance to challenge, both at source (those who wield it in the name of truth) and destination (the child who is unobtrusively subject to it). It may well be the case, as Pettit argues, that freedom comes from submitting to constraints and controls that secure us against domination. But it is also the case that biosocial power impresses a specific practice of freedom upon the subject. Biosocial power is a contextual grid of controls: historically constituted and culturally transmitted, and thus contingent, yet recalcitrance is often perceived as a problem, even a threat, certainly in the case of children. When a child refuses to comply with the demands of power, it is often perceived as a sign of some underlying problem—whether familial, situational or psychological—which must be caught as early as possible so that the deviation from social expectations can be

countered and corrected. Whether by force, persuasion, or some subtler technique whereby the recalcitrant child is gently coerced, each and all must travel to *right* path, which amounts to a type of social orthopaedics (Foucault 1977, Hacking 1990: 162–163). Perhaps bio-social power *does* further the interests of children, and in a way that tracks ideas that they gradually come to recognise as their own. But there is still a lesson to be taken from the playgrounds of the Progressive Era: the purpose of biosocial power is to govern the formation of the child's subjectivity; to select and direct the formation of interests and desires as they are embodied by the 'free' subject. This does not mean that children are at the mercy of another's arbitrary will, but it also makes it extremely difficult to agree with Pettit's argument that freedom and domination are 'antonyms'. When it comes to the social positioning of children, this argument simply does not stand up to scrutiny. Biosocial power constitutes freedom at the threshold of domination, and this threshold is also a space of thought and action wherein concrete political strategies are constructed and (potentially) contested. It is for this reason that biosocial power is, and must remain, a problem worthy of ongoing critical inquiry.

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PLAY, REPETITION AND TESTIMONY: MEDITATIONS ON DEATH AND TRUTH

Tom Frost

DEATH

Why do you want to play chess with me?

KNIGHT

I have my reasons.

DEATH

That is your privilege.

KNIGHT

The condition is that I may live as long as I hold out against you. If I win, you will release me. Is it agreed?

So begins Ingmar Bergman's greatest film, *The Seventh Seal*. We are presented with a game, whereby Death is quite literally playing for the life of the Knight. Throughout the film, the game of chess continues. The final judgement over whether the Knight lives or dies is suspended, waiting for the outcome of the game.

I would like to posit that we have in this scene in *The Seventh Seal* an intimate connection between 'play' and 'death'. The playing of the game of chess continues throughout the film. The Knight is playing for his life, all the while longing for the knowledge of whether God exists, seeing in Death no assurances as to what lays beyond his own demise. We have in *The Seventh Seal* a life (represented by the Knight), bound by the knowledge of his own mortality. Despite, or even because of this fact, this life is given meaning through coming into contact with others, and performing an ethical act, which gives that life meaning. All the while the game of chess is being played; a life lived in the knowledge of its own mortality is structured through this play.

This connection should not be seen as restricted to cinema. Drawing upon the philosophies of Jean-Luc Nancy, Martin Heidegger,

Giorgio Agamben and Emmanuel Levinas, I wish to explore this connection, and its importance to politics, through the lens of transitional states caught up in conflict, and specifically their responses to political upheaval. Perhaps the most famous current example of a transitional state, or states, would be the states involved in the Arab Spring.

The 'Arab Spring' is the name given to the current political tumult throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Political upheaval led to the fall of governments in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. Yemen's President was replaced after on-going protests, and President Bashar al-Assad in Syria has been brutally suppressing an uprising which has continued for over a year. Facing all of these states, and others, has been the question of how to reconstruct their societies after the overthrow of a dictatorship.

There is always a risk when writing about current events, especially current political events. Events can occur so quickly that what is written today can be obsolete by the time of publication and beyond. However, I am in agreement with James Martel that one thing is certain—the revolutionary moment of the Arab Spring will end, and things will be 'righted' (Martel 2012: 1). The ensuing regimes in these countries involved in the Arab Spring will be declared 'normal', and the process of post-revolutionary transition will occur in those states where changes in government have taken place. However, what needs to be questioned is precisely this 'righting'. I wish to use this example to argue against the usage of one such righting mechanism—the Truth Commission.

What makes the Arab Spring a useful example to draw upon is that we have not yet fully explored what this righting will look like. This righting potentially faces us with a question of 'transitional justice'—namely, how best to deal with violence and repression that occurred under previous repressive regimes? In focusing upon transitional justice, this chapter adopts the definition of Ruti Teitel:

Transitional justice can be defined as the conception of justice associated with periods of political change, characterised by legal responses to confront the wrongdoings of repressive predecessor regimes (Teitel 2003: 69).

The countries and movements that fall under the umbrella term 'Arab Spring' (itself imposing a monolithic label to a diverse and heterogeneous Diaspora) are confronted by the question of how to deal with the oppression of prior (or current) regimes. They have to confront what has gone before. It is not my aim in this chapter to formulate the best response to this tumult. It is my argument that to posit one single answer is not possible. Rather, what I wish to explore is the very confrontation with the past which will take place in any post-conflict state.

When Teitel claims that there is a complicated relationship between transitional justice, truth and history, she is correctly referring to the fact that revisiting the past is understood as a way to move forward (*ibid.*: 86). It is this complicated relationship that is the lens through which the connection between play and death can be viewed. To fully consider this connection, I will need first to dwell upon the question of tradition, and how the past, and how we conceive of the past, defines us.

It is through constructing a narrative about the past, and about the truth of what happened in the past, that transitional justice responses to political change gain huge traction over how the future is shaped. Specifically, these narratives about the past and truth can form a constitutive event in a nation's identity, meaning that to 'belong' a singularity or movement must accept the veracity of such a narrative.

In defining the past, it is possible to provide the ground for what it means to belong to a nation, group or society. This can be seen most clearly in the United States, whose own revolutionary history of overthrowing a perceived tyrannical government still influences current debates over the size and scale of Federal Government

projects. In a very real sense, the meaning of the American Revolution, and what it means to be an American, is a continuous matter of debate even today. The past is constitutive of our understanding of the world; tradition, and the narrative that is told about that tradition, shapes both our views of the past and our approach to the present and future.

In order to be a member of a nation, an individual must 'buy into' the national story. It is such a narrative that Jean-Luc Nancy called a 'foundational myth' (Nancy 1991, p.45). This foundational myth can provide the self-referential legitimacy for a State, as it always finds itself through its relation to the origin, the constitutive act. Power over the narratives told about the past equates to power over structuring future modes of political existence.

In attempting to think seriously about the question of tradition we can turn to the work of Edmund Burke. Burke, the defender of the *ancien regime* in Great Britain, may not be the most obvious thinker to introduce this argument. However, Burke's writings upon tradition underscore the importance of what has gone before for the constitution of the self. We can turn to Burke's *Reflections*, where he is commenting upon the shamelessness of democracies. When commenting upon the fact that, in his opinion, political power must be exercised in trust, Burke states:

By this unprincipled facility of changing the state as often, and as much, and in as many ways as there are floating fancies or fashions, the whole chain and continuity of the commonwealth would be broken. No one generation could link with the other. Men would become little better than the flies of a summer. (Burke 1993: 108)

Here I follow Anthony Kronman, who contends that Burke's use of flies in this passage is quite deliberate. If the 'chain and continuity' of the past, of tradition, is abandoned, Burke sees men as no better than flies. What is inhuman about the fly is its disconnectedness to the future and the past (Kronman 1990: 1049). Human beings are

born into a pre-existing cultural world; tradition is part of the world in we live. The moulding of the self is done from within a world that is shaped by the historical events and past that have created the present into which we were born. In a very banal sense therefore, we are all products of and shaped by the past and history, even if we do not realise it. It is thus impossible to separate tradition from existence, as tradition helps constitute existence. The pre-existing world of culture is the human being's own (*ibid.*: 1065). This world of culture can be accumulated or destroyed, added to or removed from, but never abandoned or ignored. This is why the power to control the narratives of tradition is so important. These narratives shape the world of culture which in turn shapes subjectivity itself.

It is with respect to tradition that we can turn to the first major theme of this chapter—death. The importance of tradition can be underscored by the connection between being born into the cultural world Burke posits and the death of the singular being. Although death is often viewed negatively, and indeed has negative connotations, it is not my intention to imply that this connection is a negative one. Instead, following the thought of Martin Heidegger, death can be seen as exposing the possibilities for what Heidegger would term the 'singular being' to live by. It is through the knowledge that existence is finite that any of us can make authentic choices as to how to live their lives. This emphasis on authenticity is deliberate: it is only through the realisation that it is not possible to fulfil all desires, wants and fancies that real choices can be made.

To explain: Heidegger writes of existence through the figure of *Dasein*, literally 'being-there'. We do not need to explore the distinction Heidegger made between the 'human being' and *Dasein*; for the purposes of this argument these are not strictly relevant. We can summarise that for Heidegger, the singular *Dasein* is the mode of our understanding of existence. Heidegger writes of *Dasein* that it is 'thrown' into an already-existing world (Heidegger 1963: 321). This is what Heidegger terms 'Being-in-the-world' (*ibid.*: 174). We understand the world through living within it. For Heidegger,

‘being-thrown’ reveals itself as being thrown in the direction of death. This is the direction of possibility of *Dasein*. For Heidegger, death is not seen as a negativity, but can be seen as integral to *Dasein*’s own potentiality:

Being-towards-death is the anticipatory of a potentiality-for-Being of that entity whose kind of Being is anticipation itself. (*Ibid.*: 307)

Through anticipating death our own-most potentiality can be understood—in accepting that we will die, we can make authentic choices about the time we have and how we wish to spend it. It is death that makes possible authentic existence for *Dasein* (*ibid.*: 68). Thus the anticipation of death is necessary for *Dasein* to grasp its own potentiality, its own possibility. This Heidegger terms “freedom towards death” (*ibid.*: 311).

Thus in a sense Kronman and Burke can be read with Heidegger, and tradition and death can be connected. The past should be respected because the world of culture human beings inherit from it makes us who we are. The past is not something to be chosen. Rather, it is a custodial attitude and respect towards the past that establishes humanity (Kronman 1990: 1066). The world of culture is inherited from those who went before, and in conserving this world humanity expresses its indebtedness to the past. Humanity is bound within limits to respect the past for its own sake. All these debts are connected. As humanity satisfies its obligations to the past it in turn puts the future in debt to the present. Humanity therefore depends upon the future for the preservation of the world of culture created today (*ibid.*: 1067).

Kronman explains that Burke’s chain and continuity of generations is a chain and continuity of interwoven obligations. Burke sees succeeding generations as party to a contract. By phrasing it in this way, Burke aims to remind humanity that it has obligations towards the past. It is only through meeting this obligation can humanity can compel its successors to conserve the cultural world it has created and added to (*ibid.*).

Periods of political transition offer a choice between contested narratives, narratives which can be told about the past and construct a coherent story about what happened in a regime and why. We can follow Teitel in presenting this decision as a threshold choice between forms of political change (*ibid.*: 86–87). Our response to periods of political transition involves a choice between narratives of the past. In turn, different transitional justice mechanisms construct different narratives about the past.

Teitel sees what was at the periphery of responses to periods of political change—transitional justice—becoming normalised and a reflection of ordinary times (*ibid.*: 90–91). Transitional justice responses are now the ‘norm’ for transitional societies, and are turned to in many post-conflict states (Zunino 2011). Truth Commissions are an essential part of this process. The South African Interim Constitutions of 1993 instituted the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on the basis that “there is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not retaliation” (Christodoulidis 2000: 183). Christodoulidis quotes Edgar Gutierrez, Director of Guatemala’s Truth Commission:

We have chosen another way forward: memory as an instrument for the rebuilding of communities, as the affirmation of the dignity of the victims, as the first act of justice: the recovery of the right of the word. (*Ibid.*: 184)

This emphasis upon memory as a foundation aims to allow a new community to be founded. For example, in Guatemala the Commission for Historical Clarification attributed blame for ninety-three percent of the human rights violations that occurred in the country’s thirty-six year conflict to state agents and declared that the Guatemalan State had committed genocide against the indigenous Mayan population (Hayner 2002). Such a report stands as an example as the outcome of a Truth Commission—through identifying abuses that took place and focusing upon the victims, blame can be attributed and a collective narrative adopted.

What is problematic with Truth Commissions is precisely this very nature of the created narrative. Zunino notes that transitional justice approaches rely upon a number of universal notions regarding justice, accountability and truth that are then applied to the particular situation of a transitional society as a way to achieve a predetermined end (Zunino 2011: 2). This technical application (following Zunino's phrase) involves choosing amongst the different available means to pursue the end sought by transitional justice. To apply this to the context of Truth Commissions, the procedures and rules of such Commissions are means chosen to pursue the end of 'Truth'. This technical approach is not just problematic when it comes to transitional societies, as Zunino puts it, but it is also self-defeating (*ibid.*: 3). Zunino argues that this technical approach is problematic as transitional societies are complex and unique, and so applying universal principles may not be appropriate or do justice to the nuances of the society in question (*ibid.*: 2–3). Our focus needs to be moved away from single answers or universal responses towards the particular.

Zygmunt Bauman saw this technical approach of applying universal notions to specific situations as indicative of 'modernity'. Bauman defined modernity as a project that set itself the impossible task of ordering something, the human condition, which refuses to be ordered. At the same time, modernity sought to master nature by adjusting it to human needs. It did this precisely through a technical approach; modernity fragmented the world into small problems that could be managed technically (Bauman 1991).

The Truth Commission, an approach taken towards establishing Truth, is one that is firmly entrenched within a dialectic of means and ends. This is to say that the ends of Truth, the truth of what occurred under a previous regime in a country, is reached through appropriate means, namely a Commission which has the power to interview witnesses, examine evidence and compile a final report on the past. If necessary, it is possible to adapt these means to each situation in order to reach the best possible ends. For example, the South

African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) differed from other Truth Commissions used in other countries. The TRC's mandate focused upon reconciliation, not retribution (Christodoulidis 2000: 186). It was a hybrid Truth Commission, and aimed to provide a forum for storytelling, granting amnesty to individuals who made full disclosure before the TRC (*ibid.*: 183). Thus the TRC aimed not simply to discover the Truth about Apartheid, but also to serve as the basis for the new South African State. Christodoulidis quotes South African Minister of Justice Dullah Omar in an October 1993 radio interview:

The idea of the TRC goes back to ANC decisions ... [T]here was a strong feeling that some mechanism needed to be found to deal with all violations in a way that would ensure that we put our country on a sound moral basis. And so a view developed that what SA needs is a mechanism which would open up the truth for public scrutiny. But to humanise our society we had to put across the idea of moral responsibility—that is why I suggested a combination of the amnesty process with the process of victims' stories. (*Ibid.*: 190)

Despite this flexibility in the concept of a Truth Commission, I contend that such an institution will only ever succeed in producing an oppressive notion of 'Truth'. Such a statement can appear provocative. What I wish to contend here is that this oppression is the oppression of the particular, of individuals, in preference to a universal.

The Truth of a Truth Commission becomes a foundation for 'belonging'. The judgment as to what is the Truth of past regimes is a judgment as to what the tradition of a community is. This judgment cannot help but be foundational, and will posit an essential Truth that founds the legal order of the new State. It is this essentialising that must be opposed. Again Nancy's thought is instructive:

A community presupposed as having to be one of human beings presupposes that it effect, or that it must effect, as such and integrally, its own essence, which is itself the accomplishment of the essence of humanness. (Nancy 1991: 3)

Nancy's example of the human being illustrates the problem of essential foundations, namely that the community legitimated by that foundation works toward effecting that essence. In the case of post-conflict societies who have utilised Truth Commissions, measures of governance are legitimated through reference to this established Truth.

Thus through presupposing a foundational 'truth' in their judgments, Truth Commissions can serve to oppress what Jean-Luc Nancy called 'the political', the site where what it means to *be* in common is open to definition (Nancy 1991: xxxvii). The idea of Truth is not one that can be imposed upon a social order from without. This is especially the case for a mandated version of 'Truth' that is affirmed to be the historical version of events.

Instead of the Truth Commission, we can utilise Nancy's idea of the political to develop our discussion of tradition and offer an alternative for societies undergoing political upheaval. If such an alternative is to do justice to the political, then it must avoid creating meta-narratives. Such meta-narratives efface the '*in common*' of being-in-common, and simply create a 'being common' (*ibid.*: xxxix). As such, meta-narratives efface difference. All must agree with one truth, and it is this which oppresses.

Let us now connect these observations about truth to the previous points made regarding tradition and death. To recap—Heidegger saw *Dasein*'s Being-toward-death as a freedom towards death, with *Dasein* always-already born into a pre-existing world and tradition. Thus death is not seen negatively, but as revealing the possibilities for the political. Crucially, this existence is not lonely. It is an existence *with others*. We live our lives, in the spectre of their finitude, not as lonely actors but with other people. This point is important

as Nancy's political, the space of being *in* common, is a space with-others. The political is not a lonely space. The cultural world we are born into which constitutes our existence (Being-in-the-world) is a world that is built and inherited through our interactions with others. Moreover, this existence with others gains its meaning through its essential finitude. Not only does being-with-others characterise human existence, but this being-with needs to be appreciated as finite in order to do justice to its potential. As Nancy states:

One cannot make a world with simple atoms. There has to be a *clinamen*. There has to be an inclination or an inclining from one toward the other, of one by the other, or from one to the other. (*Ibid.*: 3)

The existence of the self is the mode of an exposition in common; the singular being is defined through their *clinamen* with-others (*ibid.*: 6–7).

It is this finite being-with others which characterises not just human existence, but also provides the basis for an *ethical* existence. This ethical existence can provide a response to political transition which does not have the potential to provide a foundational myth of Truth which can exclude and oppress those who do not ascribe to it. It is this ethical existence which is focused upon the particular, and upon the most ethical of all questions: "Who am I?" (Wolcher 2012: 103). As Wolcher contends, genuine ethical problems are experienced as personally intimate in a way that no mere objective relation between cause and effect could ever be (*ibid.*: 104). In fleshing out this ethical existence, we can draw support from the writings of Emmanuel Levinas.

Ethical experience for Levinas has its foundations in our existence with-others. For Levinas, this relation between the self and other people is irreducible. The absolutely other for Levinas is the Other, a Stranger who disturbs and disrupts every notion of ipseity, the same (Levinas 2001: 39). The irreducible strangeness of the Other presents an ethical demand that cannot be ignored or avoided and

must be faced. Thus a sense of subjectivity, a definition of self, is only felt when the individual faces an ‘infinite debt’ to the Other. By this is meant the fact that when faced with the Other, the self experiences the absolute alterity of difference. It is the Other, and our relationship to the other, the *clinamen*, that defines us. In this way, it is the Other that precedes the Self, and as such the Self will always-already owe the Other this infinite debt.

This “radical heterogeneity” of the other and its effect upon the individual is only possible with respect to a term that serves as entry into the relation—for Levinas a term can only remain at the point of departure as ‘I’ (*ibid.*: 36). Levinas views the I as “the being whose existing consists in identifying itself, in recovering its identity throughout all that happens to it” (*ibid.*). The I is the primordial work of identification but exists in relation with the Other.

Levinas saw the I’s enjoyment as isolated (*ibid.*: 120). The I’s isolation is unsustainable; it is not possible for anyone to live their life without being affected by others. The awareness of objects by the I leads to the awareness of the Other (*ibid.*: 148). This existence with-others constitutes the I, the subject. It is through others that we define our existence (Levinas 2004: 50). The I cannot ground itself by itself. Levinas places the formation of the Self in the very relation between the Self and the Other (*ibid.*: 104).

It is in the “face-to-face” encounter with the Other that the ethical revelation occurs (Levinas 2001: 202). The face of the other person causes a primordial demand for the other person’s recognition (*ibid.*: 199). This encounter hints to the fact that the other person is truly Other to the I, ungraspable. Such a connection reminds the I that its freedom is inhibited, and that in order to affirm its own subjectivity, the I is compelled to acknowledge that affirming its own subjectivity necessarily involves assuming responsibilities. These responsibilities are ethical. What is more, the encounter itself is ethical and no-one can release the I from these responsibilities that the I must encounter alone (*ibid.*: 205). Faced with the other the I is made aware of the other person as an unpredictable, irreducible entity:

I cannot posit myself as a subject without distinguishing myself from that which I am not. I must thematise the world around me. However, it is not possible to conceptualise the world without reaching out to the Other. In affirming myself as subjectivity in the face of the Other, I posit myself as responsible. (*Ibid.*: 215)

The language of ethics designates a singular relation with and response to the other person as other. Not only that, but ethics cannot be avoided precisely through this relation with the other. It is through this ethical relation that subjectivity is constructed (*ibid.*: 245).

Crucially here is the nature of Levinas's ethics. This ethics constitutes the subject. It provides the *clinamen* between individuals. Each individual makes the ethical relation with the other anew (*ibid.*). The I's existence unfolds ethically through the meeting with the Other:

The most passive, unassumable, passivity, the subjectivity or the very subjection of the subject, is due to my being obsessed with responsibility for the oppressed who is other than myself. (Levinas 2004: 55)

At this moment we must pause to note the wider picture that is being built. A position has been sketched opposing Truth Commissions as a response to dealing with past abuses and oppression in transitional societies. Such responses, which place a primacy to universal answers, are not just unethical, but can never be ethical. Ethics means that an individual acts because of ethics, not in accordance with external ethical rules or standards (Wolcher 2012:104).

The movements that comprise the Arab Spring and their dilemma of how to deal with the past point to the wider problematic of meta-narratives. Such meta-narratives, universal foundations, oppress difference, and the particular. This oppression effaces what Nancy termed the political, where individuals dwell together and define themselves through their dwelling with one another *as* individuals. The most important question facing modernity is this: What does a politics of the political look like?

Giorgio Agamben has written that human life itself must be rethought as *ethos*, as ethical way (Agamben 2007a: 11). This ethical way cannot be dependent upon presuppositions. Instead, this *ethos* is entirely dependent upon the singular being. This being Agamben calls “whatever-being” (Agamben 2007b: 1). Whatever-being is a singularity that does not belong to a class or a set. It is not founded upon anything more than its own existence (*ibid.*: 2). Whatever-being is “being such that it always matters” (*ibid.*: 1). This figure has no recourse to presuppositional foundations (*ibid.*: 15). It is irreducibly singular. As a singularity whatever-being founds its own existence through its exposition to other whatever-being, its Being-toward-others; Agamben does speak of the “being in common” of whatever-beings (*ibid.*: 87). This Being-toward other singularities is an ethical life.

This ethical life can be described as ‘profane’. Agamben traces a particular use of the term profanation to ancient Rome. The profane can be placed in opposition to the sacred. Whereas to be sacred was to be in the thrall of the gods, to profane an object or custom was to return it to the free use of men (Agamben 2007c: 73). What is profaned back to free use is free from all sacred names and foundational myths, such as an essence or as essential Truth. Sacred mything foundations are rendered inoperative by this new profane use. Agamben writes:

The passage from the sacred to the profane can, in fact, also come about by means of an entirely inappropriate use ... of the sacred: namely, play. (*Ibid.*: 75)

To profane life is to open up life to its own potentiality and possibilities. The act of profanation opens up life itself and makes it available to a new use, returning to common use the spaces that power had seized (*ibid.*: 77). Such a new use can be brought about by the curious example of ‘play’. It is this idea of ‘play’ which brings us back to our starting point: the connection between play and death. As Agamben states:

One day humanity will play with law just as children play with disused objects, not in order to restore them to their canonical use but to free them from it for good. (Agamben 2005: 64)

I would like here to make two claims. Firstly, that this 'playing' opens up Nancy's 'political'. The act of play is profane, and opens up new possibilities for politics. Play is therefore an act that opens up the political. Secondly, Nancy's political must be understood as being written in the tradition of the thought of Heidegger and Levinas. To fully explore the potentiality of political existence, we must first grasp the importance of death, finitude. Only when we appreciate this will any ethical dwelling with others have full meaning.

But, this being said, how does 'play' operate?

For Hans-Georg Gadamer, the human capacity for language involves the ability to understand something as a sign of something else. In arguing against the attempt to understand language and gestures as simply an act, Gadamer invokes the analogy of a dog who tries to bite his master's outstretched finger rather than understanding what it represents (Gadamer 1996: 95). As David Kishik has eloquently put it, if someone points in the direction we need to go, it is our prerogative to bite that finger (Kishik 2012: 70). Humans are unredeemable—the attempt to 'complete' this imperfect human condition through consigning 'man' to a universal truth, defining his essence, fitting him into a fixed narrative or directing him toward an original unity will abolish ethics and politics, as all that needs to be done is to follow the user manual for life (*ibid.*: 70–71).

Crucially, this lack of an end does not mean that existence is meaningless. Like a profane existence, play has no end. The most important point to remember in *The Seventh Seal* is not the fact that the Knight lost the game of chess. It is that the game of chess is our invention, and the rules which are set are ours alone. There is no reason why such games cannot be rethought, or renewed.

There is no purpose to the act of playing. When a child plays with a disused object, there is no user manual to tell them how to use

it. The act of play does not impose a new meaning upon an object; a cardboard box does not suddenly become a spaceship because a child uses it as such. Instead, the object is open to all possible uses. All that bounds play is the fact that our finitude means that play must one day end for us. We will be replaced in our play by others, who will create and recreate relations with others anew. Play is man's vocation precisely because play has no end. As Kishik maintains:

Agamben's point, therefore, is not that we need to do away with all classes and identities ... by repressing or dissipating or transcending them. Since no identity is sacred, the ethical task is actually to profane it, use it, play with it, examine it, struggle for and against it, or even render it completely inoperative within our life, but without trying to resolve the matter once and for all. (Kishik 2012: 83)

In support of Kishik's contention, Agamben does tell us that whatever-being "wants to appropriate belonging itself" (Agamben 2007b: 87). To 'play' with belonging is to engage in a task which is end-less (in the sense that it has no end). There is no 'final state' or 'final identity' which is to be reached. Whatever-being can have neither identity nor a bond of belonging (*ibid.*: 86).

To play *is* ethical. It involves opening up our actions and identities to new potentialities. To live a life of play is to live a life of potentiality, constantly open to the future. In this sense there is an affinity between play and Heidegger's being-towards-death. Both play and death can show us that our lives are potential. This world is ours to grasp and play with, and such a playful politics will precisely be *ethical*.

The construction of such a life is a constant act of deconstruction (*ibid.*: 104). Humans "have not an *end*, but a *remnant*. There is no foundation in or beneath them; rather, at their centre lies an irreducible disjunction in which each term, stepping forth in the place of a remnant, can bear witness" (Agamben 2002: 159). Remnants resist totalising tendencies. Humanity, or those who make up what

we call humanity, are unfinished manuscripts, a community of fragments without a need for a universal whole, or an 'end'. Through play this remnant of existence is able to explore the possibilities of its Being-toward-death, and its being-with others. A playful existence is an existence with-others. It is a playful being-in-common.

It is this character of being-in-common which Truth Commissions efface through imposing a narrative of belonging. Being-in-common has no end, as it is an exposure of singularities to their own finitude, their being-toward-death. In this manner being-in-common is not a politics of identity, as the common has no identity. Nor is it a politics of a narrative, as it has no fixed narrative. It is an exposure of singularities to the political possibilities beyond a fixed narrative, such as a 'Truth', or other terms that define belonging. It is in this context that I would like to advance two potential keys to what I will call play-toward-death-with-others. These are the ideas of 'repetition' and 'testimony'.

The act of 'testimony' is the bearing of witness to that for which one cannot bear witness. In *Remnants of Auschwitz*, Agamben uses the Nazi death camp to explore an *aporia* that exists at the heart of witnessing. This *aporia* relates to the importance of the figure of the *Muselmann*. The *Muselmann* was an extreme figure of survival in the camps—an individual who no longer sustained the characteristics of the living but who were not yet dead. As Catherine Mills describes, they had reached such a state of physical decrepitude and existential disregard that inmates hesitated to call them living, and hesitated to call their deaths a death (Mills 2003). As Primo Levi described the *Muselmann*, they were the 'drowned' of Auschwitz (Levi in Agamben 2002: 44). Agamben goes on to cite Levi and Levi's central paradox of being a witness to an event such as Auschwitz:

We, the survivors are not the true witnesses ... we survivors are not only an exiguous but also anomalous minority. We ... did not touch bottom. Those who did so, who saw the Gorgon, have not returned to tell about it or have returned mute, but they are the

‘Muslims’, the submerged, the complete witnesses (Levi, in Agamben 2002: 33).

The true witnesses of what happened in Auschwitz were the *Muselmanner*, those inmates who had become inhuman from the treatment they had received. However, these drowned were the ones who could not talk. In his testimony, the survivor who has not touched bottom of destruction can only speak by proxy, in place of the true witness, who cannot speak. The true witness’s testimony is delivered by the one who was an incomplete witness. Thus the witness was bearing witness for the Other who could not talk for himself. Testimony is always-already an ethical act, as it brings the I into a relationship with the Other.

It is this nature of testimony that is vital to the remnant of humanity. The act of testimony, the act of bearing witnessing to past events helps to build the tradition that constitutes the world of culture into which we are all born, and through which we all constitute our Being-toward-death. The notion of testimony here, of witnessing, should be separated from the idea of a witness coming before a courtroom, or even a Truth Commission. Agamben’s writings on testimony do not presuppose a testimony given under oath, or even in a formal setting. It is the act of bearing witness, not the setting nor the context, which is important. As Agamben states: “human beings are human insofar as they bear witness to the inhuman” (Agamben 2002: 121). Testimony not only establishes a relationship to the Other, it also allows the singular being to construct their sense of self through their own confrontation with the past. Testimony enables an understanding of the self, what it means to ‘belong’ and what relationship the individual has with others. In this sense, the act of testimony, of witnessing, provides the *clinamen* to the Other. To be a witness to events affecting others recognises that existence is not lonely, but is a being-with-others.

Contrarily, the Truth Commission embraces the *aporia* of witnessing; the true witnesses in transitional societies will not be able

to give testimony, as they will be the victims. As such, what is posited as Truth will in fact be incomplete. Testimony embraces this incompleteness of witnessing, enabling individuals to be in-common, without an end. In a real sense, testimony is playful, as it has no purpose other than its own revelation, which is that existence is an existence 'with'.

Most importantly, there is no defined way for testimony to be given. Testimony simply is. It is the revelation of the finitude of the singular being, the *clinamen* between singularities which exposes their finitude in-common, the fact that we are all Being-toward-death in a world with-others. This means that testimony, as it has no end, can be repeated. In this repetition testimony can open the space of the political for action, for the ethical way of life to be conducted. Here we can connect testimony to the notion of 'repetition'. Agamben writes of repetition:

Repetition is not the return of the identical; it is not the same as such that returns. The force and the grace of repetition, the novelty it brings us, is the return as the possibility of what was. Repetition restores the possibility of what was, renders it possible anew; it's almost a paradox ... To repeat something is to make it possible anew. (Agamben 2008: 328)

Repetition here does not bring similitude, but rather novelty. The repetition of testimony is the opening up of the space of being-in-common; it is the continual revisiting of the past which Teitel understood as a way to move forward (Teitel 2003: 86). Thus there is no answer, or a foundation, such as a Truth Commission supplies. It is in the endless repetition of the act of witnessing, of testimony, where political existence occurs. It is to this ethical repetition upon we must focus. There will be no revolution, or zero hour. This task is both endless (as it has no end point), and bounded (for us at least, by our own lives).

Through repeating the bearing of witness to the inhuman, the human being effects a play-toward-death-with-others, opening a

space for being-in-common. Tahrir Square, and the threat it poses to the modern State, should be understood in these terms. It is prescient to end this exposition with Agamben's words:

Wherever these singularities peacefully demonstrate their being in common there will be a Tiananmen, and, sooner or later, the tanks will appear. (Agamben 2007b: 87)

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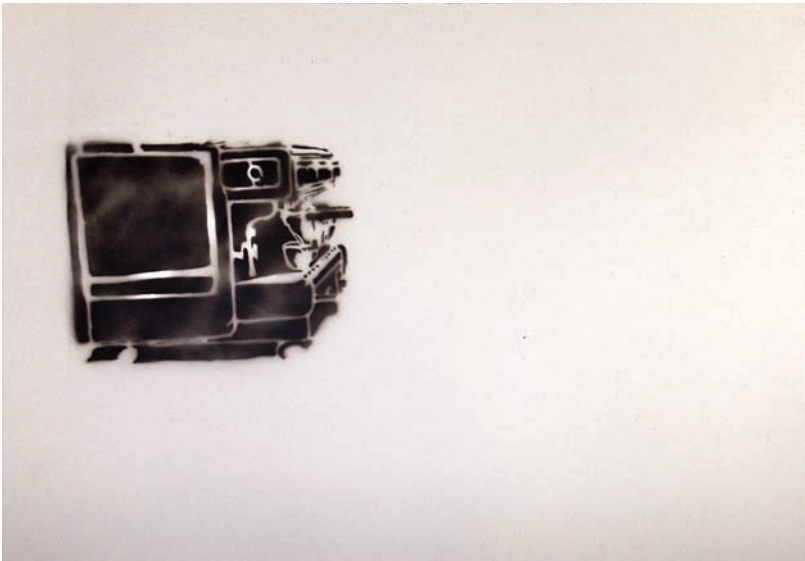
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UNEMPLOYMENT WILL TEAR US APART

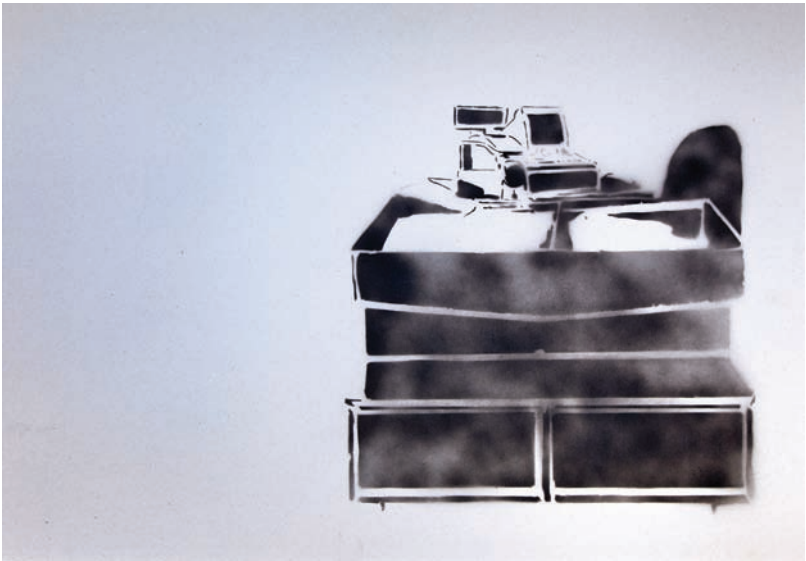
Flo Kasearu













B.

OVER THE FENCE

POST-SOCIALIST MODERNITY...

Francisco Martínez¹

The best place to hide anything is in plain view

Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Purloined Letter' (1844)

To see what is in front of one's nose needs a constant struggle

George Orwell, 'In Front of Your Nose' (1946)

Bardak and remont societies

Even in a world of connections, such as the late-modern one, each society keeps creating its own disconnections and failures, which eventually become a part of ordinary dynamics, a normality of crises. We can take Lija as an example, owner and waitress of the Georgian restaurant 'Argo' in Tallinn (Estonia). I've heard Lija speaking in Finnish, Estonian and English language; one of the days I went to Argo for lunch I asked her how many languages she knows. Surprisingly, she told me that she's trilingual but does not speak any of the previously mentioned languages. She is a native speaker of Armenian, Georgian and Russian, three languages that she learned in childhood. Nonetheless, she recently acquired these unlikely skills in order to attend to both tourist and locals.

Lija graduated in law at the University of Tbilisi and briefly worked as a lawyer. Then she married a German man and moved with him to Estonia. Being divorced in the late nineties, with her academic certificates remaining unrecognized in the new state, she

¹ Thanks to Madis Mikkor, Siobhan Kattago, Dita Bezdičková, Maroš Krivý, Madli Maruste, Laur Kiik, Patrick Laviolette, Klavs Sedlenieks, Andres Kurg, Ksenia Berner and Marika Agu for their encouragement and comments on drafts of this text. Earlier versions of this chapter have been presented in the *Playgrounds and Battlefields* seminar in February 2013, SIEF Conference on July 2013, and Humboldt University summer school in August 2013.

bought the restaurant from an Armenian entrepreneur.² Lija has been working in Argo for ten years... however, in November 2013 she was told to move out. The new landowner wants to construct an apartment building on the site, where there has been a bar since 1980. The same year, a canteen called ‘White Bears’ opened here, serving cheap beer for construction workers and seamen who built the venues related to the Moscow Olympic Games.³ Lija has been searching all over Tallinn for a new locale to rent, yet has found nothing cheaper than 5.000 euros per month. Eventually, she will relocate Argo near to the Stockmann shopping mall. If it doesn’t work within three months time, she’s convinced to emigrate to Italy and take care of elderly people to make money.

Once I go to the restaurant a dozen of times, she tells me her life story and openly laments: “Sure, there were many things forbidden in the Soviet period, but we enjoyed stability and social differences weren’t that huge. People say that the Soviet system was alienating, but I have the impression that the current system doesn’t need humans; at least, it doesn’t need people like me”. Lija grew in a world in which labour was identitary, so its loss, added to other losses, makes her a sort of half a person. Behind this case, as well as other experiences of disorientation, we can find a way of governing societies that is led by financial criteria, shock-therapies, erosion of the collective idea, lack of cultural tools, deterioration of working conditions and material failures.

This chapter suggests that late-modernity is particularly imploding in post-socialist societies, wherein change and crisis have become

² From my fieldnotes in Tallinn in 2013. During several months I have been considering to change the real names of my informants. Eventually, I have decided to maintain them, since a repeated comment that I got from the referred people was that ‘no one writes about us’ or ‘tells our story’. So somehow I believe that the recognition and visibility won’t be complete without the real name. Otherwise, all the informants were aware of the academic purpose of the inquiry.

³ Some sailing competitions were organised in the Baltic Sea, prompting the development of touristic infrastructures in the region.

a permanent condition, a way of life, an order.⁴ Also I put forward that the current differences between West and East European societies are not about being highly developed systems and imitative followers, but rather related to patterns of negotiating modernity and ways of applying a transition ideology. Therefore, I propose to question post-socialist and late-modern processes as simultaneous and interrelated, substituting any 'developing/imitating' approach for one that acknowledges excesses of modernity and a crisis of normality.

The term 'post-socialist modernity' is proposed in the attempt to explore multiple regimes of modernity; with local negotiations and global failures; in dispute. Late-modernity and post-socialism are here presented as reciprocal; hence acknowledging the complexity of the experience and the effects that the collapse of the Soviet Union produced beyond the border of the former Tsarist Empire. By post-socialist modernity I do not mean that the modern project has lost all utopias and markets have rawly eaten social support from the state. Rather, I refer to a new togetherness and way of dominating, characterised by the evaporation of collective notions, the breed of uncertainties, an infantilisation of politics and the re-writing into neo-liberal grammar of the ways of organising societies.

Max Weber (1983) related the emergence of modernity to a new understanding of civilisation, which evolved through local negotiations and processes of rationalisation. In this sense, we can frame post-socialist modernity into a context of disappearing civilisations, in which local negotiations deal now with 'excesses and abjections' of modernity (Ferguson 1999). In his study of the decline of the

⁴ Late-modern features are evidenced in Eastern Europe in a more naked and paradigmatic way but late-modern societies themselves live in a permanent liminality. According to Arpad Szakolczai, liminality becomes a permanent condition when any of the phases described by Victor Turner (Separation, liminality and re-aggregation) becomes frozen. Szakolczai invokes the example of communism as exemplifying a society stuck in the final state of a passage towards the future (2003: 220–223). See Szakolczai, *The Genesis of Modernity*. London, New York: Taylor and Francis 2003.

Zambian Copperbelt, James Ferguson explores the anti-teleological variations of modernity, herein described as ‘bush-like’, rather than ‘ladder-’, ‘tree-’ or ‘root-like’. With the term ‘abjection’, he refers to both, a sense of loss and a type of expulsion and disconnection that is becoming normal, paradoxically, throughout a world of connections (Ferguson 1999: 236). Moreover, there is a need to recognise the ‘actually-existing post-socialism’ with distinct manifestations, rather than analysing it through the lens of official discourses of globalisation and transition—which present it as monolithic and abstract. Otherwise, the transition discourse might become another form of ‘orientalism’, this time applied to Eastern Europe (Sedle-nieks 2013: 148).

Understanding locally embedded interpretations of the changing social context is crucial to observe the differences in the practices of transformation. As in any non-linear system (based on temporary evolutions rather than progress), the inter-relations between cause and effect are neither proportional nor determined, but rather chance-like and based on needs that never get totally free from contingent vectors. Social changes are rooted in multiple historical processes. New transformations complement old ones, always sensitive to the initial condition; thus not substituting them to the end and complicating personal adaptations.⁵

Indeed, post-socialism refers to a perennial state of transition, in which the normal is the attempt to return to normality. As modernity (crises, shocks...), post-socialism relies on continuous discontinuities and sutured gaps. When continuously repeated, these chaotic regularities and contingencies become the normality, creating their own inabilities (expressed through fragilities, irreversible vectors and sutured needs). This refers to a state of perfect non-adaptation, not because of the extension or scope, but based on the capacity of the system to self-regenerate, constantly producing new

⁵ For instance, Alison Stenning and Kathrin Hörschelmann suggest to “outline post-socialisms that are partial and not always explanatory but nevertheless important” (Stenning, Hörschelmann 2008: 312).

connections and disconnections and limiting the critical horizon of societies.

In strict terms, post-socialism refers to what followed the privatisation of the means of production and public goods, the discredit of critics of capitalism and the dismantlement of multiple geo-political barriers. Here the focus is put on Eastern Europe, yet this multi-dimensional process had as well several collateral effects on the whole world; namely an increase of labour and economic inequality, a growing vulnerability for individuals (social atomisation and discredit of collective thought), a rise in the transnational circulation of capitals, a technological shift which accelerates everyday life, an escalation of production (correlated by one of consumption), a cultural aphasia⁶ (incapability to verbalise changes and alternatives), and a desynchronisation of individuals with the world and among them. In short, it is not possible to explain late-modern processes without being aware of post-socialism.⁷

Hartmut Kaelble (2000) finds as a distinct feature of European societies their attempt to 'moderate modernity' through public property, interventionist and politically engaging government and the development of the welfare state. Contemporary policies seem however to point at different direction⁸. Nevertheless, and as Stephen Collier has pointed out (2011), post-socialist modernity is

⁶ For more on the topic see Oushakine, S. *The Patriotism of Despair* (2009). Our experience is not directly reflected in the formally organized world that surrounds us. This is manifested in an incapability to communicate our conscious experiences with language. Also discourses have acquired new euphemisms, for instance Western societies promote growth to fight scarcity (rather than redistribution) and innovation to re-synchronize society with the world (rather than take control of the acceleration).

⁷ Indeed, post-socialism is better understood when related to late-modern processes (rather than post-modern or post-political). This new phase of modernity entails a new togetherness: new constellations of self and community determined by late-capitalist models, new alienating practices, intensively exhausting economies, multidimensional accelerating vectors, political inefficiencies of nation state model and a new understanding of obsolescence.

⁸ In 'A Brief History of Neoliberalism' (2005: 150–164), David Harvey defines the neo-liberal system as an 'accumulation by dispossession' prompted through four measures: 1. Privatisation and commodification of public goods; 2. Financialisation

not entirely 'post-social' (opposed to social welfare and governed through market forces), but rather a product of contingent historical factors, specific conjunctures and certain political decisions.⁹

Post-socialist modernity hints at a distinct togetherness in the frame of liberal democracy, global economy and network society, highly conditioned also by what occurred once the 'socialist' alternative vanished and 'transition' therapies were prescribed to several parts of the world. In this sense, post-socialist modernity describes how historical processes of social change are being embedded and shaped by something entirely new, producing an afterlife of modernity that encompasses abjections and excesses. Moreover, the radicality of the structural adjustment and shock therapies experienced in post-socialist societies depends upon the 'neoliberal' and technological character of globalisation, as well as upon the locally existing expectations, social infrastructures and regimes of knowledge.

Both post-socialism and late-modernity are meta-transitions unfolded through crises; a way of dealing with loss and change; a process of normalisation and occultism; an attempt to repair; a state of passage in which origins and destinations seem to have vanished. Summing up, I assume that the whole world has entered into a distinct phase of modernity, apparently uncontrollable and dependant upon unfinished fragmentary hegemonies. This is particularly evidenced in Eastern Europe: the continuous social changes experienced in the region, overlapped with global and technological shifts, have increased the perceived uncertainty and desynchronisation, making the effects of late-modernity more radical. The initial accounts of modernisation argued that in the course of development, traditional practices, informal networks and cultural particularities were about to disappear. However, what we have seen is that not only they remain but even condition and characterise willing social

of anything that can be turned into an instrument of economic speculation; 3. Social management and manipulation through crises. 4. A redistribution of state politics.

⁹ Modernity has always a social character; it entails a collective dream and an attempt to deal with scarcity.

transformations. The liminality and fragmentation of post-socialist societies rest therefore on both: the influential legacies of the past (mostly taken as a burden, re-producing persistent factors) and the changes experienced during the 'transition' period itself (entropic and excessive).

"We wanted the best, but it turned out like usual"¹⁰, acknowledged Viktor Chernomyrdin, Prime Minister of Russia between 1992–1998. A small twist of the quote illuminates a shadowed side of the post-socialistic change: "We wanted the best, but it turned out to be forever."¹¹

An example of that is the Russian term 'bardak' (*бардак*, multi-dimensional chaos), extensively used within the post-Soviet society in order to describe the radicality of recent changes.¹² 'Bardak' refers to a further des/organisation beyond the order-disorder dichotomy and to the impossibility to make sense within transformations experienced as a storm. 'Bardak' implies also a way of thinking, a mentality characterised by a survival set of assumptions, animal-like, habituated to shocks and crisis that prevails after being thrown into disarray. This 'bardak mentality' is one of the possible reactions to continuous discursive loopings, the failure of institutions and a disorderly state of existence; a situation that is not totally new in the region. After successive historical junctures and radical changes, the ethical orders of society get affected and people begin to treat each other more like circumstances and obstacles.

The volume 'A History of Eastern Europe' published by Routledge (2007) presents crisis and change as a long-term condition in the region. Anthropologist Klavs Sedlenieks shares this view, adding that if the whole life, generation after generation, is determined

¹⁰ "Хотелось как лучше, а получилось как всегда."

¹¹ "Хотелось как лучше, а получилось навсегда". See for instance Berdy, Michele, 'Hitting New Lows, Like Always'. – *The Moscow Times*, Issue 5285, 26 december 2013.

¹² In Russian language bardak means both mess and brothel. It comes probably from the Hebrew, language in which bardak means a hopeless tangle. Nonetheless, it also exists in Turkish language, referring to a water pot. For studies on 'bardak' as a form of dispossession see Jakob Rigi 'Post-Soviet Chaos' (2001).

by liminality some culture features are geared towards withstanding regular, persistent and fast changes at the level of state organisation. Sedlenieks describes this ‘solution’ as a ‘buffer culture’ (2013), a survival adaptation to the state of permanent transition. Also Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov (2003) has pointed out how perennial changes in the state-citizens relation in Russia provoked ‘a process of continuous displacement’, whereby the system is perpetually built but never finished—thus creating a sense of continuous failure and disorder, as well as keeping people distracted and busy with ungraspable tasks. In his view, disorder emphasises its own temporary character—problems not yet solved, order still unachieved... yet, as a display of work in progress takes itself out of linear time (Ssorin-Chaikov 2003: 136–137).

There are forces and rules in disorder; we may even go as far as to present chaos as a late-modern form of domination; a sort of Foucaultian *dispositif* that depoliticises crisis, convert it into a lifestyle and translate it into normality. The absence of direct regulation and intervention is in itself a way of organising societies and planning transformations, mostly decided in advance. Agreeing with Maroš Krivý, the fact that things do not proceed as outlined, “means neither that they are not planned, nor that there is no logic behind them” (Krivý 2012: 16). Crises do not occur because of an institutional vacuum, but actively influenced by them, taking place because of certain discourses and measures approved.

As described by Joanna Kusiak, fears, passions and dreams of freedom and a Western order were used in Eastern Europe to feed the conditions of what people later described as chaos (Kusiak 2012: 317). This had a strong impact in the recent urban changes in Warsaw, to the point that chaos seemed to be better organised than the democratic order.¹³ Also Jakob Rigi¹⁴ presents chaos as a mode of

¹³ “There is no mysterious emergence of chaos, but only power relations triggering it” (Kusiak 2012: 317–318).

¹⁴ Under the pseudonym of ‘Joma Nazpary’.

domination in his study of quotidian violence and dispossession in post-socialist Kazakhstan. In his view, chaos favours both arbitrariness and the incapacity to navigate it, resulting from the articulation of myriads of smaller pockets of order (2001: 4). Rigi sees chaos as far from accidental, being created by the ruling elite in response to a crisis of hegemony.¹⁵

Deficits and crises have been a driving force in modern political economy,¹⁶ yet nowadays they are evidenced in a more insatiable, naked and unbounded way. In chaotic systems predictability is sharply limited, changes come and vanish as a surprise, activity becomes crisis oriented and production relies on young apprentices. A practical consequence of this is the impossibility to predict future changes with precision, since a small initial variation might produce a great change in the system. Chaos is not innocent or neutral in societies, but rather cunning, making disabilities appear as accidental to a system rather than generated by it (Lorenz 1993; Faraldo 1999; Rigi 2001; Kusiak 2012). Chaotic systems present the things go wrong as necessary. They not only entail a certain order, but also inner contradictions, antagonisms, inconsistencies, forms of precariousness and marginalities.

Dis/orders and crises are also related to a lack of time and a 'contraction of the present',¹⁷ interrupting personal rhythms and

¹⁵ According to Gramsci, the crisis of hegemony happens in a situation where the old social system is in crisis and while alternatives are absent or not strong enough to transform it or bring a new one. Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, London: Lawrence and Wishart.

¹⁶ For instance, Katherine Verdery uses the concept of 'economy of shortage' (1991: 76) to describe how the Soviet model economy was ruled in Eastern Europe. She claims the conveniency to differentiate between the capacity to allocate resources and the amount of resources available. See Verdery, Katherine 1991. *National Ideology under Socialism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

¹⁷ Concept developed by Hermann Lübbe, who claims that Western societies are experiencing an ongoing contraction of the present as a consequence of the accelerating rates of cultural and social innovation. For Lübbe, the past is defined as what is no longer valid, while the future denotes what is not yet valid. The theme of accelerating time appears already in Luther's Table Talk inside a suggestive representation of the

social processes. It is a system whereby the time for which we can account, reflect and imagine our living conditions, become constantly disrupted, shortened and reduced *at minimum*. The anxiety and uncertainty provoked by crisis and turbo-acceleration produce an excess of liminality, thus societies in a perpetual state of transition. When people's lives are hedged by fear, their horizons shrink and they only see their way to survival. Chaos, crisis and turbo-distraction not only do not provide any chance for alternate orders, but it even impedes the possibility to think and imagine alternatively.

Based on an ethnographic work in post-socialist Moscow, Olga Shevchenko holds that crisis was assumed as the norm in Russia after a decade of wildly unpredictable changes, even becoming "the very essence of a community's identity, a mode of living and a way of self-imagining without which the community is inconceivable" (2009: 3). She juxtaposes the notion of 'total crisis' (Shevchenko 2009: 2) to the conventional usage of the term, which designates an acute event. Originally, crisis referred to key moments in the evolution of a sickness, which lead to recover or to death. But here crisis becomes a state that favours certain practices and understanding of community as well as disables some others, conditioning the ways and forms to measure one place in life. Indeed, perennial crises make ourselves blasé in the face of changes; forcing us to deal with them in a survival way—promoting a living made of resistances, rather than by adaptations.

East-European societies are ever transforming systems: living in a constant process of change. This state was intensified by global

immanence of the apocalypse as a vertiginous shortening of time, whereby 'centuries become years, months become weeks, weeks turn into days, days into hours, hours into minutes, and minutes become seconds' (Martin Luther, *Tischreden*. – *Werkausgabe*, II, 2756 b). Since the late 18th century, a new time consciousness has developed in Western culture (particularly influenced by Hegel). Hermann Lübbe, 'The Contraction of the Present'. – *High-Speed Society. Social Acceleration, Power and Modernity*. Ed. H. Rosa and W. Scheuerman. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University 2009, 159–178.

circulations and technological shifts, which have extended a need of constant adaptation. Crises and breakdowns appear as part of the system, not as aberrant. Likewise, global vectors are embedded in an increasingly liminal and precarious way. The failure to locally incorporate global features is presented therefore as exceptional, as dependent upon local skills and maturity, thus a matter of time and behaviour. There are those who suggest that this kind of adaptation is a leading cause of innovation (Graham and Thrift 2007). However, here I argue that politics of repair and systemic breakdowns are the means by which late-modern societies remain in a state of distraction.

In Russian language there is a word intimately related to quotidian experience of crisis: 'remont' (ремонт). This term came originally from French, meaning the provisioning of horses to the cavalry. In Russian, the use has been extended describing all sorts of repair activities and ways of handling losses. As exposed by Ekaterina Gerasimova & Sofia Chuikina (2004) and Wladimir Sgibnev (2013), 'remont' might be understood as both the expression of a state of permanent unfinishedness and a way of negotiating modernity. Perennially ongoing renovations, continuous breakdowns, patching amendments, anti-crises measures, unstable equilibriums, low-key engagements... late-modern processes seem to extend politics of repair and societies of maintenance beyond the former Soviet bloc. Indeed, contemporary Western societies appear to be in a perpetual state of repairing, as engaged in the *remont* and depending upon low-quality, fast social infrastructures, forays of improvement that have not been thought through.

In Eastern Europe, post-socialism has been not only a missed opportunity for developing an inclusive public arena and indigenous civil society but also a laboratory whereby implementing shock therapies later applied in the former 'first world' (Bockman, Eyal 2002; Klein 2007). Indeed, contemporary crises in Southern Europe and austerity measures in the global north might be understood as

part of the 'boomerang effect' (Arendt 1951)¹⁸ from post-socialist *stragedies*.¹⁹

In short, post-socialism has not been merely a transition, or an attempt of catching up to Western standards, but a social experience intimately related to both late-modern processes and embedded patterns. Processes of privatisation were not simply contemporaneous in different parts of the world but also justified by parallel arguments and ideologies, pursued by interrelated, overlapping groups of elites, personally and corporately linked to each other. Nevertheless local actors had a crucial responsibility and active role in translating shocks, 'domesticating' neoliberal 'therapies' and idealising changes (Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008).

Also it refers to a process of social atomisation, low-key political engagements, privatisation of public goods, increasing turbo-distractions and the motionless acceleration of life pace. Post-socialism entails indeed indeterminacy and an enormous uncertainty and says about a state of disorientation, social disengagement and individual impossibility to cope with changes, which sharply contrast with the stability and collective thinking of the socialist period. This also coincides with a request to escape from the past and follow the new credo of 'innovations'. Such a 'macro-liminality', internalised

¹⁸ As formulated by Hannah Arendt, the practices of colonial governance were eventually transferred back to the metropolitan country. Regimes originally excused as exceptional laboratories of modernity became eventually normal manifestations of reason. In this sense, nineteenth century imperialism and colonialism played a crucial role in creating the conditions of possibility for twentieth century totalitarianism in Europe, favouring the crystallisation of a variety of forces and factors. Nowadays, racial arguments, nationalism, bureaucratisation and extractive economy have been substituted by new forms of domination.

¹⁹ My friend Maroš Krivý first noticed how several people in Tallinn unwillingly distorted 'strategy' by saying 'stragedy' in their speech. *Stragedy* refers to those plans conceived from rash and deception. Discourses of transition usually define as a 'social cost' the suffering and disorientation provoked by the political decisions taken during the last twenty years in post-socialist countries. This line of argumentation ignores what more precisely has been experienced by many individuals as a tragedy. This is not the only problem, however; but also the motivation behind those who promote the official discourse to do that.

as normal, is what gives a distinct cultural condition to post-socialism.²⁰ Twenty-three years after the fall of socialism, Eastern Europe is still running in child's shoes, with the lights off, and an i-phone marking the direction. Hence I dare to ask: was the transition about bringing freedom or aiming at expanding markets (and reducing labour rights)? How was the language of liberty, identity and democracy misused? Has *euroremont* fulfilled expectations?

Little *stragedies* of post-socialism

Transition came to Eastern Europe to stay and advance back to Western societies following a boomerang effect. Indeed, post-socialism does not seem to comply precisely with a trajectory of transit to an endpoint, or to a vacuum between two units; it is rather a broken constellation that remains as such through shocks and continuous changes. Shocks were introduced in the second half of the nineteenth century in the context of railway accidents and their traumatic nervous effects. In the transit from the medical to the popular discourse, shocks acquired connotations of risk, calamity and human impossibility to fully control, understand and cope with them. Nevertheless, shocks are not always negative, they may bring the possibility for intervention and open the door of the new.²¹ Shocks are just not neutral; as any frontier, or edge, they can be used to regulate what passes, what remains, and in which conditions they do it.

This assumption of post-socialism as a vacuum, or transition, introduces societies into an iron cage from where is not possible to escape. The cage of transition grows as a snowball and moves directionless, in a sort of inert runaway. Shocks fail to enter into personal discourses of experience, undermining shared meanings, attention and critical involvements. Late modernity, with its bombardment

²⁰ For more on the topic see Erjavec, A. (ed.), *Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition*. University of California Press 2003.

²¹ See Adorno's, Benjamin's, Brecht's, or Shklovsky's works on estrangement, interruption and defamiliarisation.

of inputs and fragmented continuity (nonetheless experienced as a flow) determine the way we make sense and communicate. Hence the material and abstract shocks of late-modernity not only condition life experience (*Erlebnis*) but also make certain thoughts impossible (*Erfahrung*).²²

The internalisation of shocks as the norm determines our ways of making sense, sweeping critical horizons and the possibility of personal narratives, which nowadays has disorientation as a consequence and run for your life as a reaction²³. In a way, post-socialist societies are like a watch shop where each clock shows a different time; or like a freak body whereby some parts are more elastic, grow in different sizes and directions, and which walks improperly. From a two-speed society we have turned into a desynchronised and fragmented one. Contrarily to common interpretations (Kliems and Dmitrieva 2010; Czepczynski 2008), post-socialism is not a period of transition with a relaxed self-understanding and behaviour, but a distinct social condition, liminal, nostalgic (*algos* implies anxiety), and depending upon *stragedies* (fuzzy failures; plans and expectations that went wrong).

²² In this regard, Walter Benjamin distinguished between the consequences of shocks as '*Erfahrung*' and as '*Erlebnis*', noticing that: "Baudelaire placed the shock experience (*Chockerfahrung*) at the very center of his artistic work" (1969: 163), and then, Baudelaire "indicated the price for which the sensation of the modern age may be had: the disintegration of the aura in the experience of shock (*Chockerlebnis*)" (1969: 194). This approach is actually similar to what Georg Simmel defines as 'blasé' and 'metropolitan mental life'. "The greater the share of the shock factor in particular impressions, the more constantly consciousness has to be alert as a screen against stimuli; the more efficiently it does so, the less do these impressions enter experience [*Erfahrung*], tending to remain in the sphere of a certain hour of one's life [*Erlebnis*]. Perhaps the special achievement of shock defence may be seen in its function of assigning to an incident a precise point in time in consciousness at the cost of the integrity of its contents" (Benjamin 1969: 163). Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*. H. Arendt (ed.). New York: Schocken Books 1969; Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: a Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*. London: Verso 1983; Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*. New York: Da Capo Press [1863] 1964.

²³ Run for your life as 'every man for himself', 'let whoever is able to, save himself' attitude or *bardak* mentality.

Figure 1. Photo of *Urmas* taken in Tallinn's *Roheline Turg* esplanade. July 2012, FM



For Dmitrieva and Kliems, the withdrawal of state monopoly, the terminations of controls, the cultural opening of the region and the entry of private investors—with their individual likes and dislikes—into urban life led to a hybridity of the post-socialist city. Post-socialism is in this sense ugly, uncanny, and even ‘bizarre’²⁴. However, this hybridity is not neutral, apolitical or clean, but rather entropic and liminal, entailing both mirroring and driving features that make forth changes more uncertain and difficult to follow. In Tallinn, for instance, we can identify powerful examples of liminality, which interrupt and question the hegemonic discourse about transition by suspending ‘normality’, its necessity and causality.²⁵ In the summer season, more than a hundred people gather in the esplanade *Roheline Turg*, in the heart of the old town. Every evening they

²⁴ See for instance, Saulesh Yessenova, ‘Hawkers and containers in Zarya Vostoka: how ‘bizarre’ is the post-Soviet bazaar?’ – N. Dannhaeuser (ed.), *Markets and Market Liberalization: Ethnographic Reflections*. Amsterdam: Elsevier 2006, 37–59.

²⁵ Likewise, the snapshots exposed in the text invite us to reconstruct history and are perceived as if the running time was stopped for a moment.

play ping-pong, sing, flirt and drink alcohol (even if theoretically it is illegal in non-authorised public places). This space of fun is also a working place for a few 'anyone(s)'. Besides the waitresses of *Hell Hunt* we can meet Urmas, who earns around 20 euros a day picking up cans and bottles. On Fridays and Saturdays he might get more than 50 euros. Early morning, he goes to the recycling machine situated in a parking lot nearby *Rimi* supermarket to put the cans and bottles and get some money. According to his calculus, 26 cans value 2 euro.

During several nights in July 2012, I brought some beers from *Kodu* bar to him. We then sat on the bench and he told me stories, repeating himself a bit. "I'm the king of this place. People know me and respect me. At the end, this is not a job; it helps me to forget my pains and sadness", he confessed, demonstrating that our fun is not his sorrow. There are above 300 can-collectors in Tallinn. Most of them work at night and just during the summer. He got the goldmine of the business (*Roheline Turg* esplanade) because his son is a popular Estonian rapper living in New York. The name of his son is Lennart Lundve, though everyone knows him as 'Abraham'. The youngsters look for Urmas, bringing the bottles to him: "They respect me because of my son".

In the autumn 2011 he ended up in prison, after having fought for the place against another can collector. Urmas spent four months and four days behind bars. He confirmed the territorial character of the esplanade by saying: "This is my place. If there is someone picking up around this area he has to leave once I come". In August, he told me that he had already saved more than 2.000 euros. He doesn't want to ask money from the son, even if he presupposes that Abraham is earning well. "People should know how difficult is life" says Urmas, who fought for four years in Afghanistan (1982–1987), in the Red Army. In the 90s he worked as a mechanic repairing boats, but he lost his sight and had to choose between the job and a medical operation. He is 55 years old. His wife had Russian and Estonian roots. "I also fought for the independence of this Republic, Estonia



Figure 2. Graffiti in Polymer 'STAY OUT OF THE PREZENT FUTURE BOY', taken after visiting the summer festival of the culture factory. Tallinn, August 2012. FM

was not fair with me”, he claimed. He planned to go to Stockholm at the end of August, and then to Tenerife to do the same business—someone told him that the weather is good there even in the winter season. “Perhaps I’ll cry once I leave Estonia”.²⁶

A walk around Tallinn and Berlin traces the shadow play and sutures of renewal and metamorphosis, making the act of raptorial change and its nonlinear outlines visible. In most post-socialist cities, we meet an archipelago wherein the eccentric modernities clash, setting the cityscape as a particularly entropic place. Such entropy

²⁶ Quotes from my field notes. Tallinn, July and August 2012. This chapter is not an ethnography in which I portray my fieldwork in Tallinn as an existential journey. Rather it’s an attempt to answer questions related to my doctoral thesis and a literature review on the global implications of post-socialist transformations. Various commentators have observed that I should have changed the names of my informants as an ethic concern. However, one of the claims repeated by all my informants was that no-one told their story, that they had no voice or representation within the hegemonic discourse. Therefore I decided to publish their real names, as a way of recognition.

reflects not just an accumulation of historical energy but as a constant re-ordering of the system of meanings. Rather than a sum of stratifications, in post-socialist cities we encounter a juxtaposition of unfinished projects, modern ruins and elements that do not totally match; in other words, a sort of *Frankenstein*.²⁷

For instance, in the area of the old-factory Polymer coexist motor-bikers, mechanics, anarcho-vegans and artists without merging at all. The building (3.000 sq. mt.) was previously a rubber toys factory. According to anonymous informants, first gatherings for rave parties and band rehearsals were organised in the late 90s in a non-legal way. However, the founder, Madis Mikkor declares: “there was actually nothing before 2002, when I rented the first spaces in the huge derelict factory for a furniture workshop and a rehearsal space for live-action role players”. Madis founded *Kultuuritehas Polymer* with his brother Tõnis Mikkor and Alfred Rosenroth. They originally focused on historical preservation and worked hard to transform the space and renovate the building. Activities officially commenced as a civic initiative in early 2003; Polymer Art Factory was already registered as a non-profit organization by 2004. “This was done in spite of the bitter understanding of the fact that the rental agreement was always extended by three months only and that the future of the building would most probably be demolishing”, confesses Madis.

Kultuuritehas Polymer has been a member of the European network of independent cultural centres ‘Trans Europe Halles’ and pays rent monthly to the official landowner, who is a dubious real-state investor. Artists and activists have been working in the building for ten years, yet extending the original contract every three months. This eventually impedes any long-term strategy or renovation; they even thought about moving the culture factory to another place.²⁸

²⁷ For more on the topic see forthcoming article ‘On the Post-socialist Entropy of Tallinn (Estonia)’, Martínez.

²⁸ The living conditions are not particularly comfortable, specially during the winter season due to the size of the factory, the low temperatures in Estonia (below 0° for sev-



Figure 3. Ljuda printing the poster ‘Post-socialist Runaway’ for the V Autumn Conference *In, Out, and In Between: Dynamics of Cultural Borders* organised by the CECT in Tallinn. Photo by FM, September 2012

The art factory was developed with abandoned materials and fulfilled with several fascinating leftover objects. The most impressive artefact is the letterpress printing-machine with all the typesetting equipment. The core machinery (Victoria 1040-2) was produced in the German Democratic Republic in 1979. The machine was used during more than ten years in a printing house located at the city centre of Tallinn. After the collapse of the Soviet Union it ended up in a storehouse in the suburbs where the *Victoria 1040-2* was discovered by Madis Mikkor’s gang and brought to polymer in late 2003.

“Yes, they all were great people (*молодцы*). I’m particularly thankful to Madis, who hired me when I most needed a change”, admitted Ljuda, during an informal interview²⁹. The change was,

eral months) and the lack of central heating; the everyday survival in Polymer results in quite a struggle in the eyes of an academic researcher. Nonetheless, all this has not yet discouraged the artists involved in the lively residence.

²⁹ From my field notes; written in Tallinn, in March 2013.

however, a step forward to the past. Ljuda (a Russian speaker) studied typography in Riga in 1968 and completed four years of training there. In 1972 she moved to Tallinn in order to work in the Ühiselu printing house, the oldest in Estonia. In 2002 Ühiselu was integrated into Reusner publishers (nowadays facing economic problems) and the old workers were degraded to do mechanic work such as supplying paper to the newly imported machines and producing cheap books. “I consider typography as an art”, she adds.

More than forty years after her first training, Ljuda is still printing posters and visiting cards. She goes to Polymer a couple of times per week to print the orders coming increasingly from festivals, bars, museums... She also gives workshops to students of the Estonian Art Academy and has taught the profession to Lemmit Kaplinski and Mai Sööt. Every time I visited her she has repeated “I remain as the only person in Estonia who deeply knows this art. My former colleagues left the profession in the nineties and the new generations don’t want to get dirty”. Ljuda earns a little money with the printing, which represents a good complement to her low pension. She’s still active because of her love of this profession. When she’s ill or has to take care of her granddaughter she misses the printing activity. “This should be consider a museum, as Madis and Lemmit managed to do in Tartu”, concludes Ljuda.

Few people in my generation dare to imagine having the same job for over 40 years. The precariousness of our era and the current social narratives do not allow that. If Ljuda still does it is probably because she managed to put certain distance with the social processes around her, being aware of them yet not adapting to the end (one has just to see how she talks by mobile phone). Also because she was capable to survive with very low incomes for decades and found a refuge in her family. This was not the case for Vladimir Egozov. Born in Altay (modern day Kazakhstan), he moved to Moscow when he was 17 to follow engineering studies in the military aero-academy. Later, once he graduated, Vladimir began to work in Riga where he was employed for nearly 30 years in an electric factory,



Figure 4. Vladimir Egozov during one of our meetings in his Pelmeny imbiss at Ostbahnhof, Berlin, July 2013. Photo by FM

producing microchips for the military industry. As one of the main coordinators within the factory, he ventured into private business following the moderate economic opening promoted in Perestroika. For a couple of years he made some money installing cable TV (the Swedish TV was very popular in Latvia at the time) and then he left the country.

Vladimir actually prefers to be called ‘Dyadya Vova’ (uncle Vova). His first wife was Jewish. The marriage only lasted for five years but they had a son, who was allowed to move to Berlin after the re-unification because of his Jewish roots. Dyadya Vova came to visit him a couple of times and in 1992 he decided to stay. What he prefers about Germany is the order.³⁰ Between 1992 and 1998,

³⁰ In his view, “everywhere there is a particular social mentality. In Kazakhstan, in Russia, in Pakistan... and one has to adapt to the local order and normality”. From my

Dyadya Vova was living on social money provided by the state. He didn't speak any German and had no access to a job. From time to time he repaired TVs, but was always paid under the counter. He also began to wash cars, however the clients complained about 'using' an old man to clean their cars and after some months he was fired. Indeed, in 2000 he had an operation due to cardiovascular problems. However, during all those years he had a clear-cut project: to create a 'Little Soviet Union' theme park in a former military base of Brandenburg. He saw the opportunity when the last Soviet soldiers left the place in 1994, but didn't have the right contacts in Germany by then. Nonetheless he calculated the costs, designed the park, structured the required jobs and began to lobby the project.

Keeping that in mind, he decided to buy an *imbiss* (food kiosk) and thus reach a wider audience. In 2004, he found a good offer in an esplanade nearby *Ostbahnhof* (Eastern Railway Station of Berlin). Initially he bought only a cabin-caravan to prepare food in, and then, step by step, he extended the business by constructing a booth and providing some tables. "This business works because people got tired of McDonalds. People come here straight with the special purpose of eating *pelmenis*"³¹, presumes Dyadya Vova, who is 78 years old. He realises that his dream will not be accomplished and now he keeps the *imbiss* for two mundane reasons: he has some debts to pay related to the business and the only stable income he receives is a low pen-

field notes; written in Berlin, in July 2013. Dyadya Vova still goes twice a year to Riga to visit his other son and his sister and make some bureaucratic procedures. Nonetheless he never stays there more than two days.

³¹ Some times too many people come and he cannot be fast enough to prepare food for everyone. But it also happens that few come and the basic meals that his wife prepares at home have to be thrown away. But that is uncommon, since *piroshkis* (East-European pie) may last for several days. Of course, the variety of meals is not so big; some days there is 'solyanka' (spicy-sour soup), some others 'plov' (spicy rice in Central Asian style), 'blintchiki' (crêpe pancakes), 'syrniki' (cottage cheese pancake) or 'borscht' (beetroot soup). What we can always find is *pelmeni* (dumplings), his most popular product. Actually, he says to have found recently a very good supplier from Estonia.



Figure 5. Dyadya Vova cooking. Berlin, July 2013. Photo by FM. In a way, and with all my respect and no irony, we could say that Dyadya Vova is a man with a tractor soul

sion from the Latvian state.³² Additionally, he says that, in spite of the great interest that the business awakens,³³ it cannot be transferred to any random person: “I am a realist person. I worked a lot and got some experience. To work here one has to have a special soul”.

During all those years, he held some meetings to promote his project, but never with a high ranking official, with the exception of the former head of the *Stasi* police, Markus Wolf. According to Dyadya Vova, Wolf was enthusiastic about the project but he died in 2006. They met in the headquarters of the ‘Neues Deutschland’ newspaper. “Markus Wolf was a great man”, he believes. Unfortunately,

³² Surprisingly he has no access to German social money, even if he got the German citizenship in 2000.

³³ “Once I feel very tired of the imbiss I’ll sell it. People keep asking me if I want to sell it”, confesses Vladimir.

Dyadya Vova has been unable to find a sponsor, but his idea of a mini Soviet park was actually not that bad. Indeed, similar projects have been developed, for instance the ‘Tropical Islands’ of Brandenburg³⁴, the Euroworld of Jürgen Kahl or the film ‘Soviet Park’.³⁵

For having the *imbiss* in the esplanade, he pays 600 euros every month to the *Bürgeramt Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg*. They have a year’s contract that gets automatically renewed. However, the city hall has a project to ‘develop’ the area that entails, of course, ‘cleaning up’ temporary businesses such as markets and food-kiosks, which will be substituted by elite condominiums, office towers and malls. “Sooner or later they will build something permanent here. What we constructed is not proper order. One should not feel any nostalgia about it”, he asserts. Some of the businesses around stay for many years and others last only for a couple of months. Nonetheless, Dyadya Vova complains that there’s not much contact between neighbours: “In the Soviet Union there was more communication between workers... We were all Soviet People, with so many different kitchens, traditions and nationalities. We all belonged together and understood each other... Nowadays everyone is separated... it is a way of controlling us”.

A middle age man passes in front of us and Dyadya Vova screams: “tovarish polyak!” I ask him how he sees himself... whether he is Kazakh, Russian, Ukrainian (his mother was originally from there), Latvian or German? Then he answers: “I am a Soviet person”. In this section, the examples not only expose post-socialism as a waiting room in the midst of a ghost-past and a rushed future, but also a complex condition that manifests the contradictions of late-modernity.

Moreover, writer Svetlana Aleksevich considers that nowadays, people who grew up in the Soviet Union are living in ‘second-hand

³⁴ <http://www.tropical-islands.de/en/attractions/>

³⁵ ‘Парк советского периода’, 2006. Directed by Yuliy Gusman. In this film, a faithful journalist is invited to Odessa to inform about the newly created theme park that offers ‘Soviet’ services and items for nostalgics.

time', an era of disenchantment in which they did not find the expected freedom, but a borrowed time, a second-hand life. In her books, Alexievich develops an emotional archaeology of what characterised the great utopia. She reminds us that the new life still does not have a name; additionally she describes the Soviet person as a mix of prison and *kindergarten*.³⁶

Late-modern runaway

In transition, in crisis, in need of financial austerity... late-modern societies are nowadays presented as being in treatment, undertaking transformations that deal with problems but do not resolve them, to the point that change has become a new utopia. The lifespan of these 'groundbreaking' 'revolutions' is very short, not producing any development and falling into small interventions. It seems it is important to change regardless of what, when or where. Financial austerity has emerged as the current collective project; previously, it was the expansion of neo-liberal democracy, liberalising markets, macroeconomic growth and so on. Trajectories and directions have vanished, and with them our capability to foresee any critical horizon; for instance, in regards to ecological concerns and social responsibility, thus our rusty legacy to future generations.

But what exactly is in crisis? History, narratives, experience, economy, politics...? Is crisis a transition, an event or a spectacle? For how long is it supposed to endure? As with any threshold, crisis distracts and divides, but also it opens opportunities of critique and generates history. The oddity here is that the latter does not come unless societies produce it. Crises do not necessarily entail critique, or bring up transformations, but rather provoke distraction. The

³⁶ See Svetlana Alexievitch, *La Fin de l'homme rouge (Vremia second hand. Konets krasnovo tcheloveka)*. Trans. S. Benech. Paris: Actes Sud 2013. Also the interview she made with Olesia Yaremchuk in the newspaper *Den* (<http://www.day.kiev.ua/en/article/society/chronicles-great-utopia> (23.10.2013)).

term 'crisis' itself presents as abstract and self-explanatory all that changes and strategies that went wrong (Roitman 2014). Crises create a narrative based on fragmented moments of truth, conditioning therefore the ways of thinking trajectories and transformations. As any other diagnostic, it determines the life-mode, entering upon the past and future through the present.

Rather than finding the promised Western progress and blooming landscapes, late-modernity and post-socialism brought a superhighway in which citizens notice velocity, distraction and vertigo, but no displacement.³⁷ The modern civilisation was built on a paradigm of forward-looking dynamism that is nowadays experiencing its own crisis. Originally, modernity entailed risk, passion for gain, flux, industry and shocks, which overall have improved the overall quality of life in Western societies. However, in post-socialist modernity these features appear as excessive and out of control, thus in a terminal way. Relevant accounts³⁸ present modernity as a particular form of socio-political organisation with European origins and related to the idea of progress, the expansion of capitalism, the rise of nation-states and the development and spread of forms of rationality and scientific works. However, we have nowadays entered into a distinct phase of modernity characterised by a lack of time in depth, motions without displacement, transitions without history, economic precarity and crisis of normality.

³⁷ Modernity not only has been intensified in Europe but also penetrated into other parts of the world, such as China, India or Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, social changes seem neither to happen in generation terms, nor being shared by a collective. In this sense, late-modernity is increasingly liminal and entropic, as an unstable equilibrium that makes societies more desynchronised. Otherwise, we see a fewer correlation of our redundant 'nows', becoming our world increasingly desynchronised within and in relation to the planet.

³⁸ See for instance: Ferguson 1999); Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *Multiple Modernities*. London: Transaction 2000; Michel Foucault, 'What Is Enlightenment?' – P. Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader*. Harmondsworth: Penguin 1984. And Paul Rabinow, *Marking Time: On the Anthropology of the Contemporary*. Princeton: Princeton Press 2008.

In searching for alternative routes from this super-highway and turbo-distraction, the seeds of nostalgia and retro-utopia³⁹ are spread around, discovering, however, that the embodied imagination and collective ideas—the ways of turning to somewhere—have been deeply conditioned by successive collapses, vanishings, motionless accelerations and turbo tics. Ultimately, these features of late-modernity question the sustainability of industrial production, ecological survival, social capability to adapt to changes and even the bases of democracy. They are particularly evidenced and intensified in post-socialist societies but not only circumscribed to them.

As defined by Hartmut Rosa, modernity is a dynamic of development, shaped by a continuous acceleration of processes. The paradox is that speeding forces move so rapidly that they seem autonomous and liberated from human control; nevertheless, this movement is not oriented towards any objective and has not trajectory, being distracting rather than transforming. Rosa invokes the idea of a ‘frenetic standstill’, wherein ‘nothing remains the way it was yet nothing essentially changes’ (Rosa 2013). He describes social multi-acceleration as the ‘new Leviathan’, since ‘politics run out of time’ and the complexity of society and the decisions needed to govern it have become too fast for genuine democratic control. Likewise, no matter how fast we become, the proportion of the experiences we have will continuously shrink in the face of those missed, producing a society more vulnerable to depressions and burnouts as well as increasing the danger of falling behind (Rosa 2013).

In this new phase of modernity we also observe an anxious and fragmented coexistence of multiple temporalities and regimes of knowledge. On the one hand, the way individuals experience velocity is diverging (increasingly unequal). On the other, the cultural tools and world resources do not directly accompany the acceleration,

³⁹ Term originally coined by Inke Arns, ‘Avant-garde in the Rear-View Mirror: From Utopia under General Suspicion to a New Notion of the Utopian’. – Zdenka Badovinac, Viktor Misiano, Igor Zabel (eds.), *Seven Sins: Ljubljana—Moscow*. Ljubljana: Moderna Galerija 2004.



Figure 6. Toby making pottery. Berlin, June 2013. Photo by FM

complicating conscious experiences overall. Likewise, we all know activities that cannot be accelerated in any way; for instance, we can reduce the time we sleep, but not the period of pregnancy; we can make faster cars or cheaper airfares, but not affect rising hydrocarbons; climate change might shift cycles or fertilizers advance the harvest, but farmers have to follow the seasons nonetheless. We even sleep less, communicate more and move quickly; thus the story sounds as Plato's cave: one sees shadows in motion but suffers turbo-distraction. Acceleration requires a trajectory and we just move (pure motion; increasingly faster, yet without any horizon). Eventually, this produces a crash of human capacities and addiction to speed. The first reactions are being manifested as zones and activities of strategic deceleration such as yoga, meditation, slow-food, gardening, isolation from the world (rural-utopia) and the practice of oriental religions (always detached from any political concern).



Figure 7. David in his garden in Bethanien, Berlin. June 2013, photo by FM

For instance, Tobi likes to make pottery in his free time. He's now teaching his friend David, who recently became interested in multiple activities to slow down his life pace. "First try to find the centre, David, or an approximate centre"⁴⁰, instructs Tobi in the shop-atelier 'Feuerzeug Keramik' (Mariannenstrasse 48). He rents all the material and tools from Cordula, who has found in the increasing 'amateur' demand a valuable income of money to the shop. Around five people a week come to make pottery, paying ten euros per hour. Pottery is an activity that provides a corner of freedom, as also sports and urban gardening do. Unlike meditation or religion, they do not depend upon an individual faith or spiritual belief, but the search for meanings in life and a personal balance seems to be (symptomatically) similar. Otherwise, how should we explain the growing interest in yoga, tai-chi, qigong, traditional Chinese medicine, ayurvedic

⁴⁰ Fieldnotes written in June 2013 in Berlin.

lifestyles and alternative diets (such as veggie or eating only raw-food), Waldorf schools and even psychotherapies?

Rather than escapism, Tobi finds in pottery a way of expanding his life. He enjoys his job but praises a “deeper human need for diversity”. He raises his head and then looks at me: “it’s not just about time, but also about the way we are ‘in’ or ‘off’, how we follow patterns of labour, technologies, innovation... without being left aside”. Tobi and David met in their job place. They were working for the same company, an agency dealing with renewable energies and environmental issues. Ironically, this company tries to construct a better world and for that it has to be highly competitive.

Tobi, Canadian; David, German; and I Spanish, we all belong to the same generation: people born in the late seventies and early eighties who have lived in Internet and pre-Internet societies. “Life was harder for former generations, just think about the time they dedicated to wash clothes. So lets not dramatise... also acknowledge that young generations are more informed of the consequences of fast food... But there was never as good and bad as now, life was never as radical as now... for instance traffic is one of our tragedies”, claims Tobi meanwhile introducing his finger into a chunk of mud. Pottery requires its own tempo. What they are producing now with their hands needs ten days for drying and pit firing. This process cannot be accelerated in any form, so only after that period they can see the final result of their work.

For David, there are several explanations for the increasing popularity of gardening in Berlin, such as the idea of cultivation, a desire of friendship, a need to raise something and be recognised, to work with other people (even if only taking care of your own piece), to feel a primitive connection with our ancestors or to appreciate the cycles of the Earth and be aware of the seasons... “For some people it becomes a sort of community... yet for me it’s more a way to get my fingers dirty, do something pleasant and get out from the computer”. David suffered a so-called ‘burn out’ after a couple of years working and travelling intensively. Since then he has changed many

of his habits, often leaves the phone at home and even began to walk v-e-r-y slowly. “Still I get impatient when seeing the time an onion takes to grow”, he says when walking in *Bethanien*, where he has his piece of garden.

David likes urban gardening as a hobby, but still he’s not sure about the practical changes it might bring: “perhaps a first step to a deeper transformation, perhaps just a distraction. I suppose it depends on the person. I don’t think this leads to any revolution but makes life more pleasant”. “To me it’s a dialectical response to things becoming more artificial”, concludes Tobi, already outdoors and opening the lock of his bike. Urban gardening, slow food, and even biking are a sort of nostalgic and sensual retreat from the harshness, relentless and deceit of the contemporary world. Nonetheless, some have seen in these practices a political contestation. Across the German capital many of the 73.000 small garden plots (3.000 ha) are fighting for their existence against the bulldozers of international investors, which gain the speculative surplus of this ‘creative city’. Likewise, so-called ‘garden guerrillas’ stage small interventions such as throwing seeds over fences or planting flowers in a crack of a wall.⁴¹

Contemporary nostalgic waves might be also described as an attempt to escape from speed addiction and late-modern alienation; hence a way of coping with shocks and a retreat in order to re-structure the self-position. Various seminal authors⁴² have presented nostalgia as depending upon the remaking of modernity. It is thus related to a sense of loss in the face of change, feeling of

⁴¹ See for instance: Kate Connolly, ‘Berlin’s urban gardeners reach for their pitchforks to fight off the developers’. – *The Guardian* 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/05/berlin-garden-colonies-threat-developers>

⁴² Some of them: Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1996; Alastair Bonnett, *Left in the Past: Radicalism and the Politics of Nostalgia*. New York, London: Continuum 2010; Fredric Jameson, ‘Nostalgia for the Present’. – *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 1989, 88, 2, 517–537; Serguei Oushakine, ‘We’re nostalgic but we’re not crazy’: Retrofitting the past in Russia’. – *The Russian Review* 2007, 66, 451–482.

displacement (many Soviet people experienced emigration without leaving home), unsuitability of symbolic forms, longing for unrealised futures, yearning for utopia, rehabilitation of the present, and radical critic to politics.

Still it remains debatable whether such a thing as nostalgia exists and if does, what is its nature (Ugresic 1996). In words of Esra Özyürek (2006: 19), nostalgia is a scheme of reconciling different measures of being modern, hence a way of dealing with new senses of time and turbo experiences. Otherwise, David Lowenthal (1989) presents nostalgia as a declaration of distance, a narrative of dislocation, an act of homelessness, a contemplative search for a home in changing world. For Fred Davis (1979), nostalgia is an 'adaptive mechanism' to turbulent changes, thus socially useful. Nonetheless, most of times nostalgia is experienced as an awkward reaction, a sort of Benjaminian memory that flashes up at a moment of danger. In that sense, it acknowledges a discontent in the present and it does so by stalking our detour from the past and projecting ourselves towards the future. Hence, it tells us more about the present than about the past, revealing a complicated relationship between personal histories, disadvantage, dispossession and the betrayal of promises (Berdahl 1997).

Additionally, Susan Sontag (1972) describes nostalgia as the art of rearranging time according to a more random order than the chronological one. It is thus a new beginning that might not last long but contains a retrieve, a creative promise of change (Kattago 2013), far away from monolithic.⁴³ Nostalgia has therefore a symptomatic

⁴³ For Alastair Bonnett and Catherine Alexander, nostalgia is a vision of the future based on the power of the past, thus mobile, 'a dynamic process' (2013: 394). Also Michael Pickering and Emily Keightley (2006) recognise multiple meanings and manifestations in nostalgia, 'accommodating progressive, even utopian impulses as well as regressive stances and melancholic attitudes (2006: 919). See A. Bonnett, C. Alexander, 'Mobile nostalgias: connecting visions of the urban past, present and future amongst ex-residents'. – *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 2013, 38, 391–402. Also M. Pickering, E. Keightley, 'The modalities of nostalgia'. – *Current Sociology* 2006, 54, 6, 919–941.

character, emerging as a need of personal order, as a recess after an acceleration of history. It looks from a position before, revealing pluralities but not conquering any Winter Palace (yet for Boym outbreaks of nostalgia often follow revolutions). Dylan Trigg describes it as 'a disarming paradox': rather than a deliberate act of turning to the past, it emerges as a life-project. 'We do not summon nostalgia; nostalgia summons us. The movement of nostalgia is one of a seeping orientation' (Trigg 2006: 57). Unlike memory, manifested as a struggle and based on encounters, nostalgia is not reactive but a disposition, that tells us about the difficulties in dealing with the present.⁴⁴

Nostalgia seeks for destinations and longs for history as utopia hopes for its time. In the middle of the technological deployment and the banishment of any critical horizon, the human being seems to find shelter in nostalgia, trying to recover a position that cannot exist anymore as it was (Boym 2001).⁴⁵ A horizon works as a temporal marking and balance between past, present and future.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Nevertheless, there are also voices who diminish the importance of nostalgia; for instance Dominik Bartmanski (2011: 217), who considers it an intellectual sympathy for the historic underdog. Dominik Bartmanski, 'Successful icons of failed time: Rethinking post-communist nostalgia'. – *Acta Sociologica* 2011, 54, 213–232.

⁴⁵ It relates to post-socialist societies, in which citizens are impelled to constantly negotiate the gap that emerges between pastness and horizon. The described reflexive nostalgia (ironic, sceptic, based on snapshots) searches for an actuality that has been un-actualised, in other words a destination. In a way, nostalgia is what remains once all the destinations have been reduced to a touristic decision; or a human reaction when a wagon waggles without moving to anywhere, noticing speed but seeing no destination or trajectory

⁴⁶ Recently, several authors have pointed out an explosion of memory discourses and the relevance of the archive, framed in a Zeitgeist of commodification of the past (mode retro), turbo-normality (shocks), and information overload driven by media (which ultimately confuses what is important to remember). See for instance: Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1998; Alexander Etkind, 'Post-Soviet Hauntology: Cultural Memory of the Soviet. Terror'. – *Constellations* 2009, 16, 1, 182–200; David Gross, *Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press 2000; Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*. New York: Routledge 1996.

Also Nietzsche pleaded for the value of a horizon in order to balance between the historical and the a-historical. For him, the nations of the nineteenth century were somehow intoxicated with an overdose of history, thus he claimed for a need to forgetting. Nowadays, we can see in Eastern Europe a similar situation yet from the other side: the horizon is also cloudy and blurred, yet the overdose is produced by an excess of nowness and the a-historical.⁴⁷

Philosopher Siobhan Kattago claims that “what distinguishes contemporary society from previous ones is the knowledge that most of the things surrounding us will be soon obsolete. This conscious knowledge of obsolescence means that the present shrinks in duration when compared with the perception of the present in previous periods of history” (Kattago 2012: 6). Obsolescence has become the opium of our era, a belief that enchains us to the now and makes us children, forgetting that our future is based on what we leave behind and imagine further.⁴⁸ Moreover, collective utopias have been privatised and translated into neo-liberal terms. Boris Buden describes this process as a transition from utopia to ‘retro-utopia’ (2009). In his view, the future to be realised has been subsumed by successive transitions and changes in the

⁴⁷ History remains entertained and distracted at the shock-therapy room. The experience of this loss has affected both West and East European societies, yet to the latter in a more radical way. Hence a new spectre is wherefore haunting Europe—the spectre of nostalgia. The Slovenian sociologist M. Velikonja re-phrased Churchill’s Cold War speech: “From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent”, in this other way: “Od Szczecina na Baltiku do Trstana na Jadranu... what has descended is nostalgia” (Velikonja 2004: 37). Mitja Velikonja, ‘Tistega Lepega dne: Znacilnosti sodobnega nostalgicnega diskurza’. – *Balkanis* 2004, 12–16, Letnik 5, pomlad-zima.

⁴⁸ Once the horizon banishes liminality and banality take place. As argued by Hannah Arendt, it is when a meaningful account of the past and a modest array of imagined futures go missing that a gap between past and future opens up. In this case, the gap ceases to be “a condition peculiar only to the activity of thought” and becomes “a tangible reality and perplexity for all; that is, it became a fact of political relevance” (Arendt 1961: 14). Hannah Arendt. *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought*. Viking 1961.

wake of the collapse of the socialist regimes. This collapse was not just a geopolitical end, but also the beginning of a new phase of modernity.⁴⁹

Conclusion

This chapter showed ‘post-socialism’ and ‘late-modernity’ as overlapping processes. The post-socialist ‘transition’ experienced in Eastern Europe has as much to do with regional patterns of unstable equilibrium as with global processes (of technological shifts, acceleration of social pace, political disengagement, privatisation and financial crisis). Additionally, it explored the consequences of internalising shocks, changes and crises as the norm, which determines our ways of making sense and reproduces a society in a permanent state of transition (with turbo-distraction, low-key political engagements, survival attitudes and continuous modification of the rules of the game). This social condition makes citizens unable to cope with changes, the speed in which meanings unfold and the articulation of alternatives, producing a crisis of normality—the inability to articulate experience, sense and meaning in a temporary frame.⁵⁰

Social forms mutate through chance variation; when they occur step by step—following life rhythms—people adapt better to the

⁴⁹ Susan Buck-Morss (2000) and Charity Scribner (2003) have seen the fall of the socialist project as an event that says about the epochal exhaustion of industrial modernism, an historic experience which equally belongs to both West and East European societies. Buden, Scribner and Buck-Morss, identify the collapse of the socialist project with the vanishing of a collective utopia (the utopia of the collective). See S. Buck-Morss, *Dream-world and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*. Cambridge: MIT Press 2000. Also C. Scribner, *Requiem for Communism*. Cambridge: MIT Press 2003.

⁵⁰ East-European societies are ever transforming systems. New generations are not totally free from inner dynamics, since available cultural tools and behavioural patterns re-produce persistent factors in an entropic way. In a context of globalization, these features get but intensified, since global and modern vectors are not neutral and result mostly embedded in a liminal way. See ‘On the Phantom Sutures of Post-socialist Tallinn (Estonia)’, by F. Martínez.

transformations.⁵¹ When this is not so, the ‘buffer culture’ described by Sedlenieks grows, as does social entropy and liminality. These late-modern phenomena are evidenced in East-European societies in a more naked way because of the social *bardak* and *remont* order. East-European societies are particularly concerned of this; firstly, because of the vanishing of ‘in-between tools’ which enable civil engagement and communication. Secondly, because of the perennial translation of dynamics of change, mostly coming from foreign vectors and distant rulers.

As claimed by Alexander Kiossev (2008), the word ‘normal’ both inspires and hurts in Eastern Europe: “In the slogan ‘revolution back to normality’, ‘this word’ occupied the place left empty by the ‘bright future’”. Descriptive meanings associated with ‘normality’ are ‘ordinary’, ‘usual’, ‘typical’, ‘customary’, ‘common’ and ‘average’. Also it implies a call for obeying a norm or following a rule. Nevertheless, in post-socialist societies, normality has become an ‘object of desire’ and entails nuances such as functioning institutions, social order, return to the Western world and consumption of expensive goods. As a consequence, ‘normality’ was imbued with exceptionally positive connotations in post-socialist societies, embracing Western norms in a more naked way, without in-between institutions, accessing to late-modernity with less defences, higher exposition and stronger passion.

Discourses of transition have created the impression that socialism was a non-real condition, presenting post-socialism as an abnormal phase towards normality or just a moment of change. In this sense, Buden has noticed (2010) how expressions such as ‘education for democracy’ and ‘democratic exams’ entered into the quotidian language of Eastern Europe in a top-down line. The paradox here is that those who provoked democratic revolutions seem to be now children of democracy, internalising immaturity and need to

⁵¹ See for instance: Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Vintage 1961.

learn how to use what they have won. As children, no-body can ask for responsibilities of the ruling elites in the mistakes (for instance about how was the privatisation process done almost overnight). Nonetheless, the political use of immaturity is not circumscribed to Eastern Europe, as we can see in other societies of the global-south. To a certain extent, we all are post-socialist yet with different 'normalities'; so one of the battlefields of our era is to avoid this alien given role (which does not take freedom away but postpone it, as we can see in Greece and Portugal).

Buden claims there is no domination that seems so natural as the child and its guardian. Citizens as political infants offer the almost perfect argument of control and subjecting order. Children are untroubled by the past, oriented towards the future and distractedly enjoying freedom. Discourses of transition, changes and maturity contributed to reducing Eastern-European societies to a playground of late-modernity (by ignoring the influential legacies of the past, confusing the personal experiences of its citizens and promoting alien strategies of 'development'). In many ways, these societies are at the mercy of external rules and driving forces. They are exempt of any responsibility (and therefore of the power of emancipation); moreover, they have perennial interruptions (remaining always adolescents—in lack of). But as chaos is the source of an order, liminality refers to the state from which new structures come up. Hence a critical horizon can be always re-established in order to re-conduct contingencies and transformations. For that, collective responsibilities and efforts as well as social infrastructures are required. These in-between skills are precisely what distinguish adult societies from playgrounds.

Transitions, changes and crises have been lasting very long, managing to hide behind a tangled skein that it is eventually the same story but told differently. They offer a newness based on ever-emerging plots, scandals, spectacles, stimuli, shocks, warped knots, accelerations, innovations... that eventually makes it impossible to infer consequences from past sequence relation. In spite of the ties between shocks and knots remaining unobservable, the dreadful suspicion

that we are not about to reach any end by following this way might transpire at a certain point. This might be the advent of clarity, in the way discord precedes desire and will. Indeed, Aristotle pointed out in his study of literary creation that any plot should not have an excessive *durée*, otherwise the whole epic breaks down. Aristotelian drama theory supports a four-act play, wherein we first meet a radical change in social relations; then a crisis, confirming that the conflict is more complicated than originally thought; thirdly, mechanisms of reconciliation and re-integration; and finally the resolution or, in the worst case, the acknowledgement of an incorrigible disruption.

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THOU SHALT NOT FAIL TO DO GOOD: HUMANITARIAN ARENAS AS PLAYGROUNDS OF THE SOUL

Marcos Farias Ferreira

In a world marked by the complex diffusion of norms and practices, and the agonistic confrontation of political agendas, Haiti has swiftly become the repository for global compassion and the ultimate check for cosmopolitan bereavement. In January 2010, after a violent earthquake hit the capital Port-au-Prince, heavy flows of goods, funds, human resources and goodwill headed for the country in what could be easily construed as an instance of the ‘politics of pity’ Hannah Arendt explored in her celebrated *On Revolution*. However, at the very moment the earthquake hit Haiti, it was not politically correct to remember the politics of dependency instigated in previous decades by the Washington consensus and leading the country to neglect food sovereignty and security. The destruction of rice production during the 1980’s and 1990’s and the accompanying liberalization of the Haitian economy and the import of cheap rice from the US are not on trial here. Instead, what really is in question is that we are living at a time of successive crises and that, in one way or another, they are all interconnected. The bottom line is that ‘natural’ disasters and our relation to them are “the expression of something more fundamental—a transformation of our social, economic and political relations [...] and the failure of our governing institutions to adapt to this transformation” (Held, Kaldor, Quah 2012: 1).

The point made by Held, Kaldor and Quah is that we are more aware of crises in faraway places now than in the past—the acclaimed Joseph Roth would have asked far away, but from where?—due to the extended experience of media texts and images but also to the capacity of anonymous people to take photos, post them and comment

them on social networks. Be that as it may, it has become impossible to avoid confrontation with images of human suffering and material destruction coming out of recurrent human catastrophes. Although on the agenda for the last two hundred years, humanitarianism as an extended and diffused norm and practice on the global scale has been revived in the last two decades due to the smoothing away of the nuclear tension between superpowers and the sprouting of ominous crimes with political motivation. The increased resolve and capacity to track such crimes, to access the victims and display the marks of evil—as some would put it (Heller 1993)—has had a crucial impact on the upsurge of humanitarianism or, as I would phrase it, the forging of global humanitarian arenas governed by the axiom ‘Thou shalt not fail to do good’ and often transformed in playgrounds of the soul.

Feeling empathy towards the suffering, irrespective of their nationality or material condition, is the foundation of contemporary global humanitarian arenas. According to John Rawls in his “Law of Peoples” (1993: 77), there is a natural duty to help people in trouble, a kind of duty of mutual aid with its roots in what Michael Walzer deems the “pre-philosophical recognition of the ‘others’ as people like us and of their troubles as troubles that might be ours” (2011a: 43). The naturalness of this empathy, explaining the outpouring of aid in the aftermath of a natural disaster or political violence, has been the object of much thought. Walzer himself has long been puzzling over these kinds of questions, asking whether helping others is charity or duty and concluding it is both (2011b). But it has also to be an on-going situated argument about what ought to be done right now, with answers depending on existing needs, political contexts, available resources and requirements of justice. In a different place, he states that these answers have their origin in the individual and their feelings. But how these feelings produce duty is the question we need to address. Walzer’s argument is that “[i]t must be because one of the things we feel is that we ought to feel this way: we ought to want to help” (2011a: 43). The naturalness of this empathy

as the foundation of contemporary global humanitarian arenas is ambiguous though. For some, it is evidence of cosmopolitan bonds and a cosmopolitan citizenship as it were.

Those feeling a natural duty to help strangers would agree with Diogenes the Cynic and Emperor Marcus Aurelius when they proclaimed “I am a *kosmopolitês*” or a *politês tou kosmou* (Brown 2001: 7). As Chris Brown justly remarks, there’s something absurd about these proclamations though, Diogenes’s and Marcus Aurelius’s but also those of modern day pious humanitarians: “[n]o more than there is now was there then a partnership of free individuals determining the general arrangements of the world” (*ibid.*: 8). Diogenes’s proclamation was more of a figure of speech and a metaphor, and modern day cosmopolitan humanitarianism still lacks a wholesale political theory and political arrangements to put it in place. For Walzer though, there is no need of a full scale theory of justice to guide cosmopolitan humanitarianism but some sort of political knowledge and pragmatism able to show what ought to be done concretely, practically, here and now. The quandary seems to be going even deeper, as Walzer acknowledges, for cosmopolitan humanitarianism is not like “dropping a coin into a beggar’s cup” (2011a: 44). The issue here is that without political forethought, mere good will is not enough and often brings unintended consequences like the upsurge of conflict connection (Tomasini, Van Wassenhove 2009: 100).

But is the feeling of empathy towards the suffering as diffused and universal as one might suppose through the reading of Walzer, Brown and Rawls? In his seminal “Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality”, Richard Rorty seems to deny such universality by quoting a report from David Rieff about human rights violations in Bosnia in the 1990’s. The issue here is the dehumanization of Muslims by the Serbs during the wars of former Yugoslavia, where the morality to be drawn is that Serbian murderers and rapists did not think of themselves as violating human rights for the basic reason that they deprived Muslims of the very status of being ‘human’. As stressed by

Rorty, “[t]hey are not being inhuman, but rather are discriminating between the true humans and the pseudohumans. [...] The involved Serbs take themselves to be acting in the interests of true humanity by purifying the world of pseudohumanity” (1993: 112). The same kind of phenomenon is reported by Susan Sontag on the occasion of the 2003 war against Iraq and the dissemination of photos of humiliation against the Abu Ghraib prisoners. Facing the despicable acts perpetrated against the latter by US soldiers, Sontag reflects upon how someone can do these things against other human beings and then grin at their sufferings and humiliation. Her answer is straightforward, people just do these things to other people “[w]hen they are told or made to feel that those over whom they have absolute power deserve to be mistreated, humiliated, tormented. They do that when they are led to believe that the people they are torturing belong to an inferior, despicable race or religion” (Sontag 2004). For Judith Butler though the case could well be, resorting to Hegel and Klein, that “the apprehension of precariousness leads to a heightening of violence, an insight into the physical vulnerability of some set of others that incites the desire to destroy them (2009: 2).

The meaning of the Abu Ghraib pictures is not just that these acts were performed, but that their perpetrators had no sense that there was anything wrong in what the pictures showed. More critically though—and more appalling—since the pictures were meant to be disseminated, this was all about playfulness. According to Sontag, the photos taken by US soldiers in Abu Ghraib reflect a shift in the use made of them—“less objects to be saved than evanescent messages to be disseminated, circulated. A digital camera is a common possession of most soldiers. Where once photographing war was the province of photojournalists, now the soldiers themselves are all photographers—recording their war, their fun, their observations of what they find picturesque, their atrocities—and swapping images among themselves, and emailing them around the globe” (Sontag 2004). Lest we are deemed to be naïve, we need to acknowledge, in an ironist and pragmatist fashion, that contemporary humanitarian

arenas are matched by global arenas of cruelty often becoming the province of sheer fun. The material and technological progress of late modernity has been the condition for disseminating on a global scale new colonizing hierarchies based on practices their perpetrators live playfully.

Going back to Rorty and his pragmatism and ironism, the idea that reason or scientific evidence can access justified true belief about humanity is nothing but a myth and beliefs cannot be taken as more than contingent preferences that help to cope with the complexities of our late modernity. As Dunne and Wheeler justly refer, “[r]ights, for Rorty, are nothing more than a story that liberal societies have decided to tell and, as a consequence, it is only liberal societies which provide an epistemological context for human rights justifications” (1999: 9). From a pragmatic point of view then, solidarity as natural empathy towards the suffering seems to owe nothing to increased moral knowledge, and everything to hearing sad and sentimental stories, the kind of stories some societies (liberal societies) have decided to tell themselves based on the simple commandment that ‘Thou shalt not fail to do good’. Drawing on Rorty, solidarity is not a function of reason nor reflection but a creation of increased human sensitivity “to the particular details of the pain and humiliation of other, unfamiliar sorts of people (1989: xvi). So is there any chance of moral knowledge at all? Or what is moral knowledge from a pragmatist point of view? Drawing on Nabokov’s perspective, Rorty seems to agree that moral knowledge can only be captured by imagination rather than intellect (*ibid.*: 152) and “that is why the novel, the movie, and the TV program have, gradually but steadily, replaced the sermon and the treatise as the principle vehicles of moral change and progress” (*ibid.*: xvi).

What human solidarity depends upon is the manipulation of the sentiments, or the education of the sentiments, such that in specific contexts we come to realize that our differences with others are less important than our shared capacity to experience pain and suffering, to be in the shoes of strangers or unfamiliar others. Trying to

answer from a pragmatic, ironist point of view to the question of ‘Why should I care about a stranger?’ Rorty acknowledges the limits of moral vocabulary once we reach the edges of ethical communities and turns instead to the capacity of sad and sentimental stories which begin ‘Because this is what it is like to be in her situation’, or ‘Because she might become your daughter-in-law’, or ‘Because her mother would grieve for her’. “Such stories, repeated and varied over the centuries, have induced us, the rich, safe, powerful people, to tolerate, and even to cherish, powerless people—people whose appearance or habits or beliefs at first seemed an insult to our moral identity, our sense of the limits of permissible human variation” (Rorty 1993: 133–134). The problem for Rorty, and the reason he considers himself a liberal ironist, is that there is no universal or metatheoretical ground, no noncircular theoretical backup for the belief that cruelty is horrible. In his own words, liberal ironists are people “who include among these ungroundable desires their own hope that suffering will be diminished, that the humiliation of human beings by other human beings may cease” (1989: xv).

In modern liberal societies, the kind of sentimental education Rorty refers to is ubiquitous and some are now stressing it is producing instead of empathy a fatigue of the sentiments and a new entrenched exclusivist communitarianism. The way the media reports and feeds on the calamities of the world at large could instil helplessness and a sense of danger, forcing into our living room a needy world capable of exhausting the liberal compassion and understanding. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag tries to capture this particular feature of modern life by highlighting that “[b]ecoming a spectator of calamities taking place in another country is a quintessential modern experience, the cumulative offering by more than a century and a half’s worth of those professional, specialized tourists known as journalists” (2003a: 16). Journalists and photojournalists travel the world with a mission that could well be conveyed as a sentimental journey on behalf of the education of globalizing audiences that have been deprived of the possibility to henceforth allege that they

ignore the miseries of the world. To inform of human calamities has increasingly become to tell sad stories about the pain of others, to point the subjective lens at what the human world is really made of and the miseries with which we ourselves are complicit with; like the hoards of journalists heading for Haiti in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake.

Be that as it may, to inform or to tell about the suffering of others cannot help raising doubts about the moral nature of the compassionate gaze. While the victims are trapped under the rubble or roaming for help, it is legitimate to ask whether the right to inform and be informed, along with the nonstop imagery of suffering, transmute into macabre curiosity, or at least repugnant, amoral, superfluous instrument of de-subjection. It is well known that global solidarity after a calamity, and after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti for that matter, would not have been possible without such imagery and tales about the suffering of others. Nonstop imagery and sad stories are said to instil in the careless spectator empathy towards the vulnerability of those others struck by a natural or unpredictable calamity, those troubles that could be our own troubles—inevitable on the hands of blind physical nature or ruthlessly connected to basic human nature. Nevertheless, we must explore the morality of the gaze for no sentiment ought to be taken for granted nor the professional license shelters anyone from the deepest moral dilemmas of humanity, those that require concrete answers about what to do, how to act, here and now.

The moral of the gaze is inescapable and there is nowhere to hide from it. Some compassionate journalist reporting the suffering of others after a 'natural' disaster in Haiti could well be its first victim. That's what happened on the occasion of the luxury cruises that did not stop from sailing into Haiti right after the earthquake stroke. The first instinct by journalists was to call this fact 'calamity tourism', regardless that in itself this expression could turn against themselves and be used as 'calamity journalism'. Why should we ascribe to the tourist's gaze the gloomy, heinous curiosity from

which we almost automatically acquit the journalist? Why should we condemn their will to go ashore and witness, first hand, the suffering always mediated by the journalists' gaze and their full array of narrative gadgets? Should the luxury journey of privileged tourists, side by side with the extreme poverty and misery of Haitians, really be the target of the anger of the compassionate gaze? Or should we blame the ubiquitous photographs and the rest of the compassionate imagery—the journalist's paraphernalia—for they, in the words of Susan Sontag, "cannot help but nourish belief in the inevitability of tragedy in the benighted or backward—that is, poor—parts of the world" (*ibid.*: 64).

Subsequently, these tourists were depicted in a different manner, as soon as shipments of water and food to the Haitian population in need started leaving the luxury vessels. Revealingly, in the journalist's mind this image started merging with those others of the massive emergency aid of states and NGO's gaining access to Haiti on a daily basis. Suddenly, there was no 'calamity tourism' anymore. After all, and if these tourists just happened to be passing through there, and were able to do good, at the very moment nature decided to strike, why shouldn't the journalist bestow upon them that special legitimacy accorded to the hoards of compassionate humanitarian workers, journalists and statesmen (and women) with their paraphernalia of rescue, aid and reconstruction? The morality of the compassionate gaze tells more about those who look than about those who are looked at, and in the case of 2010 Haiti—as in many other calamities striking the postcolonial world—compassion quickly turned into the industry of rescue of a whole country, thereby exorcizing who knows what kind of non confessed guilt for one more 'natural' calamity. Journalists, as well as privileged tourists and liberal statesmen (and women) often act as heirs to Shakespeare's Trinculo in *The Tempest*, whose first thought after coming across Caliban was to put him on exhibit in England. As no sentiment should be taken for granted, so too the compassionate gaze and its founding commandment to do good often become the colonizing

device that deepens dependencies and vulnerabilities. The talk of global humanitarian arenas has often become the talk of colonizing norms and practices produced by states, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, UN agencies and even pop stars, and of the divide between two worlds—the world safe and sheltered from historical upheavals and nature’s wrath on the one hand, and the other the underworld prone to recurring natural calamities and political violence.

It is enough to take a look at ordinary accounts of Haiti to grasp the tone. Here is the way Daniel Erikson, the Director of Caribbean Programs at the Inter-American Dialogue in 2004, refers to Haiti and the US engagement in the region over the previous decade. Haiti is taken to be a failing state on the doorstep of the world’s most powerful nation and “[o]ver the last decade, the US approach to Haiti has vacillated between aggressive engagement that eventually falls prey to disappointing results, and partial withdrawal that allows the country’s woes to multiply until heightened involvement again becomes necessary” (Erikson 2004: 285). Is the engagement the real problem then with aid and humanitarianism (or at least an important part of it)? The problem seems to lie in that the attempt of domination of ‘nature’ by ‘society’ creates a “postmodern condition in which those who own and control the material and mental means of enforcing asymmetries between different populations of humanity [...] are continuously forced to concretize new inequalities” (Luke 2003: 394–395). Timothy Luke’s conclusions are unequivocal and point to that “[f]ar too many people and their things, in turn, become relegated to second, third, fourth, fifth, or other developing worlds, while only a few people and their things in the developed ‘first world’ benefit from the costs incurred elsewhere by these world-making, or ‘terraformative’, powers” (*ibid.*: 395). In terms of the contemporary politics of pity, it is then judicious to worry about the disproportionate influence that powerful states and global organizations have in determining how aid is delivered and to whom. Critical questions should be asked about the delivering of humanitarian aid and

the why and how of that delivering by the so-called humanitarian actors. Drawing on Michael Walzer, such questions ought to include “Who should make the critical decisions? Who are the agents of international humanitarianism, of charity and justice together? [...] Won’t they often act in their own institutional interests? Don’t states always defend their national interests even when they are engaged in humanitarian work” (2011b: 75)?

The nonstop imagery of human insecurity coming out of Haiti in 2010—of people trapped under the rubble, of the collapse of medical and food assistance, of the breakdown of political order and the institutional vanishing of the state, of improvised camps short of all basic goods, of the movements of the displaced and the traffic of children—suddenly made me go back to the article Timothy Garton Ash published in *The Guardian* on 8 September 2005, about the ‘natural’ disaster called Katrina that affected New Orleans. In “It Always Lies Below”, Garton Ash reflects upon the political dimension of the ‘natural’ disaster, highlighting that the hurricane Katrina brought about anarchy and that the break-up of civilization is not as far from Western, developed and civilized societies as we might want to think. For the self-complacent and self-congratulatory citizens of the first world, the Katrina disaster should stand as a wake-up call to the social vulnerabilities of the unequal world we inhabit—and where the most outrageous iniquities hit the very heart of affluent societies—but also to the vast amount of what is not natural in the calamities caused by natural disasters. It must stand as a wake-up call to all in Europe, and the world at large, about the coming anarchy and de-civilization should the disaggregation of Europe come in the near future.

This last set of ideas does not appear in the article, though Garton Ash does put out a warning, to wit that we had better not think the breakdown of order, of the kind that happened in New Orleans, is unimaginable in “nice, civilized Europe” (Garton Ash 2005). It did happen right here, 65 years ago, all over the continent. It is enough to read the memoirs from the Nazi lagers or the Soviet gulags; it is

enough to read Norman Lewis' account of Naples in 1944 or the endless accounts of Berlin in 1945. And it happened again in Bosnia in the 1990's, even if the calamity has been brought by a natural disaster. In his article, Garton Ash warns us that in Europe 'natural' disasters have had a human cause and hence plays by ascribing a human property to natural disasters and a natural property to manmade disasters. The figure of speech becomes a critical tool to inquire into what lies behind—or below, following the article's semantic logic—every 'natural' disaster. If the hurricanes of European history, those causing anarchy and de-civilization, were of human origin, how can we be sure that the calamities provoked by hurricane Katrina and the earthquake in Haiti are absolutely natural and unconnected to the human action? How natural have the recurring calamities in Haiti been after all? Again, how natural have they been and how forged by human action that produces social vulnerabilities and inequalities, and exposes whole populations to it in Haiti, but also in New Orleans, to the elements' wrath? "It Always Lies Below" reminds me that nature has got little ontological stability and must instead be approached as a polyvalent material-semiotic resource, as stressed by Timothy Luke in his article published in *Alternatives* journal. The critical argument here is that nature is more strategic than natural—it is used to legitimize some and displace others—and that what is material in nature is used for the advantage (capital and ecological) of some in detriment of others.

So what's left of natural disasters? In what way is nature strategic in the context of a calamity that seems to have natural contours? 'Nature' is strategic precisely because it aggravates social vulnerabilities vis-à-vis the elements and inequalities in the access to the material aspect of it—while these vulnerabilities and inequalities are produced by very human processes that dictate the gain of some to the detriment of others, both in the relations between societies and within societies. The latest calamity in Haiti is in fact here to remind us all that there are no natural disasters, a basic fact that should make us all face what follows, to wit that helping Haiti through

reconstruction should mean envisioning a different construction and alternative policies of aid and emergency relief on a global scale. Having said that a key paradox of the compassionate gaze over Haiti—mediated through the media paraphernalia—might well be the naturalization of the disaster and the inevitability of ensuing calamities. By awakening global solidarity and material aid to the population of Haiti, the compassionate gaze of the media, that hoard of professional and specialized tourists, may well contribute to reinforcing the conviction of global audiences in the natural character of this kind of disasters, thereby disregarding that nature is more strategic than natural and instead a polyvalent material and semiotic resource. However, also, disregarding also, for instance, the political decisions of local and global governance that have been aggravating the social vulnerabilities of the Haitian population, thereby contributing decisively to weaken human resilience vis-à-vis all risks.

With their paraphernalia ready to be assembled and dispatched to danger zones, the media play a pivotal role in the contemporary politics of pity. It mobilizes compassion so that the gap between sight and gesture can be filled in favour of the unfamiliar other. However, as Luc Boltanski underlines, whenever suffering is considered from the standpoint of a politics of pity the commitment of the global public towards unfamiliar others appears as a problem. The reason for this is that a politics of pity must meet a double requirement, to wit “[a]s a politics it aspires to generality [...] but in its reference to pity it cannot wholly free itself from the particular case” (Boltanski 1999: 11). By definition, politics is based on general assessments and the detachment from the particular situations inciting compassion. It is a tool for neutral and objective decision making, not for subjective and particular cases, even less for whimsical judgment. On the contrary, pity is never mobilized by the generalities governing politics but by concrete faces. It is difficult to deny therefore that “[t]o arouse pity, suffering and wretched bodies must be conveyed in such a way as to affect the sensibility of those more fortunate” (*ibid.*: 11). Boltanski highlights that in order to avoid the pitfalls of

communitarianism, the unfortunates must not be represented in preferential terms. They must remain unfamiliar others, neither friends nor foes. In today's humanitarianised global arenas, the suffering unfortunates are being both "hyper-singularized through an accumulation of the details of suffering and under-qualified" (*ibid.*: 12). Photos, videos and texts show us real people but they have to serve as examples of broader suffering. They are themselves but they are as well the multitude of many more others we do not happen to see but should arouse our natural empathy and will to do good. That's why "[t]he sufferings made manifest and touching through the accumulation of details must also be able to merge into a unified representation" (*ibid.*: 12). As a tool at the service of the politics of pity, the gaze of the media must cross the distance separating the fortunate from the unfortunate, arouse the empathy of the former towards the latter as unfamiliar others—neither friends nor foes—and finally accumulate the details of suffering in particular illustrative faces.

Such is one of the challenges and paradoxes of the gaze of the media. In the context of calamities, natural or unnatural, journalists become specialized tourists in search of the right specimen with which to instil in globalizing audiences the 'Thou shalt not fail to do good' commandment. Another challenge and paradox lies in that shock can become familiar and wear off, even when presently "the very notion of atrocity, of war crime, is associated with the expectation of photographic evidence (Sontag 2003a: 74). The spectacle of the unfortunate and their suffering has been matched, on the side of the media, by a new kind of duty, to wit the duty to arouse the responsibility of the whole international community. Nothing less than the global mind is the very target of the journalist trying to secure the moral flaws in atrocities and calamities. As a privileged spectator of human calamities and suffering, someone who can actually touch their wounds, the journalist feels responsible to arouse that kind of responsibility. In the context of a contemporary politics of pity, it would be considered intolerable, out of place or even

inhuman to stick to a purely factual account of calamities and their victims. Instead, the world of suffering is emotionally construed as a very small place—one can no longer hide from it nor from the moral nearness and responsibility vis-à-vis what happens there—“and what is thought worth knowing about it is expected to be transmitted tersely and emphatically” (*ibid.*: 17). In global humanitarian arenas, the object of responsibility suffers what Paul Ricoeur identifies as a process of displacement to vulnerable and fragile others, in a way that goes well beyond the limits established for its juridical use. It becomes an obligation that overflows the juridical structure of compensation and punishment “thanks to the chance assimilations encouraged by the polysemy of the verb ‘to respond’: not just in the sense of ‘to answer for...’ but also as ‘to respond to...’ (a question, an appeal, an injunction, etc.)” (Ricoeur 2000: 12).

Surrounded by the vulnerable, the journalist cannot help “being rendered responsible by the moral injunction coming from others” (*ibid.*: 34), and so to objectively describe the plaything—not object—of misfortune would be tantamount to catalogue it as an object, a structure “appropriate for the representation of nature, but when persons are being described it can always be criticized in the name of common humanity because it is asymmetrical and distributes the humanity of the different partners unequally.” (Boltanski 1999: 24) More so when these persons find themselves prey to nature’s wrath or other persons’ violence. Instead of objectively describing the plaything of misfortune, the forging of global humanitarian arenas depends on elaborate processes of nourishing the imagination of the spectator of calamities calling for more equitable systems of representation between spectator and victim. Sheltered behind distance and detachment, the privileged spectator waits for a wake-up call and relies on the professional tourists-cum-journalist to ignite their visions of how calamities de-humanize their victims. As rightly conveyed by Boltanski, moralization presupposes sensitization, and to transmit the spectacle of suffering to others means to share the emotional experiences it arouses and to make “perceptible how one is

both affected and concerned [...]“ (*ibid.*: 53) by other humans. Looking at other people’s pain has become the quintessential moralizing device and in the last decades photojournalists (and camera operators for that matter) have decisively contributed with their nonstop imagery production to the kind of sentimental education Rorty refers to and that alone—or almost—could lead to moral change and progress.

If we admit a universal capacity to empathize with the unfortunate and the victim, it becomes common sense to admit that capacity comes from a common and diffused ability to imagine the suffering. As pointed out by Boltanski, imagination is the crucial attribute for the coordination of emotional commitments (as it is the crucial attribute, by the way, for the coordination of national commitments, in the view of Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined Communities*). At this point, it seems straightforward to connect Boltanski’s argument with Rorty’s. Emotional commitments must be coordinated—one way or another—so that they produce effects, so that one feels one shall not fail to do good. Conventional knowledge, judgment and reason seem to be not enough to perform such a role, and so imagination appears as an alternative and more powerful candidate. In an article published in *Ethics*, in 1991, Adrian Piper comes up with the concept of ‘modal imagination’ to translate the ability to imagine what might exist and not only what actually exists. In his own words, “[w]e need modal imagination in order to extend our conception of reality—and , in particular, of human beings—beyond our immediate experience in the indexical present” (1991: 726). The reason for this urgency is that imagination allows us to preserve the inner significance of human interaction and Piper goes as far as to defend that this perspective is a necessary condition of experiencing compassion for others. In this context, it is not just that the memory museum is now mostly a visual one, as Sontag highlights in her article about the mistreatment of prisoners in Abu Ghraib. More critical is the fact that without the modal aspect of imagination “we would be unable to identify our experiences in terms of universally

applicable concepts [...]” (*ibid.*: 730) and that is central for the functioning of human social and mental life.

But how exactly does the link between compassion and imagination work? Nourishing the imagination and coordinating emotional commitments is done by resorting to common sources such as myths, songs, TV reports, fiction and docudramas in which we can find “descriptions of the internal states of other people to which we can have no direct access and which by that fact nourish the imagination of spectators when faced with distant suffering.” (Boltanski 1999: 51). As Ken Both and Tim Dunne have pointed out, a focus on individual lives is an effective way of bringing the reality of distant suffering to life, and the example they resort to is that “the teaching of the Holocaust that draws on the diaries of Anne Frank, the stories of Primo Levi, and the images of *Schindler’s List*” (1999: 324–325) are capable of stimulating an empathetic understanding of the needs of strangers in violent times. This might as well be what Piper calls a ‘leap of imagination’ to achieve insight but also an impartial perspective on our own and others’ inner states (Piper 1991: 726). Instead, we might as well draw on Susan Sontag and call this paraphernalia of nonstop imagery the ‘iconography of suffering’ with long pedigree. A lot of Sontag’s writings rightly try to capture the leap of imagination performed by photographs as a means of making ‘real’ (or ‘more real’) matters that the privileged and the merely safe prefer to ignore (2003a: 6). Everything being taken into account, this nonstop imagery enhances our ability to modally imagine the others’ inner states; “[f]resh combinations of images, words, metaphors, and tonal progressions enable us to construct an imaginative vision that may in turn causally transform or enlarge our range of emotional responses” (Piper 1991: 739).

Reality and imagination combine in the coordination of emotional commitments to perform moral progress. But how real should the pictures of suffering be if they are intended to extend the spectator’s conception of reality and allow for a certain leap of imagination? Surely a photograph is as easy to retain as a quotation, a maxim

or a proverb (Sontag 2003b: 254), and has only one language and is destined potentially for all audiences (Sontag 2003a: 17). However, as Sontag herself admits, in our globalizing and consumerist world, “no effect of a photograph of a doleful scene can be taken for granted” (*ibid.*: 71). After all, photographs objectify and run the risk of reducing the powerless to a sole feature, to wit their circumstantial powerlessness. Or they beautify the victims, thereby draining attention to the medium and bleaching out responsibility and moral action. Commenting on the widely celebrated work of the Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado, Nancy Scheper-Hughes points out that “Sebastião’s universalising images of global suffering are a bit problematic for they suggest an almost timeless, spaceless, quality of human experience”. In this critical vein, she underscores the tendency to idealize and sanitize suffering and asks why the victims are always portrayed as beautiful and luminous images: “[i]s Sebastião a little bit tempted by the medieval theologies of noble suffering, of suffering as the noble path of saints and martyrs, of suffering as useful, for something, and as meaningful in its own right” (2002)? In a way, to idealize and sanitize the suffering is to deprive victims of agency and to detach photography from activism. Therefore, global humanitarian arenas sometimes seem peopled by a pantheon of angels, deprived of what Primo Levi called the grey zones, social spaces where everything is not quite so black and white, where victims become killers and survivors become sadists.

Be that as it may, Salgado himself declares he is not an activist. In fact, as David Campbell underlines, he has a complex understanding of the relationship between his work and activism, “[h]is description of photography as only a small slice in the overall dynamic of activism that might produce change is significant for its realistic modesty” (Campbell 2012). In a similar vein, in a 2010 video produced by the Open Society Institute, Susan Meiselas asks whether we can really point to things that have changed because specific photographs were made (Open Society Institute 2010). It seems to

matter little that Meiselas deems photography “as something which has huge potential to expand the circle of knowledge” (*ibid.*: 2012). In a world of recurrent human tragedy, hand in hand with nonstop imagery illustrating and corroborating calamities and atrocities—and political incapacity to respond effectively—scepticism about the power of photography to produce social change is often matched by sheer cynicism. According to Sontag, the “[c]itizens of modernity, consumers of events as spectacle, are schooled to be cynical about the ‘sincere’. Thus, deriding the efforts of those who seek to bear witness as the ‘tourism of misery’ is a recurrent cliché in the discussion of concerned photography.” (Sontag 2003b: 270) Between the cynics-cum-consumers of everything-as-spectacle and the believers in the innate good will and naturalness of the ‘Thou shalt not fail to do good’ axiom, we had better listen to Campbell’s advice: “I think we should follow the lead of Salgado and Meiselas and reset our expectations of what photography, especially photojournalism, can do in the face of global challenges. If we persist with the flawed idea that somehow there is a clear, linear, causal linkage between information, knowledge and action we are only going to be frustrated” (Campbell 2012).

In conclusion, the politics of pity is a tricky subject and should not be taken for granted in a globalizing world, where some would expect a swifter diffusion of moral norms and cosmopolitan obligations. Nor should the capacity of empathizing with the pain of others or the use of it as some kind of (play)ground of the soul leading to moral knowledge and progress. Global humanitarian arenas seem to be possible and useful in so far as humans undertake a certain sentimental journey where pictures, fictions and metaphors instigate a leap of imagination that extends the bounds of possibility. However, as Bosnia and Abu Ghraib have shown and ought to make us ponder, both practices of de-humanization and embedding colonizing hierarchies are always part of the possibility framework—always part of the picture as it were, constituting parts of globalization—while inflicting pain to others might become sheer playfulness for

the perpetrators, turned into mere ‘picturesque’ content to post online, share and comment. As Judith Butler justly underlines in the introduction to *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*, “[i]f certain lives do not qualify as lives or are, from the start, not conceivable as lives within certain epistemological frames, then these lives are never lived nor lost in the full sense” (2009: 1). Following Butler’s lead then, a politics of pity must take into account a specific politics of ‘precarity’ that starts from the assumption that the ontology of the human body “is one that is always given over to others, to norms, to social and political organizations that have developed historically in order to maximize precariousness for some and minimize precariousness for others” (*ibid.*: 2–3). The bottom line here is that the body is always exposed to social and political forces as well as to claims of sociality including language, work and desire on which it depends to thrive and to be protected but that can also conspire to annihilate it. As Homi Bhabha has concluded in a volume in support of Amnesty International, we ought to protect ourselves from presentism—the ‘tyranny of the present tense’ (Booth 1999: 32)—to wit “from a vain and vaunting future that believes that its time has irrevocably arrived, that the present is its exclusive destiny and its isolate domain” (2003: 183).

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ALIENATION AND THE BRANDLESS COMMUNITY: BIG KIDS IN THE SANDBOX

Jaanika Puusalu

iPads, Android, Twitter, Instagram—the list goes on—we live in a period that has transcended the crassness of designer culture, the limits of materialism. No longer are we slaves to the products, they are our friends and tools, aiding us as we playfully define, design and redefine ourselves. But this supposedly emancipating culture is often anything but, more patronising than nurturing, paternalistic than liberating—where we should grow up, develop and commit we are urged to procrastinate and equivocate, to stay in the sandbox a little while longer. We make sandcastles and our Facebook friends call us princesses. For all the potential of the new direction of development, it is just another twist on alienation.

In this chapter, I first suggest that alienation can be usefully characterised along three lines. With these three characteristics I then proceed to discuss a variety of developments in modern society and attempt to argue that such an analysis helps us to identify the continuing, alienating nature of our contemporary world. The phenomena I discuss fall under the headings of brand and brandless communities. The first is adopted from sociological literature (Muniz Jr., O'Guinn 2001; Muniz Jr., Schau 2002), fitting to any group of admirers of one specific brand (whom we may also consider to be commodity fetishists). The second fits a phenomenon that is rapidly overtaking the world and which supplies an exquisitely tempting form of false-belonging. In considering these two phenomena, this chapter attempts to introduce the propensity for alienation as a vector of analysis of liberal consumer capitalism. The result of which, I argue, is a recognition that the freedom to self-realize is further

away even than at the times of Marx's impassioned early writings on the topic.

More specifically, I shall illustrate this discussion through two examples: The first, the vicious manifestation of the urge towards commodities that occurred in the August 2011 riots in England. The second, a new and dominant meme that exemplifies and commodifies a naïve (mis-understanding of) freedom to self-realization, I refer to this as 'i-ideology'.

Three characteristics of alienation

Introduced to modern discussion by Hegel, who argued it to be an inevitable state on the path to becoming fully aware of oneself and one's capacities, the concept of alienation has a rich history. Hegel's use of the concept, however, was bound to an abstract notion of self (whole or unity) that was itself tied to a too optimistic description of the development of society (Hegel 2010: 161). It is not so surprising then that the notion of alienation has since always appeared under the auspices of a critique of modern capitalist society and its alienating features. Even thinkers such as Heidegger or Kierkegaard, who did not consider capitalism to be the main source of alienation, nonetheless saw in this aspect of society an indicator of the phenomenon marking its appearance all the more clearly.

Given this rich history it seems at first glance odd that discussion of alienation, present in the first critiques of capitalist and mass society, has today lost its status. But, with production and consumption having undergone dramatic change, in which we are all supplied the apparent freedom to belong wherever we desire, we have our smoking gun. Likewise, these developments have been accompanied by a waning desire to discuss the nature and importance of belonging that could be said to motivate any discussion of alienation. As individuals seem themselves to be responsible for their inclusion or exclusion from the modern take on fragmented class division, Marx's distinction of bourgeoisie and proletariat class (Marx 1978: 133)—perhaps

the most powerful of all expressions of the concept of alienation—is no longer one-for-one applicable.

Yet, as capitalism develops and deforms, but does not disappear, so the discussion of alienation remains relevant. Indeed it can be seen as the root cause of a number of developments in society. To recognise this, however, it is important also to recognise alienation's counterpoint—self-realization. And to recognize how this remains relevant it can be useful to see self-realization in the light of a concept I have already introduced: as a question of belonging. According to which understanding, we can suggest that if the phenomena of alienation is taken to be a negative feeling or state of man, then perhaps there corresponds a phenomena that is a positive state—one related to belonging. As the positive state and counterpoint to alienation, the feeling of belonging is thus bound to man's self-realization, just as the feeling of alienation is connected to man's inability to fully realize oneself.

To further illustrate the notion of alienation that I shall employ, it can be useful to characterise it along three lines¹:

Firstly, alienation can be seen to have the characteristic of a constant urge or drive towards goals that are not considered natural to humanity, but are treated as constructs of the human mind (society). These 'improper goals' may be 'earthly' and (relatively) easy to reach but are no more natural for this.

Secondly, the reason for the value attributed to such improper goals, and the intensive drive towards them, can be understood as the misplaced urge to find self-realization through such goals. If improperly desired goals are essential to the concept of alienation, then so also is an unnatural form of self-realization, which fails to provide the possibility to fully realize oneself. We can say then that

¹ These three characteristics are the result of an earlier analysis (Puusalu 2012) of the concept of alienation and common elements as found in four of the major figures in the development of the concept: Marx, Heidegger, Kierkegaard and Arendt (with some discussion also of Hegel and Feuerbach). For reasons of space I merely refer to that previous work here and summarize its conclusions.

improper goals are created to replace one's inability to self-realize in a given situation. The improper, however, is always in contrast to the proper and the origin of desire towards improper goals is the lack of possibility to belong.

Thirdly, we can say that, if alienation may be characterized as a desire towards an unnatural goal replacing difficult to reach self-realization with a goal less challenging, overcoming this delusion demands personal recognition. In other ways disparate discussions of overcoming alienation in Marx (2004), Kierkegaard (2008), Heidegger (2008) and Arendt (1998) draw distinct borders across the reasons for a lack of belonging, but none place the responsibility on anything other than the person itself to overcome this situation. We can identify, therefore, a third characteristic of alienation: As men themselves feel alienated and create false objects to overcome this, they must recognise by themselves the need to overcome alienation, and recognise that only this is the key to belonging.

The rise of false-belonging

Behind the concept of false-belonging is the suggestion that society has developed in such a way that the second characteristic of alienation—the replacement of one's inability to self-realize with improper goals—is more central than ever. If people are, as my first characteristic of alienation suggests, subject to a need to work or urge towards something and this is properly the difficult and at times impossible goal of self-realization, it is no surprise that those same people have been eager to create and identify self-realization in goals easier to reach. Yet at the current stage of society's development, goals at some point recognised as unnatural are now appropriated to everyday life and the relation between alienation and belonging has shifted. Whilst improper goals are inevitable aspects of alienation and any attempt at its overcoming, the recognition that these do not confer self-realization has apparently evaporated. Now there is a seemingly endless variety of opportunities to create

oneself—yet choosing from amongst these only removes us further from belonging and substitutes in its place a more easily reachable false-belonging.

What marks the improper goals of contemporary society as so distinct from those of two hundred years ago is firstly the sheer number of options. Everyone can become and own whatever they desire, with both time to choose and change one's mind, and every one of these limitless opportunities should be tried. Secondly, false-belonging is presented as freedom more than improper goals in earlier stages of history ever were. Comparison with Marx's position makes this last most clear—the enforced and oppressive state of class membership which concerned Marx hardly evokes the freedom to realise one's true nature as do raw food diets, apps that promise to unleash your inner artist, or soul-searching package trips to India.

False-belonging then is fundamentally situated in the consumption of whichever commodities, or simply choice of whichever product, one has decided to be necessary to fully create oneself and fit the needs of society. Whether this demands intellectual or material capacities, it is a state that depends upon constant affirmation from others that one is part of a specific group.

These last two factors create a state which is simultaneously addictive and desirable and which does nothing to produce an urge for genuine belonging. Rather, false-belonging grants us all the 'freedom' to allow ourselves benefit of the doubt. If my current situation doesn't suit me, I simply pick another.

Such freedom of choice is the paradox of the modern world, what should offer amazing opportunity for self-realization creates only an inevitable utopia of false-belonging, one of social networks, brand communities, the lifestyle industry—in other words individualistic consumer capitalism and all of its glorious products. The freedom to choose is merely freedom to choose between different tools of self-deception, but so it is that false-belonging promises self-realization. It is a promise always mediated by consumption, self-creation absurdly found in the product.

Whilst Marx (2004: 78) was highly critical of the capitalists whose greed chained workers to factories, now—when owners and labourers are interchangeable—everyone is driven by the same greed. Through false-belonging, people seem deceived more deeply than ever before, able only to see opportunities to change within this system. Recognition of alienation and true self-realization are left out in the cold.

Brand communities

The liberty to choose immediately poses a crucial question, what to choose? Choice, moreover, is naturally related to risk. Whilst I hope for a product to lead to my self-realization there remains the possibility that this is the wrong path. In the crucible of false-belonging this becomes the risk that others do not see me as a member of the product's related community. This question of individual choice—what path to self-realization should I tread—has now become marketing and advertisement peoples' to solve. They provide for us a description of who and what one is or will be when wearing, driving, eating their product (for example, Jaguar's animalistic 'Unleash a Jaguar.', Nike's pro-active 'Just do it', Apple's divisive Mac person vs. PC person, Martell Cognac's elitist 'Only a Few Can Tell.'). They alleviate the risk by telling the individual just how and who will and should be self-realized through their product. Thus, in identifying oneself with these descriptions, a suitable improper goal for a person is found. On the one hand, such choice between belongings in which the target group is already specified is inevitably restricted—when one does not fall under the description, one is somewhat excluded from this choice. On the other hand, this approach delivers the group of people who most strongly identify themselves through the product opportunity for a rarefied form of apparent belonging—a brand community.

Albert M. Muniz, Jr.'s and Thomas C. O'Guinn's (2001: 418) concept of brand communities is a powerful one enabling us to

recognise the manner in which actual communities are replicated in the imagined community bonds that attach to brands. They highlight three characteristics. First, community has a consciousness of kind (connection between members). Second, there is a presence of shared rituals and traditions. Third, community members have a sense of moral responsibility. Over and above these three characteristics, community members have a common understanding of shared identity. Users of Nike, for example, choose to identify themselves through the brand (as Nike users) and distinguish themselves from all other sports-wear users (non-Nike wearers).

From the context of false-belonging, brand communities give people a freedom to identify themselves through a product that also provides a community to which they can consider belonging. In actuality they remain alienated from their self-realization. Membership to one of these specific groups becomes an improper goal for the alienated person. The false-belonging that these groups provide becomes the closest mirror of belonging available in the consumer's alienated position—but this 'belonging' is achieved only through external recognition and loyalty to the product that one has chosen to represent one's character.

Of course, the liberty to choose itself is not a negative thing—so long as the objects of choice are of the kind that would be equally available to everyone, i.e. objects for which access is not dependent upon resources. Equality of the consumptive kind, however, is as naïve and misplaced an idea as the corresponding image of freedom. Brand communities, for instance, are surely a consequence of sophisticated consumerism, yet they foster the very elitism and inequality that reveals this naivety, likewise the products and marketing strategies that encourage and capitalize upon them. Nonetheless, people have taken consumptive freedom to be their right: One should be able to have the mediating product and the sense of belonging that it propagates—whatever one's means. Of course, when these are not available, then the feeling of alienation is further

inflated. In a commodity obsessed modern society the drastic result of these false needs can be dramatic indeed.

We can interpret the August 2011 riots in England as one such example. Although the initial driving force of these events should be found elsewhere than alienation, the looting that followed could be perceived as driven by its participants' perceived lack of freedom to self-realize through consumption. Supporting this interpretation, are eyewitness accounts in which the action is described as a shopping spree, allowing the looters the opportunity to procure those things that they had long longed for. The following accounts illustrate this trend:

"I heard two girls arguing about which store to steal from next. 'Let's go Boots?' 'No, Body Shop.' 'Hit Body Shop after it's dead [meaning empty].'" The girl came out of Boots "nonchalantly, as if she'd done her weekly shop at 4:30am", he added. He described others, holding up clothes to themselves in the broken windows of H&M. "They were just so blasé about what they were doing." (Topping 2011)

"If we go for it now, we can get a bike," said one. "Don't do it," said another. Others were not so reticent; a white woman and a man emerged carrying a bike each. A young black teenager, aged about 14, came out smiling, carrying another bike, only for it be snatched from him by an older man. (Lewis, Harkin 2011)

Understood from this perspective, the looting was not as such wilful anti-social behaviour, but people taking what they considered to be theirs by right—i.e. the right of having equal opportunities to belong through the mediation of desired products. The riots of course were notorious for their demographic broadness, yet one common denominator which we could apply to all those involved is the term alienated—in this case alienated even from the opportunity to have false-belonging.

MIRRORING EFFECT

These events illustrate particularly well how brand communities guide the understanding of false-belonging in modern society: when there is an urge to identify oneself through a specific label, no price is too high to become a member of this group.

Furthermore, what becomes easily recognizable is the mirroring of the belonging-alienation relationship that false-belonging through brand communities achieves. The reaching of a goal improperly seen to be belonging, where that belonging is through a specific group, is juxtaposed with the corresponding failure of not being counted as a member of the group. In other words one is alienated from false-belonging.

Alienation qua exclusion, however, is easily detected and recognized. The explicit and elitist membership criteria of brand community groups suggests the importance of possessing all the necessary symbols of a group—and as such why extreme measures may be taken when one lacks tools necessary to even seek such belonging. Yet, the sources of this kind of exclusion are relatively easily recognised as unfair, and this supposed alienation recognised as a mirage. We easily enough remember that belonging through self-realization does not depend on possessions, but personal engagement with a subject matter. Membership of brand communities, in contrast, is explicitly based upon being able to have whatever else others in that group have. For example, if one is not able to procure oneself Laurent-Perrier then one is not able to consider oneself to be a member of Laurent-Perrier drinkers community, but is taken as an (hostile) outsider.

Whilst the deception is not without nuance and effectiveness, therefore, the nature of brand communities leaves open a convincing possibility for rejecting the false-belonging that their improper goals promise. One still has available the conscious decision to not seek membership to the branded group and thus to step further away from the mirage of belonging that the group provides—i.e. we have

the clear and appealing opportunity to be an individual and not define ourselves by brand. Although turning away from this system may lead people to be alienated-as-excluded from false-belonging, they are no more alienated in the true sense of the word. Indeed they are closer to self-realization than they may imagine. To return to the notion of risk at the heart of the liberty to choose: in rejecting the branded community we recognise that the perceived risk of failing to belong to that group was of no consequence—the real risk would be that we fall prey to its sales pitch.

Thus, false-belonging through brand communities, for all its persuasiveness, remains consistent with and amenable to the positive sense of the second and third characteristics of alienation. For whilst an improper goal is seductively presented, this is such that it cannot but fail to conceal the opportunity to recognize its own hollowness and work rather towards self-realization.

Brandless communities: i-ideology

Whilst the hollowness of false-belonging through brand communities is easy to realise, a more contemporary and insidious development of false-belonging is far less transparent: brandless communities, whereby one is marketed the ability to self-realize. The phenomenon that I refer to as i-ideology (as the name suggests, exemplified by the brand marketing and applications available to use on Apple's gadgets) provides perhaps the clearest and most pervasive example of this new development of false-belonging.

At first glance it may seem odd to expound upon brandless communities through reference to Apple, surely the most recognizable technology brand in current times with products recognizable instantly for their logo and distinctive designs. It is, however, the message of freedom that Apple sells—communicated through both marketing and design ethos in some sense running counter to that fiercely defended distinctiveness—by which its i-ideology so perfectly captures the inexorability of the brandless

community. The metaphor of the playground can illustrate this powerfully.

If we imagine an asphalt playground used by children to play football in the school holidays. On the asphalt court, participating in the game of football involves the very real risk of falling down and getting hurt. Only the most skilful (or least committed) will go home without bruised knees and grazed elbows. Yet, all of the players have taken responsibility to play their position, to follow the loose rules and all are aware of the risk they undertake in doing so. In the corner of the same playground, there is a toddlers' sandbox—a safe environment, where the younger children can all play according to their own rules, and where the chances of hurt are minimized. From time to time the bruised and battered big kids playing football are bound to look towards the sandbox with fond and envious thoughts of their days in its safe environment, yet overridingly they remain proud of their engagement in a game far more demanding and far riskier than building a sand castle. The little kids, meanwhile, ignorant of the risks of the hard asphalt of the real playground, are likewise bound to occasionally look up with awe and wonder, anxiously waiting on the day they are old enough to join in the rough and tumble of the big kids' game.

The relation between belonging and alienation can be described along similar lines. To achieve belonging entails risk, the risks that come with the liberty to choose, without which self-realization is not possible. In the terms of my banal playground: the older child who engages with the game, its rules and its risks, and does her all to excel, works towards self-realization. The scared and uncommitted older child clinging to the sandbox embraces only alienation, just as he rejects the possibilities opened to him. Being afraid whilst entering the game is allowed, but avoiding the risk of getting hurt is considered nothing but cowardice, a refusal to grow up: a big kid still playing in the babies' sandbox under the ever-watchful gaze of over-protective parents. So it is with alienation and self-realization. To properly follow the urge to self-realization, i.e. belonging, is to

embrace the risk of finding one's path as an individual, the responsibilities of playing for the team, by the rules of the game—to step out of the sandbox and onto the asphalt.

The freedom that Apple provides is in complete contrast to that on the playground described above. Rather than the freedom that is found only on the asphalt, they endorse riskless self-realization, everyone is dotingly assured their individuality. The showy indicators of brand communities are dispersed and one is promised a seemingly unbound freedom to create oneself. It is a playground where the big kids play their games in the sandbox, free from the risks of the asphalt, the responsibilities of roles and rules, all under their parents carefully maintained fantasy that this is the normal way to grow up. In such a playpen, the congregation of i-ideology subject themselves to false-belonging more thoroughly even than those driven by the need to consume a specific brand.

i-ideology, as exemplified by Apple, can be examined from three different perspectives, which show the indicators for this new twist on false-belonging: design ethos, apps and the users themselves.

I-DESIGN ETHOS

For all of its positive connotations and ambitions, design is one of the principal factors affecting the choice of which product or products to recognize oneself through—once again the question of suitability is asked when one is presented the liberty to choose. Which aesthetic suits me, which aesthetic do I suit—what will it say about me? As tastes differ between people, brands have been able to capitalize upon the divergence to provide essentially similar products, differentiated through slight alterations in appearance, which yet suggest great distinction in ethos.

Yet, even there remains the issue of where to draw the line between good design and tasteless aberration. Only the bold follow individual preference as opposed to the commonly celebrated.

Apple has, since at least its 90's resurgence, stood out amongst technology and hardware companies for gravitation toward ever more minimalistic design aesthetics more commonly associated with the socially motivated principles of mid-20th century German and Scandinavian schools of design. Modest colours, clean lines and unobtrusive profiles make apples computers, phones, laptops and tablets easy to integrate into any surrounding. Even the splashes of colour found in earlier iterations of iPod's and iMac's follow the same criterion of modesty—and even these minimal flourishes of individuality have been gradually toned down in favour of the further emphasised homogeneity of the Apple family.

The German and Finnish design schools, from which Apple has taken its cues, were originally motivated by the ideal of social inclusion—providing beauty for all members of society. Apple's design ethos capitalizes upon the remnants of this egalitarian ideal, rejecting divergence to push a communitarian notion of beauty in uniform simplicity—begetting a series of products that lionize ubiquitous, risk free consumption. What at first glance appears to run counter to the demands of individuality supplies Apple with the perfect platform from which to hawk the notion of freedom on which they hang their modern business model. If one does care to be identified through the brand community of Apple then this is allowed, yet one also retains the possibility of remaining unnoticed, un-sequestered to any particular hegemony. In accordance with this ethos, Apple's 1984 slogan 'The Computer for the rest of us' has been reborn in universal, identify-ambivalent appeals such as 2010's 'holding the internet in your hands' and 'a magical and revolutionary device at an unbelievable price'. The divisive message of the mid-2000's 'Mac person' and 1990's 'Think different' has been retired, allowing each and every individual easy justification of the choice to join the brandless community. It is in the design ethos, then, that the central, over-riding and paternalistic characteristic of i-ideology appears: everyone is better off with this product.

I-CREATIVITY

In accordance with its design ethos, Apple products and its marketing of those products emphasise the appeal and freedom found within a life that embraces creativity. This ideal, however, is accompanied by its own set of risks—every creative act, whether taking a photograph or painting a picture, demands a set of decisions. Without these there is no work of art and even then its positive reception is far from guaranteed. The eagerness of thinkers such as Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Marx and Arendt to associate self-realization with the creative ideal could perhaps be read partly as entailing recognition of and respect for these risks. That entailment, however, now seems in jeopardy, for in the current age any user of a smartphone, iPad or other tablet has instant access to the tools to guarantee their artistic outcome. Reliability and security in creation previously out of most our reach now comfortably fits in our pockets—such is the basis of the enormous success and usage of smartphone and tablet photo and art apps such as Instagram, Hipstermatic and Paper.

Instagram introduces itself with a slogan: ‘A beautiful way to share your world. It’s fast, free and fun!’ In essence it is a very basic photo editing programme for smartphones, supplemented with the function to easily and instantly share the result in social media. The app has gained huge popularity (the product, formerly with a staff of 13, was bought by Facebook for \$1 billion in April, 2012) partly on account of its simplicity and ease of use—the results of Photoshop, which demands time and skill (and has of course been criticised along similar lines), are just a few clicks away. You shoot, add a filter and share.

The art of photography has been brought to the masses and we all should jump at the chance—and then let others see how great our ‘art’ is. Thought, judgement and engagement with the material is as brief and unnecessary as possible so as to better allow us each the opportunity to release our inner artist. In addition to its ease of use is the perceived reliability of the artistic outcome—the filters that

the programme offers you unfailingly give your snaps a desirable and evocative aesthetic. As one blogger, in an opinion piece covering Instagram and the similarly conceived art app Paper on gadget and technology site ‘The Verge’, argues, these programmes guarantee an outcome regardless of any skill or insight the user may otherwise employ to produce something similar—bewilderingly what may sound to some like condemnation is intended as a positive endorsement of both apps:

Instagram and Paper’s minimal functionality isn’t just for the sake of “simplicity” out of moral adherence to “simplicity” in design; it’s a form of editorializing. It’s telling me what looks good, and tries as hard as it can to keep me from making something look bad. [...] Instagram and Paper don’t just editorialize the toolset, they editorialize the end goal: in Instagram it’s to post to the social network in miniature, in Paper it’s to capture and store ideas, with sharing as a secondary pursuit via Twitter or Tumblr. (Miller 2012)

This is the core of the product, allowing users opportunity to create images similar to those of a real artist and present these to the abstract audience of social networks as their masterpieces. By sharing the result in this way the user presents herself as an artist even whilst her engagement with the material is entirely unlike the artists. In its un-considered call (and promise) of finding your inner artist, the product, and others of its kind, offers a short-cut to belonging—you too can realise your true artistic self, regardless of whether or not your true self is artistic. In truth this is only a new path to false-belonging.

The point is not to say that such tools cannot be used to produce art, or employed in self-realization, but that these products promise a way of circumventing the essential risks entailed in self-realization without any actual engagement with the material. Responsibilities are passed from the individual to the safe and secure hands of the algorithm. The product’s popularity is built upon the sale and championing of improper goals, when for all its wrapping this is only an

offer of false-belonging, an offer to easily meet a set of standards entirely external to the user.

As the design ethos forestalls the risk of choice in selection of product, so the content creativity apps upon which i-ideology bases its notion of freedom continue the paternalistic approach—extending the risk free sandbox to engulf the most demanding and rewarding vistas of self-realization. In effect, at the point where the players may lack competence and confidence, the point most crucial in their development, the apps of i-ideology remove all responsibility.

I-COMMUNITY

On account of i-ideology's umbrella approach to identity there is no opportunity to talk about brand community members in the sense of Muniz, Jr. and O'Guinn. Where every brand community member makes a distinction between true brand believers and those who are merely opportunistic (Muniz, Jr., O'Guinn 2001: 419), Apple and i-ideology sell and provide individualism to every customer. To talk of brand community in respect to i-ideology simply misses the point, for the brand is pitched at everyone, creating a ubiquitous and worldwide recognized improper goal. It is false-belonging impossible to escape from. Correspondingly, it is not the product itself that is the goal of a consumer, but the freedom through creativity that these gadgets promise. The follower of i-ideology is not a member of a dull mass defined by their similar possessions, rather these shared possessions are presented as themselves being the keys to freedom. As the 2008 slogan tells us: 'There's an app for that. That's the iPhone. Solving life's dilemma one app at a time'—but this is the self-same freedom that I previously suggested to be safe, secure and fundamentally limited.

Just as brand communities mirrored the same belonging-alienation relationship that this chapter began with, then i-ideology goes one better, aiming to sell false-belonging to everyone. The elitist distinction between conscious brand followers and individuals

is erased and individual acknowledgement of one's alienation is already included in the false-belonging that i-ideology provides.

Where traditionally brands have addressed the product to a specific group, presenting straight forward descriptions of the kind of person suitable to bear the brand, Apple and i-ideology sells freedom from these distinctions, emphasising the importance of individuality that these products provide. As with the design ethos there is no demand to choose whether one wants to be identified qua Apple user and find false-belonging therewith or withdraw from this group and be left to solitude and isolation. Quite the opposite, the freedom Apple sells demands becoming a member only so much as owning the product, rather advocating that we increase and celebrate our individuality when using the products. Everyone has their own unique personality, Apple products are simply mediators of further self-creation. Thus with i-ideology, brand attached identity and the originality-seeking-individual's interests overlap. Both camps are able to justify desire for the product and the status of these gadgets as commodities is completely obscured. Instead their base is built upon marketizing everyone's opportunity to self-realize, that is to belong. Yet, this is still false-belonging, the freedom that is provided is simply a more compelling illusion—one that fails to provide self-realization and subsumes all risk and responsibility to a handful of readymade options.

With risk and responsibility taken away by design and creative freedom reconceived, the brandless i-community is the playground that awaits: an all ages, all-consuming invitation to act and play just like a toddler, safe and secure as long as one wants, without sacrificing the rewards and accolades previously reserved for the high stakes games of the older children.

Conclusion

Apple is perhaps no more criminal in these regards than many other corporations and companies, yet they are without doubt amongst the most (if not the most) sophisticated and effective in their exploitation of the new development in society and the new twist on false-belonging that I am discussing here. Indeed it is in honour of their pioneering and conducive marketing strategies and product creation that I have labelled the phenomena ‘i-ideology’.

Nonetheless this twist on false-belonging is an insidious and disturbing one. Whereas the cracks in the façade of false-belonging through branded communities are relatively easy to perceive, the surface of i-ideology is smooth and unbroken. Its replication of the scheme of belonging and alienation is far more perfect, supplanting all three characteristics of alienation to obscure the i-reality of the choices it offers. To reject the brand is to turn to brandlessness, to reject the product is not to reject the opportunities that it provides. When the tools for creativity are those provided by i-ideology then even the genuinely creative individual is forced to play on its terms.

If there is an opportunity to play in the sandbox, with new and shiny toys and no risk of mockery or judgement—if big kids crawling in the toddlers’ space receive all the praise—then even the most developed children are likely to be tempted.

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RESEARCH AS A GAME OF LOVE

Dita Bezdičková

The worst thing that can happen to a photographer
(and researcher¹) is love 'cause it's blindness

necoc yaotl

The blind person sees what a person with vision does not, because she moves tentatively. Because instead of making use of direct lines of vision to distant objects, she gropes her way across the terrain.

John Law (2004)

Treat your subject as an unconditional lover; the kind of who will never feel judged and won't judge you back. Describe it. Tell it what you love, hate, fear and hope. Pretend, if you must, to write it as a love letter. And those things take time. I got the feeling that it'll be alright. It doesn't matter if you're writing an article, or an essay. Writing is creating. It's like poetry. The images or ideas just fall on our heads and you just have to let them breathe; take over you. Let them take you to that place and make a stand. Then, when least expected, you will be totally embracing the flow of your thoughts and realize that writing is an organic, living creature.

[JC]

All this can be understood as article about love, as a love letter. It might be perceived as melodramatic mumbling with no beginning and no end. You are introduced into my process, in the midst of it, with no set up, no structure, and no introduction. There is no problematic to discuss, unless the problematic of this being problematic

¹ Note of the author

in itself. How can you problematize research? And movement? And love? Do you need to problematize them further on? Are they not problematic enough already? Would problematizing them make them at least a bit less problematic?

The importance of this love letter lies in the political choice of becoming *messy* and *emotionally involved*. It does not consist in questioning everything. I do not strive to speak to you about, for instance, astrophysics. Although, even here, there are laboratories and other situated spaces—everyday *playgrounds*; where knowledge gets born within the network of *human-object* relationships (Latour, Woolgar 1986) and where things, occurrences, events, experiments and mistakes get *meaning* (as understood in Alexander 2003) ascribed in series of *ritual social performances*. And that it is exactly the *meaning* that we might call *knowledge*. There is an ever prevailing dilemma of how generative and performative our research is, and to which extent we can actually speak about *objective² knowledge*. I believe, in accord with Latour (1993), Butler (1990) and many other authors that I need to be very careful and aware of the character and the consequences of the knowledge that I'm producing and distributing—in the process of researching as much as in the moment of *enacting* it for my readers and target *audience*. Because, at any point, I am, by the aid of my words, creating the worlds, *representing* them by the aid of manifold ritual like practices, legitimate, legitimized and legitimizing the outcomes of my little *academic social dramas [dramatizations]*.

Therefore what I do intend to speak about is doing research in places where I find myself within, among and in the midst of human relationships, trying to make sense of them and to contain pieces of life in a scientific account, narrative, knowledge and a political stance. The *messy* (Law 2004) complexity of the issues that I want to

² And what does 'object-ive knowledge' actually mean? For when I refer to Latour here, what I have in mind, simplified, is his argument about objective knowledge emerging from the relations between human and objects and from the objection of the researched objects to the hypotheses of the researchers.

capture, as well as their fleeting character, ask for a specific way of working. I do not try to throw away *traditional academic discourse*³, neither do I question its applicability or usefulness. What I am looking for is to enlarge the scope of thinkable ways of conceptualizing the *reality out there* that we are trying to learn about by making the epistemological turn suggested by many (Gergen 2009; Latour, Woolgar 1986; Law 2004); turn towards acknowledging that by *research* and *knowledge* production, we might as well be *constructing* the *realities* we want to see in the world (Law 2004).

There is a lot of hybridity present in this approach. The same hybridity that has long been absent and hidden from the sight of *pure scientists* (Latour 1993). Latour (*ibid.*), in his book about modernity, claims that the basis of modern science lies in the opposite processes of *purification* and *translation*. Purification is a constant struggle to cleanse concepts, to separate and categorize. It goes against the parallel and ongoing process of translation that “creates mixtures between entirely new types of beings, hybrids” (*ibid.*: 10). For Latour, the paradox of modern science lies in its constant production of new hybrids, but at the same time, the neverending strive to deny their existence, or at least, purify and categorize their character. To transgress this paradox Latour (*ibid.*) suggests acknowledging the impure character of entities and studying them not as static, but as dynamic and being in the process of translation/transformation in every moment; as if becoming what they are and how they are only in the process of being studied. Therefore we turn to study the hybridity, embrace the hybridity, and it is not only the hybridity of the *phenomena* we study, but also the *hybridity* of us, *social scientist* that is at stake.

My own hybridity manifests itself throughout this article. I am not able to distinguish clearly between the “*what*” and the “*how*”. Meaning, that the so-called style, the form in which I offer the ideas

³ As this is one of the many feedbacks I have received about people reading and trying to situate this article.

serves to back up and to perform the contents, the “*what*” that I want to say. Apart from this fusion, there is one more fusion. The *knowledge* is being produced on several levels—with the people with whom I do the research (my research subjects), with the theorists and the great academics, with my readers and with many others. Awareness of this fusion comes from the question: To whom do I relate myself within this article?

I have been told, by one of my teachers, that I get too emotionally involved. I have been told that I cannot just experience things to generate knowledge; even though acknowledging the bodily character of ethnographic research; the mere “living things” is academically irrelevant. But I tend to ask myself, what is wrong about living things? Feeling things? Being involved and biased? Molina (1994) shares my concerns. She doesn’t want to lose her *tongue*, her sensuality, eroticism, emotions; *the poetry that we should not allow to be taken away from us*. Although, she is, as I am, “Afraid that they label my language as just a poetic rambling” (*ibid.*: 453). For her, research and knowledge consists of recognition of the multiplicity and fragmentation of different emotional and political spaces through which we move. She strives for a *nonlinear*, affective emplacement; the reclamation of *fragmented spaces... as legitimate worlds*. (*ibid.*: 454) Her way, as mine, is to *encounter the Strangers, foreigners, marginalized people of this land*. It is through *Intimacy, commitment, willingness to risk, suave amor, apasionado amor*, that we achieve the *Creation of fragmented lives*. Her stance is, as mine; *to be me with you*.

The methodological imperative I am presenting here can be understood as a political decision to be present and to participate. Participation is twofold—it consists of the active practices, taking part in or *being in* [sharing the same space] as an act of emplacement in which we not only take into consideration our presence in the field and therefore the necessarily subjective character of our knowledge, but also of the adoption of the *being with* [participating, playing together] principle which represents a dialogical philosophical stance defining the ways in which we relate to and change in

relation *with* our research counterparts. These two principles point first towards the active participation and ontological presence as the basis of interaction and second to the fact, that it is not only the *field* that is influenced by researchers presence, but also the researcher himself, influenced and changed by the very presence *in the field and with the field*. It is the ontological relationship, the previously mentioned decision to *be with* someone that defines the character of the research that I am suggesting. Nancy (1996), in his analysis of Heidegger's philosophy, concentrates upon the necessary precondition of *dasein*, the *mitsein*—the being with, that precedes the being there. This being with, in the words of another philosopher, Martin Buber (2004), would mean to have an *encounter*, a *dialogue that* would treat our counterparts, our research *subjects* as partners—as *Thou*, an entity with whom I meet, relate, love and change, instead of *It*, the entity that I can observe, describe and encapsulate into little drops of knowledge. This distinction and necessary condition of *encounter* is captured in Lynn Hoffman's work (2007), where she makes an important distinction between *aboutness* and *withness*. There is a considerable difference between generating a descriptive knowledge *about* things, and the *dialogical* knowledge, that forces you to live, to interact, to participate, to relate and to change. Hoffman, by the words of Janice De Fehr (2009: 11) takes us beyond our present characterization of understanding as she begins to describe: "the risk involved in moving away from modernist psychology into a very different kind of "withness" (Hoffman 2007: 63–80), one that is as communal and collective as it is intimate, *withness* that requires us to "... jump, like Alice, into the pool of tears with the other creatures (Hoffman 2007: 66). For me, Hoffman's jumping-into-with imagery points to a very special aspect of dialogical understanding: when we position ourselves "in" with an "other", we cannot remain the same."

The participation imperative consists therefore not only from acknowledging that I, as a researcher, affect the phenomena or people I am studying [with], but they, as much, affect me. By Molina's

(in research focused dialogue) words, the modern scientific methodology could be translated into a simple principle: I am allowed to fuck with my research subjects, as long as I keep my distance, my reflexivity. But what if we took into consideration the fact, that whomever we interact with has the same rights and capacities to fuck with us? We would have to accept and acknowledge that as researchers and scientists, we participate in the “act” as much as anyone else. And as anyone else, we can be treated the same way as Deleuze, suggests treating all theories, theorists and researchers in his essay on Bergsonism⁴ (1988); our words, as much as our bodies will get re-appropriated, our meanings transformed. Wouldn't it then be more reasonable and respectful to meet and account for each other in the mutual act of love?

The transformation [translation or hybridization] is always mutual. Mutual transformation (Anderson 2008) means that we as scientists participate in the process of encounter with our research subjects [or co-researchers], and get changed along with the process as much as all the other participating sides do. Or, as Shotter (2008) puts it, we are relational beings who mutually influence and are mutually influenced by each other. In other words, as Harlene Anderson (2008: 422) states, the mutual transformation or “the newness (e.g. solutions, resolutions, and outcomes) develops from within the local conversation, is mutually created, and is uniquely tailored to the person or persons involved”.

I propose a new understanding of research epistemology—a way to relate—here, in the middle of the field, in the middle of our conversations, I show how our simple dialogues and stories that we share shape our understanding of knowledge production. Both methodology of inquiry and its outcome—knowledge—can be understood as ways of being—to be—being with it, as a decision to participate, to relate, to love, to have a dialogue; and being in it, as a decision to situate ourselves in spaces, to participate but not only as relating, but

⁴ Use them to our best benefit.

also allowing ourselves to be affected, to be changed, to be moved by the relation.

One of the difficulties that I am facing when proposing this turn, comes from the need to situate myself within the boundaries of legitimate scientific research, while needing to be able to remain deeply immersed within the very messy and empirical micro-level. How can I translate my everyday lived experience into highly abstract, scientific terms—theories? And, how can I, situated and plunged in the micro experience, still be aware of the macro-level structural constraints? (D'Andrea *et al.* 2011: 156–157) To make an article scientific and legitimate, I also need to relate myself to authors, who are already recognized. I have a lot of respect and perhaps even love for all those old and well-known *names* and their wise words. I carefully tend to refer to them in order to back up our own experiences and my own ideas. But why should their voices have more weight than the voices of others; for instance my loved ones, or the ones that inform my research? Whom do I invite into my research? And how can I invite different voices into the conversation, and what do these voices do with the outcome of my research?

I want to argue that in doing scientific work, we went too far with being respectful to academic rules and restrictions, requirements, methods and authors. We were actually so respectful that we have forgotten to respect the other people—the research subjects, our readers, our colleagues, our loved ones... and ourselves. My dilemma is the following: relationships and love letters are not recognized as academically relevant. To gain relevance, they need to adopt a certain expert position. But adopting such a position requires objectification of the phenomena and people I am studying [with]. Could this be avoided? Is there a possibility to create a certain space or a way of writing that would allow us to include a multiplicity of different voices and enable a conversation among them?

To produce scientific work, I have to use the appropriate structure, work with relevant resources, utilize plausible methodology, and I always need to account for my actions. But, is it truly that the

theoretical and much formalized structure of my writing justifies and legitimizes my position as researcher and the value of my work? What would the consequences be if I decide to subvert the purifying imperatives of academic writing; the sterile and segregating forces, rules of scientific method which, at every point keep on reappearing and I keep on either having a dialogue with them or pushing them outside my experimental space? The same space that I am creating here, space for playing, space for choosing, a playground—represented by this article, place I am inviting you to share and co-create with me.

Maybe we are not even able to imagine it; to fantasize about such a space, which would allow us to practice, to love, to make choices, to act, to live in a way that we would like to. But to think and to live the *unthinkable* (the absence of which Slavoj Žižek—Occupy Wall Street speech, 2011—criticizes so much) is one of the choices that might already be present within the unarticulated possibilities that exist in the playground. Here I find myself tempted to say that by the mere fact of imagining that space and even the *unthinkable* we are already generating it. How can such a space be created then?

The playground is a metaphor for the lack of structure and constant mobility; I conceive of it here as being an *espace lisse*, Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) smooth space. This space is defined by enabling free action and play, the dynamic process of constant *becoming*. Therefore Derrida and Deleuze would consider it more as a space of speech. I would like to argue though, in accord with the so called topographical turn in semiotics [Lotman, 2005], that it might become a written, textual space. The gap between the *speech* and *writing*, I want to argue that it is as similar as the gap between the *polyphonic* internal dialogue of the thought and the *articulation* in spoken word. For “*We don't know what we think before we have said it*” (Goolishian in Anderson, Goolishian 1996: 122) There are a lot of different possibilities in our thoughts, contained in our dialogues, whether internal or external (Anderson 1997). All different thinkable and unthinkable possible uses exist in this space—parole

[the ways of using language; speech] (Saussure 1983) But from this complexity, fluid and virtual, one selects just a few options, giving them a tangible articulated form—in statements and in writing and thus making them tangible and present as choices. Once written, these choices have a stable form. They are static, as text is. Writing is, therefore, a *territorialization* (Deleuze, Guattari 1987)—structure emerges while I write. The moment I write this narration, I'm freezing it in; mortifying it in the act of love. By territorializing myself, making a political choice to *emplace* myself in a specific space, re-appropriating it, I am creating a *territory*, delineating a space; "emplacing myself into a place where I relate to others". (Guattari 2006: 421) *Every interaction that I have, is in its own way an emplacement.*

But do I have to freeze my writing to make it part of the repertoire of available choices? One of the most haunting facts about the revolutionary *movements* or *performative revolutions* nowadays (Alexander 2011) is the absence of coherent structure or program. These movements define themselves as open to different voices, different possibilities. The basic self-definition message is "We are allowed to think about alternatives." (Žižek 2012). But how can the alternatives be recognized and distributed? Isn't it precisely the absence of thinkable alternatives to "capitalism" that Slavoj Žižek (Occupy Wall Street speech 2011) criticizes? It seems, as if the alternatives were present only in the unarticulated soil of unstructured *playground*, but never really made it into becoming official options to choose from. This conflict reminds the ongoing and never-ending debate about multiculturalism. How do we create, sustain and maintain a multiple and diverse open society? Such a society has to tackle with at least two important difficulties—the danger of ignorance, relativism and homogenization on one side and the danger of fragmentation and structural reinforcement of differences on the other side. If we take the analogy of the current movements a bit further, we can see that most of these revolutionary *movements* face the same dilemma: how to, on one side, provide legitimate

alternatives to choose from [which would be the main dilemma of the *politics of recognition* (Taylor 1992)]? And on the other side, prevent this range of alternatives from becoming petrified and limiting [the main dilemma and critique politics of recognition faces (Eriksen, Ghorashi, Alghasi 2009)]. The same dilemma arises with writing.

What are then the choices we actually have? Many of the questions that I have asked myself point towards the same direction. I believe, in accord with John Law [2004], who takes the argument even a bit further, that the alternative approach maybe doesn't consist in enlarging the contents of the already reified list of available choices based upon the same epistemological principles, but in questioning these principles and asking ourselves in what other ways we could conceptualize our work? How can we do research, writing, knowledge construction and [social] science in a different way? How do we construct the playground then? How do we delineate it? What language do we use? Whom do we invite? How do we invite different voices? What spaces for them? How do we treat them? How do we relate to them? What happens with us? And how do I/we share our experiences?

Here is where I am, among these questions, in the middle of everything, as a boundary, delineating the space where we play. *La frontera soy yo* (Anzaldúa 2007: 99)—I am the boundary; I am the one who decides. I would like to invite you, into this liminal space, to the borderland that is represented by an academic article, to experience what it means to be in motion and to meet in diverse spaces. You have a choice to play with me, for a while, here, in this playground, play a game that we could call “as if” (as if we were here forever, as if this was our playground and we were living in it—as if we could chose to put ourselves to different positions, experience them and move among them—as if we could do whatever we please). *Here is where we are*—We are the ones delineating and inhabiting spaces. We create them, the way we need them, to be able to stay in them. It is our decision, to be creative and by the aid of

ways of using; different tactics (De Certeau 1984); to be the ones who define, emplace and *choose*.

I have changed my voice, from speaking about me towards speaking about us. One of the intentions of this change is inviting and creating people. By including and engaging with my readers, I hope for the *people that do not exist yet*⁵ (Deleuze and Guattari in Hoffman 2007) to emerge. This piece therefore, as much as being a love letter, is a standpoint; addressed to people who care, people who move and allow themselves to be *moved*, and to be created along with reading these lines. It does not mean that you and I fuse or that the differences vanish. Rather it is intended as an invitation to participate. Part of this mumbling, in the end, is the question about whether you, as a reader, can, along with reading these lines, experience the very tangible and vivid political layers present in problematizing the research and the knowledge in relation to love; in sentimental, yet academic account for the encounters that shaped my understanding and conceptualization of *knowledge, research, emplacement* and *ways of relating*. I believe in a generative potential of my writing which in the first place attempts to be collaborative, creative and inviting. Writing is lovemaking. *Writing is a sensuous act* (Anzaldúa 2007: 93), it is a corporeal state of limbo; a moment of making meaning out of the experience, whatever it might be. And we who participate become who we are just in the moment of engaging with the text/space; undergoing the act of *mutual transformation* (Anderson 2008); both the readers and the authors always *in becoming* (Deleuze, Guattari 1987).

What more is there to say? In the end I come back to the beginning, as if I could start it all over again, as if I have never had started, nor ended. I can once again trace back where and how I have been. I would like to account for my little wanderings, sum

⁵ There is no work of art that does not call on a people who do not yet exist.—Gilles Deleuze (in Hoffman 2007)—Refers to the generative potential of every work of art and every piece of writing. The potential resides in the capacity of the work of art to address people and speak to them, transform them...

up the things that were born in long overnight conversations taking place in different parts of the world, with wine, on a bike, in bed, in consulting rooms, conference halls, dark offices, Skype windows and other *reappropriated places*. But that is what I have already claimed at the beginning and still went in different directions. Anyways I am, taking shape inside of a narrative. And this narrative, as lived experience is a broken story, broken plot, de-fragmented and multiple. Therefore I was never entirely sure where I was headed to, I could have never been. I have decided to adopt the not knowing position (Anderson 1997), a philosophical stance that allowed me to stay with the uncertainty of a non-directional process.

I haven't given up on *knowledge*, but did give up my expert position. I do not strive for the aboutness (Hoffman 2007) anymore—an exterior description, that would allow me to capture a phenomena. I couldn't draw a map of my writing, nor of the journeys that have shaped my ideas. There is no way of accounting for the interactions within the playground by creating its blueprint. Writing as much as a living being has been growing, bit by bit, in a process in which I've been trying to account for the transformations that occurred within my thinking about studying *movement*. As Michel De Certeau (1984) puts it, to escape the unifying and categorizing effect of modern cartography, you should, when writing a research, account for the different trails, that you have taken—or in accord with James Clifford (1994), it is the *routes* taken, that mean much more than the *theoretical roots* of this little statement. And if your movement happens among people, who knows?

This piece of writing is special, not because of its quality, neither because of its character, but for the fact that by writing it. I have allowed myself to acknowledge the personal and intimate experiences and make sense of them, firstly to myself to then make them public and allow others (and myself) to reflect upon them by means of sharing. The aim was not to subvert the vastly shared academic discourse. But it became a serious effort to enlarge the range of

possibilities by speaking about love, tentativeness and engagement. I think this effort is not new. It is already present in many different aspects of research. The newness of my contribution lies in its personally and emotionally engaged style. My writing is a *sensual act*, expressed in a *passionate language*, infected by *different emotional states*, and most of all *performative*. In yet another moment of reflection, I can see, how at this occasion, this time, the encounters I have had territorialized themselves and provided new knowledge, new insights into and about research and ways of relating. It was through withness (Hoffman 2007)—the mutual and relational knowledge construction, articulated in a dialogue that I've gathered these ideas.

What I hoped for, at the beginning, is still present. I hope to enable the *be-loved* readers to experience the political consequences of choosing different ways of relating while doing research. In this playful space, we are the ones making choices. We are the ones delineating our spaces and the ones deciding. For me, for now, the decision has been made. I have decided to allow myself to care, to relate. In writing as much as in the process of learning and knowledge construction I struggle to make the encounter happen. I want to keep the relationships open and alive, in motion, in every interaction. Not only when relating, lovemaking, but also when writing about it and when reading. I hold experience as the basis of my knowledge, and offer nothing more but nothing less either; just the *being there* and the *being with* as its basis. There are several points to take out from this little stroll, wandering. The imperative lies in the mutuality and in a respectful relation. I am living my research and researching my life, all the time, by participating, and by meeting and loving. This is just my stance, as simple as it is complex and with important political consequences. I have started, by admitting the *not knowing position* (Anderson 1997, 2008). And in the end, I need to stress it once again. I don't know where I came from, I don't know how we have met, and neither how long are we going to stay in touch or how we're going to relate to each other. But, by I am not afraid, for, as Foucault

uttered: “What is true for writing and for love relationships is true also for life. The game is worthwhile insofar as we don’t know where it will end.” (Foucault in Martin 1988: 9)

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VAGRANCY

Emeli Theander



Mary Go Round (2010).

Courtesy: Merkel Collection; Rhein-Neckar-Delta, Germany



Fuck it (2008). Pencil on paper, 21 x 29.7 cm.

Courtesy: Emeli Theander and Parrotta Contemporary Art;
Stuttgart / Berlin



Karusell (2009). Pencil on paper, 29.7 x 42 cm.

*Courtesy: Emeli Theander and Parrotta Contemporary Art;
Stuttgart / Berlin*



The Royal Tea Pot (2010). Pencil on paper, 42 x 29.7 cm.
Courtesy: Emeli Theander and Parrotta Contemporary Art;
Stuttgart / Berlin



Tempelhof (2010). Pencil on paper, 29.7 x 42 cm.

*Courtesy: Emeli Theander and Parrotta Contemporary Art;
Stuttgart / Berlin*



Pulsar Games (2013)

*Courtesy: Emeli Theander and Parrotta Contemporary Art;
Stuttgart / Berlin*

VAGRANCY

Vagrancy refers to the way by which individuals appear well outside their normal range. When applied to animals, species are called vagrants. When applied to humans, people are called strangers or wanderers. Vagrancy is both a state and an action. It speaks about a condition of homelessness and of the attempt to seek a home. Vagrancy thus describes an existence *en passant*, approaching life askance, experiencing multiple beginnings and exploring the reciprocal relation between self-making and perception.

For Joseph Brodsky, the origin of the consciousness of a 'me' and a 'you' is to be found in childhood lying. Giving deliberately false self-reports, distancing from what is known to be the truth, children first appreciate their power to re-invent the world; they become themselves through being the source of its misperceptions, brokering a gap between themselves and how they are perceived. A man who gives a false account of himself is considered a vagrant. Vagrancy is frequently used as a tool by police to proscribe a wide range of public behaviours. This is also called 'disorderly conduct', rendering individuals liable to penalty. Regimes of knowledge—domination, order—reject ambiguous figures that contest the established exclusivity and cleanness of social categories. This explains the horror that freak creatures (werewolves, elephant-men, dements...) produce and why they should be separated and controlled.

Vagrancy resists final categories and calculations. It is as edgy, as erring, as failure, as any exploration. Vagrancy brings to the here and now exaptation and serendipity—thus the possibility of becoming. Exaptations are lateral adaptations that occur in an unexpected yet positive way. They occur when a particular trait evolves to serve one function, but subsequently comes to serve another. Overall, adaptations are not one-sided. Wandering, estranging, erring, vaguing... they all broaden social margins, favour personal becomings and open the possibility to explore human freedom. Those deprived from modern accounts of reason and social favour find refuge but in sensual experiences and ambivalent personalities. That's why they grasp them in an obsessive way.

Francisco Martínez

C.

STREET LEGAL

THE NEO-FLÂNEUR AMONGST IRRESISTIBLE DECAY¹

Patrick Laviolette

Introduction

The immediate exaltation after a difficult climb only lasts two or three days at the outside, but there is a residual effect after the effervescence has died down. The imagination, through its violent and constant use in climbing, receives a permanent increase in strength. It becomes constructive instead of haphazard, so that instead of thinking what he might do a climber thinks more of what he could and may do. (Symington/Whipplesnaith 1937 [2007]: 222)

Most of us who have grown up in sprawling towns or metropolitan centres will remember that age-old adage preached to us by our mums when we were of a certain boisterous predisposition: “don’t play in the streets, it’s not safe. Stay in the school ground or find a park. Otherwise you’ll be playing indoors for the rest of the

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summer”. For a new generation of young urbanites, this is exactly the advice they choose to go against. The streets are the platforms for their games; buildings act as an urban type of furniture to bounce off or to be climbed. Architectural structures of all sorts become the very playground for urban explorers and free runners.

Fans of James Bond’s 007 were recently exposed to an acrobatic spat between Daniel Craig and the founder of Parkour, Sébastien Foucan, in the flamboyant opening sequence of *Casino Royale*. For many people around the world, this was their introduction to an eccentric phenomenon—an activity of global appeal which goes hand in hand with urban exploration and certain aspects of inner-city street culture. The roots of ‘cosmopolitan’ exploration go back much further, however, to such initiatives as the night climbers of Cambridge, whose philosophy since the 1920s had been to infiltrate and conquer college premises after curfew; or the San Francisco Suicide Club, whose members, influenced by surrealism and the Dada movement, staged renegade events in abandoned spaces in the 1970s. Similarly, the spin-off Cacophony Society provided an anarchic legion of West Coast creative groups associated with culture-jamming. Inspired by Bertolt Brecht’s idea of *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation effect), the Surveillance Camera Players have performed silent plays for corporate CCTV cameras in guarded areas which were meant to be off-limits to the public. And who could forget Oxford’s Dangerous Sports Club, who often illicitly accessed private property to perform daringly innovative stunts.

The current inception of urban exploration is attributed to ‘Ninjalicious’, the alias of Jeff Chapman [1973–2005], who in the mid-nineties founded the forum *Infiltration: The Zine about Going Places you’re not Supposed to Go*. He later authored the book *Access All Areas* (2005). As Chapman pointed out, there are obviously different types and styles of urban exploring, based on different agendas, rationales as well as sub-cultural elements. This means that exploration frequently gets combined with other pursuits. Originally known as *traceurs* in France, practitioners of Parkour have found

many counterparts: Free-runners in the UK; Diggers in Latvia; Sky-walkers in the lofty ether of Moscow's new high-rise developments; and Stalkers in Estonia as well as some other parts of the former Soviet-Union.

Such groups often use abandoned urban spaces for training purposes. By fine tuning their manoeuvres, they learn to negotiate with maximum efficiency and speed such things as buildings, fences, bridges or rooftops. In the early development of the activity, the aesthetic values of movement, grace and efficiency were central to the discipline. The *Untergunther* is a clandestine French team which attracted media attention for restoring the nineteenth-century clock of the Parisian Pantheon (Fig. 1). Their remit has been to secretly and anonymously help regenerate abandoned or decaying heritage sites (King 2007). Groups such as Dark Passage and The Madagascar Institute in Manhattan, or the Ripple Effect in New Haven, have also



Figure 1. *Askew in the half-light of time. Pantheon de Paris, France (July 2012, photo by the author)*

reclaimed abandoned spaces for games, art installations or performances, as a part of a particular philosophy of urban preservation. In these guises, urban exploration has coalesced into a globally popular sub-culture that is gaining ground, even as certain members emphasise the importance of constant media and internet exposure.

What many of these sub-groups share is a value system concerned with locations and material remnants. In the mainstream view these are frequently seen as little more than ruins—negative spaces or non-places—hampering the trajectory of economic and industrial progress. An urban explorer is a person who finds, goes into and draws out value from these abandoned sites. The motivation for such adventure, and the frameworks within which such excursions are undertaken, can vary enormously. Yet in most cases this is an illicit or semi-lawful activity. Often fraught with moral and physical risk, it is nonetheless extremely validating and rewarding for the participants themselves, who frequently justify their action as a form of physically embodied poetics.

In an essay about Walt Whitman, the Estonian writer Johannes Semper remarked:

Today, poetry of technology and machines is no surprise to anyone. We often come across it: E. Verhaeren, F.-T. Marinetti, V. Majakovski, J. Romaine, G. Duhamel and many others have brought to poetry the smoke of factories and the noise and roar of engines, and made these modern topics acceptable. (Semper 1920: 15)

Similarly, John Tomlinson talks of the inherent connections between danger, machine innovation and socio-cultural acceleration in his book *The Culture of Speed* (2007). He highlights some interesting moments that bind the social construction of rapidity to the prevalence of the risk society, when violence coincides with the creation of reflexive times for introspection, or even with existential realisation. Summarising the work of Paul Virilio, he validates the existence of strong connections between immediacy, spatiality and the politics of violence. Here we see that it is not Bell & Lyall's (2002) 'accelerated

sublime' which is sped up by the effects of modernity. Rather, it is the very conditions of modernity themselves, through efficiency and an aggressive abolishment of frills as well as an alienation from labour-time and nature, which take on a faster pace of life—what Stephen Bertman calls the 'hyper-culture' phenomenon (1998).

Tim Edensor (2005a, 2005b) has broached some of these issues, especially concerning the rapidity of decay, by exploring the aesthetic and material qualities of industrial remains. According to Edensor, ruins blur boundaries between the urban and the rural; waste and commodity; past, present and future. In their material existence, ruins are ambivalent since, even though they have not been permanently eliminated, they break down and decompose, seemingly valueless. Yet simultaneously, by virtue of neglect, they exist outside the sanctions on use value and interpretation. In such terms, ruins are enigmas. As paradoxes, they are intimately tied to memory, desire and a sense of place. Lamenting the increased absence of access to ruins in the UK, he writes:

[...] if spaces are conceived as disturbingly non-functional, they must be replaced and filled in—turned into abstract space—to remove these signs of unproductive and unfunctional blankness. Frequently, these are asset-stripped and then cleared to encourage property speculation because dereliction appears as a scar on the landscape composed of matter out of place, which must be erased and then filled in with something more 'useful'. (2005a: 8)

In *The Aesthetics of Decay*, Dylan Trigg (2006) also considers the remnants from the fallout of post-industrialism. Through an analysis of memory, place and nostalgia, he points out that the decline of reason has enabled a critique of progress to emerge. This position reassesses the direction of progress by situating it in a spatial context. The derelict factory, abandoned mine or dilapidated hospital all become complicit in an attack on a fixed image of temporality and progress. Memory thus imbues time in the temporal ruin whereby rational thinking situates mnemonics into a neat linearity

that excludes unreasonable anomalies such as structures which are largely forgotten. “Since decline is ontologically prior to continuity,” Trigg writes, “the conversion of memory warrants criticism. Instead of an ethical demand toward continuity, let us place memories in ruin” (2006: 243). Trigg’s post-rational aesthetics certainly locates itself in the realm of alterities, whereby an affirmative ethics of ruins challenges a fixed and unyielding spatial order (Gibbs 2010).

Memories, remembering, nostalgia, forgetting and memorialisation are paramount for understanding such ruins. Trigg’s conclusions also rely heavily on the work of Virilio. The detachment of place from the site which embeds it is a powerful concept to consider. Writing about structural remains, Virilio also comments “this architecture floats on the surface of an earth which has lost its materiality” (Virilio 2004: 12). In invoking Virilio’s idea of floating space, one is compelled to think about the relationship between the remaining materials and the form from which those remains are cast. The modern ruin or remnant redefines the notion of progress by embodying a sense of decline. By equally embedding a critical mnemonic, such locales exist in an ambiguous sphere, somewhat at odds with the sanctification of official monuments or sites of collective social significance.

The situatedness of the past and the non-place or placeless existence of certain sites of decay today is an equally interesting contrast worth thinking through because of the gulf between historical functions and ambitions for the future. Marc Augé’s *Non-Places* (1995) and *Ruins* (2003) provide highly relevant conceptual starting points to think about the plans to gentrify abandoned sites which are to be rapidly transformed. For Augé, non-places are sites that are used but devoid of authenticity and meaning:

Place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten. (Augé 1995: 79)

When space is filled with cultural meanings, places (cultural, varied, relative) emerge. However, when spaces are not inhabited by those who dwell nearby and share their fate, then placelessness results. This creates thin places. Or at the very least, it dilutes the complexity of once many-layered places (Relph 1976). Herein rests a central paradox between abandonment (of domestic abodes or once commercially viable sites) and the appropriation by marginal, subversive thrill-seekers, who are likely to help propagate a certain 'spatial infection'—where architectural dereliction can spread even further. This is certainly part of the moral dilemma addressed in some of my research on urban exploration and in my anthropological study of dangerous places more generally. Yet perhaps the catalyst question for this discussion is to consider how these playfully serious activities might add, as well as remove, value to highly undesired spaces or restricted playground areas. That is, this research is intended as a platform to consider growing concerns over 'danger zones'—our sensorial perceptions of them (from up close or at a distance) along with our movements within, or skirting around their edges.

So in embarking on some tentative and as yet rather anecdotal research of an ethno-historical and autobiographical nature (which draws, in part, on a recent post-Soviet mnemonic), I am in the exploratory phases of documenting the ways in which individual as well as social anxieties connect with certain physically radical reactions to tabooed and abandoned spaces. Such questioning follows recent thematic developments regarding embodied leisure (Coleman, Kohn 2007), urban exploration (Garrett 2011), dark tourism (Stone 2012) and the risks of adventurous sport in various landscapes of fright (Lavolette 2011).

Move-scapes for stalking the quasi-flâneur

Running parallel to this, it is important to draw upon certain topical theories. Those which are most pertinent are driven by considerations of social immediacy, the cultural construction of speed and rapidity as well as reflections upon the conditions of late or post-modernity, especially in relation to understanding the flamboyance and foolishness of characters which one can perhaps label as 'accelerated *flâneurs*'. Moving in-between urban and semi-rural landscapes, from risk spaces to sanitised or safeguarded places, alters the manifestations of *flânage*. Consequently, what happens to risk and time as well as to our sensorial experiences once we start challenging normative definitions? Or begin asking different questions? Or even once we start playing with the types of answers to give?

Le Flâneur is certainly a character of the imagination. So perhaps it is appropriate to think in terms of the accelerated imagination? Maybe still, as it has been pointed out to me recently by a close colleague, perhaps the *flâneur* isn't the most suitable analytical category at all. Or at least it would need to be enhanced, boosted, complemented or distorted with other cultural nuances. In this sense, maybe the notion of the 'stalker' becomes good to think with? This is certainly the case regarding Estonia and to the degree that it does have an interesting legacy in the former Soviet Union. Before moving ahead of ourselves, however, we should first exhaust some of the conceptual relevance of *flânage*.

The Parisian arcades, iconic examples of an imaginative panoramic architecture, were devised to orient the individual's movements through the marketplace. In light of all the social changes brought on by the French Revolution, the most significant of these were the result of budding capitalism which involved the need to create new social spaces for vending and purchasing purposes. These were passageways through neighbourhoods that were covered with glass roofs and lined by marble panels. The result shaped a sort of

ambiguous interior-exterior environment. Through the literary inspiration of Charles Baudelaire [1821–1867], this generic space and its associated character of the *flâneur* (a marginal occupant of such a setting) were initially theorised by Walter Benjamin in the 1930s. Both authors wrote about the growth of a new upwardly mobile class—it would become one of the key sectors of society to epitomise the public experience of modernity:

The street becomes a dwelling for the flâneur; he is as much at home among the facades of houses as a citizen is in his four walls. To him the shiny, enamelled signs of businesses are at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to the bourgeois in his salon. The walls are the desk against which he presses his notebooks; news-stands are his libraries and the terraces of cafés are the balconies from which he looks down on his household after his work is done. (1980: 37)

Inevitably men, *flâneurs* would stroll through the city to kill the time afforded to them by wealth and education. Their tendency for nonchalance meant that they would objectify the masses, treating the other passers-by and the surrounding architecture as riddles for interpretative pleasure. The act of the *flâneur* symbolised privilege and the liberty to move about the city observing from a distance, not interacting; consuming the sights through a controlling but rarely acknowledged gaze, directed as much at other people as the goods for sale. An anonymous face in the multitude, the *flâneur* was free to probe for clues that were unnoticed by other people, simpletons, caricaturised as domestic beings. In making apparent the spatial inversion between public and private, Benjamin brought the outside in and placed the inside out. This inversion was intended as a social subversion whereby leisure became one of the main tools behind creating an enduring persona for the *flâneur*, that is, as someone not confined to an increasingly State manipulated domestic sphere. And yet as someone who had the capacity, freedom and cultural capital to live wholly within the world.

Mobility is of course central here, as are the kinaesthetic dimensions of movement and ultimately the physical experience of the urban. Benjamin defined modernity as a break from the past, focused on the gaze and liberty of movement. Ervin Goffman's (1967) essay 'Where the action is' also becomes relevant at this point. In conceptualising non-spectator, risky sport, he defined action within temporality, the very rubric so important to those interested in social acceleration:

[...] activities that are consequential, problematic, and undertaken for what is felt to be their own sake [...] action seems most pronounced when the four phases of the play—squaring off, determination, disclosure, and settlement—occur over a period of time brief enough to be contained within a continuous stretch of attention and experience. It is here that the individual releases himself to the passing moment, wagering his future estate on what transpires precariously in the seconds to come. At such moments a special affective state is likely to be aroused, emerging transformed into excitement. (1967: 185)

A notable feature in this regard is that the *flâneur*, this supreme being of leisure, is the personification of in-betweenness, especially in terms of a perambulating demeanour which in Baudelaire's time was halfway between sleep walking and an intoxicated consciousness of reform. This characteristic lent itself well to the surrealists who captured the *flâneur* as a kind of mascot for moving poetry. For Benjamin, dreams were indices of freedom, whereby our socially constructed dreamscapes could be tapped to provide visions for utopian change.

The *flâneur* was therefore a form of transcendental presence who encompassed what Thorstein Veblen (1899) had earlier labelled as 'conspicuous leisure'. Veblen's musings were heavily influenced by the populist movement in America which was prominent from 1887 to 1908. With some socialist influence, they divided the world between those who were producers and those who were not.

Populists were antagonistic to the values of the dominant leaders of the business community and shared a sense of urgency and an edge of desperation about the demand for reform. And it is this connection between a desire for change, increased leisure and the ability for movement through different restricted spaces that connects both *flâneur* and stalker to adventure.

Inspired by Simmel's impressionistic musings, French scholars such as Michel de Certeau's (1984) and Henri Lefebvre's (1991) provided some thoughts on walking in the city which are extensions to the earlier work on the *flâneur*—although theirs is about ordinary citizens rather than the exceptionally educated bourgeois who receive pleasure from wandering around cities, gazing at, but never communicating directly with others. One of the lessons from their studies is that urban movement is hegemonically restricted and controlled. Walkers exist within the built environment that they explore while some possibilities are denied to them, other possibilities open up. This 'walking rhetorics' suggests the idea of creativity for getting around obstacles. Now in the realm of 'buildering' (the climbing of buildings), urban exploration and more recent manifestations of parkour/free running, such ideas of overcoming the restrictions of urban planning through acrobatics and accelerated movement are part of the core rationale for these practices.

As such activities evolve, one could argue that they seem to be noticeably transforming so that their aesthetic dimensions are less important—with a certain flippant emphasis upon silly tricks and comedic stunts taking over (at least at the grass-roots level). Hence, this is not too dissimilar to the evolution of the various skateboarding styles (e.g., in comparing the counter-cultural ideals espoused in documentaries such as *Dogtown and Z-Boys* (Peralta 2001) or *This Ain't California* (2012) with the commercialisation presented in the X-Games version of competitive skating). Or the consequent tensions within the arts between tricksters and aestheticians.

But despite being mobile in a number of senses, the *flâneur* is nonetheless the embodiment of idleness, at least with regard to the

production of socio-economic value (and hence in contrast to the stalker). So we need to re-introduce another component before we can apply the relevance of this category to the topic of adventure. This additional element, a product of modernity's industrial revolution and post-modernity's turbo-capitalism, is rapidity. In other words, some paradoxical form of counter-entropic acceleration is necessary.

The time that place forgot

At the core of the urban exploration sub-culture, lies a particular relationship that participants experience with the material infrastructure of physical spaces left behind by the booms and busts of capitalist or socialist industrialised systems. Inherently, they formulate a scheme of valuation around objects which have been excised out of the value market. Such value relates precisely to the same factors that fail to recognise these spaces in the mainstream market: excessive extravagance to the point of inefficiency, loss of use-value, severe entropy and decay. For people living in economically depressed areas, this provides an alternative relationship with their physical surroundings, when these same surroundings in turn present something other than a narrative of decline.

Urban exploration thus manifests a different relationship to history in progress. Once apartment complexes, hospitals, hotels or industrial factories are abandoned, they become relics of the past, relegated to a non-useful time. They become dated by the very objects frequently strewn around within their abandoned walls: decade old newspapers and journals, bottles of medications well past their sell-by dates, portraits of then-current government officials, record documents from the first half of the twentieth century, out-patients' x-ray scans, police mug-shots, bullet cartridges and so on. Explorers often talk about the locations they infiltrate as places 'which time forgot', where time itself 'has stopped' or 'stands still'. The past is indeed a foreign country in these circumstances.

Certain explorers even consider that it is their duty to document these pockets of forgotten time, thus creating an historical record of information which, in some cases, offer glimpses into the institutional cultures of the past. Yet these will rarely be archived or officially rendered. This motivation is especially urgent when the places in question are slated for demolition. Attitudes regarding the removal of materials from a location differ. At one end we have treasure hunters who explore partially to add to their collection of interesting mementos. Contrarily, there are those who subscribe to the 'take only photos, leave only footprints' attitude. Once the destruction of a site is imminent, however, (i.e. the date has been set or demolition has actively started) most inhibitions about removing finds are set aside.

One common denominator in delimiting urban exploration 'hot spots' is a significant period of economic decline and physical decay in the general vicinity. Hubs in the U.S. concentrate in the so-called Rust Belt, especially factory towns such as Detroit, where in certain parts nearly half the properties are vacant, derelict or abandoned. Other examples of economically depressed areas include New England's old mill towns or Pennsylvania's steel industry settlements. Indeed, certain branches of urban exploration focus on specific types of locations, which themselves always encode a history of financial decline and ineffective management preceding the physical decay. For instance, exploring abandoned asylums is popular in New England, as budget cuts and lack of funds within the mental health system in Massachusetts during the early 1990s forced a number of them to close down. The most notable of these are 'Kirkbrides'—hospital institutions designed and built in keeping with the philosophy of a nineteenth-century medic, Thomas Kirkbride, who advocated a system termed 'moral treatment'. His treatise on the construction and administration of mental hospitals emphasised the patients' humanity and dignity as well as the health benefits of access to a peripheral sub-urban environment. Extravagant in design and expensive to manage, most on the East Coast of

the U.S. are no longer in use. Many have recently been torn down or redeveloped as luxury apartments.

One of the prodigious regions for urban exploration is the former USSR territory, where entire towns in Siberia were built to be centres of industrial production and mining manned by prison labour; where State-funded factories that did not survive privatisation exist; and where networks of Young Pioneer summer camps and 'houses of culture' can be found. One of the global meccas of urban explorers is Pripyat, the town which accommodated Chernobyl's station reactor 4, the victim of the 1986 nuclear plant meltdown. Several companies organise tours to the area. Nevertheless, many explorers sneak in by themselves to visit off-limit sites which the guides do not cover, often clinching a Geiger counter and engaging in what Stone (2012) amongst others now call 'dark tourism'.

Explorers from such post-Soviet settings are frequently referred to as stalkers, after Arkady and Boris Strugatsky (1972) dystopian science-fiction novel entitled *Roadside Picnic*. This was later adapted into a cult film *Stalker* by Andrei Tarkovsky. Both novel and film are set in and around a mysterious forbidden 'Zone', where abandoned and decommissioned remnants of industrial factories are reclaimed by nature and where strange, dangerous objects and spaces pose a constant threat to those who dare intrude. The stalker of the story is a mercenary guide who knows his way through this zone. The abandoned hydroelectric plant near Tallinn (on the Jägala River at Jöelähtme) where part of the film was shot in 1979 is thus an important pseudo-pilgrimage site in the Baltics for many fans. This fictional scenario is reinforced in the cyber-social realm of urban exploration. Here a number of Eastern European online-gamers have anagram pseudonyms of the word or make other cryptic allusions to the novel.

As with many sub-cultures, self-aggrandising is an important part of urban exploration. The paths to status acquisition widen via a track record of visits to settings which especially difficult or dangerous to access and explore, including abandoned sites located

on campuses of educational, medical or even military properties (Fig. 2). Certain locations confer the status of a 'tough' explorer on someone who successfully infiltrates them. This includes unusually hazardous places, such as offshore ship graveyards, sites possessing toxic waste, structures that have reached a dangerous level of structural instability or edifices that require scaling over razor wire or crawling through stinging nettles to gain access.

Specific skills such as filming, tagging or graffiti art equally help create status. Often urban explorers are amateur, professional or semi-professional photographers and most online forums have spaces dedicated to the sharing/critiquing of photographs and video footage. Certain locations even have 'iconic' photos attached to them; shots featuring specific composition from a particular angle taken over and over again by different practitioners (Talling 2008). Creative self-portraits or portraits of other explorers are additionally welcomed and appreciated. Some have even become well-known in the scene for their unique styles of composition or use of colour.

Other ways of garnering status in the subculture consist of sharing with peers in a way that reflects awareness about one's own status relative to others. There are strictly observed, if not formally codified rules around exchange within the community. For instance, reciprocity and discretion are strongly emphasised. 'Asking for hand-outs', that is, using cyber-forums without pre-existing social connections with the other members and appealing for access information to particular locations, is a faux-pas which easily gives away the neophyte. Discretion about shared information is an expected norm.

As long as these basic rules are observed, social ties within the group are constantly established and reinforced through exchanges. These sometimes take the form of generalised reciprocity, where people contribute knowledge (such as maps of locations or historical information gleaned from archival research) to the shared in-group knowledge pool, without keeping track of give-and-take (Sahlins 1972). More often, however, exchange is manifest as instances

of balanced reciprocity, where information about specific locations circulates. Sometimes well-established individual explorers or small groups of them make themed trips to different cities. Frequently they are shown hospitality by local explorers. This often includes lodging, transportation and site tours. Reciprocity on the guests' home turf is common.

The time frame for one's involvement in exploring is also directly related to status, both because a long-time explorer has many opportunities to participate in the kind of exchange described above but also because newer explorers rarely get a chance to visit locations that were legendary in the scene before they were gentrified, refurbished or torn down. Instances of such places include: Jõelähtme's hydroelectric plant, Tallinn's power station now housing the Kultuurikatel and the Paterei prison a kilometre away. It is often the case that souvenirs from such locations function as markers of status and material proof that this status is legitimate (Fig. 3).

As a complex sub-cultural phenomenon, urban exploration evolves constantly. Nonetheless, it is inscribed into an alternative value system for an entire material infrastructure that has lost its use-value by the criteria of mainstream society. Further, in enabling the production of social identity and personhood, it allows us to consider the relationship between the material and the social in the communities which form around the exploration of decaying structures.

Vertical Walking

From a different but parallel perspective, the ethnographer Synthia Sydnor (2003) has analysed skydiving within the rubric of the performative, the imaginary and the surreal dreamlike character of a rapid experience of movement and descent. Her account of free-fall choreography relies on Benjamin's phantasmagorical pondering over the "abstraction of insensible gradations from bodily spaces to environmental ones" (Rinehart, Sydnor 2003: 133). Gilles Deleuze,



Figure 2. Anthropological accident. Self-guided 'tour' of the Accademia Carrara, Bergamo, Italy (Jan 2013, photo by the author)



Figure 3. Ethnographic exploration of an abandoned house prior to its refurbishment. Narva Mnt. Tallinn, Estonia (Jan 2011, photo by Kerstin Kary)

in his reflections on the categorical spaces of sport through the developing movement of the extreme, also draws on Benjamin to speak about the participant's appropriation of kinetic energy:

Running, throwing a javelin and so on, effort, resistance, with a starting point, a lever. But nowadays, I see movement defined less and less in relation to a point of leverage. Many of the new sports – surfing, windsurfing, hand-gliding—take the form of entry into an existing wave. There's no longer an origin as starting point, but a sort of putting-into-orbit. The basic thing is how to get taken up in the movement of a big wave, a column of rising air, to 'come between' rather than to be the origin of an effort. (1992: 281)

One should equally note that mobility and movement are inherently connected to the phenomenological project. It is through such an emphasis that existential anthropology has come to encompass the idea of being *At Home in the World* (Jackson 1995). Or how migration exists as a form of identity creation (Rapport, Dawson 1998). In this sense, the emphasis is not on the formulation of identity as one restricted to where social actors are from. More importantly, it is on where they are going.

In terms of examining the links between thrills, decay and rapidity, Michael Balint (1957) has offered a psycho-analytically driven approach which reveals the often pessimistically dark association between the dangers, risks and implicit violence associated with acceleration and the typically modern sensual aesthetic experiences it can engender. As Tomlinson writes:

This is a discourse which embraces a range of transgressive and rebellious impulses chafing the smooth surface order of institutional modernity. And out of this is formed a narrative of speed which is 'unruly' both in its orientation and in its expression. Subversive and impetuous, conjoining hedonism with a particular sort of existential hedonism, this discourse constantly teeters on the brink of collapse into violence and chaos. (2007: 9)

From such a position, the euphoric settings in which plays the accelerated body is no longer an enveloping oasis of seclusion. Instead, it is a series of opportunities, each significant for how they technically engage the body in genuine and imaginative risk. Indeed, the thrill and the singularly skilled body within the mind are attuned harmoniously. Sometimes for the exceptionally well-trained practitioner, vaguely defined hurdles transform into distinctly technical spaces of precisely executable motions. These not only lend themselves to detailed description but equally invite certain exceptional counter-movements. And whereas the normative city-scape of the pedestrian offers the alienated subject the structured grid of backgrounds, the ecstatic play-scape of the exploring body decisively reverses this symmetry. For the new adventurer, this setting only really provides a scenario for foregrounds which, in the adventurous imagination, rivets one's attention and frees the restrained body.

As a result of such trained investment, hitherto anonymous structures or lengths of bridges and rooftops become significantly differentiated, complex micro-scapes of the hybrid-body. They are durably fixed in local consciousness through embodied repetition and narrative transmission. Moreover, this newly developed city-scape becomes further differentiated, as new generations of players appear with their own games to colonise intermediate niches. It is as if the opportunistic logic driving the differentiation and hybridisation of urban explores is similar to the logic that imaginatively dictates the playful colonisation of every marginal niche (Anderson 1991, Borden 2001).

Furthermore, from the aesthetic angle of the sublime or idyllic, the thrill seeking explorer appears unconscionably invasive, lacking apparent empathy for the bucolic rhythms of poetic movement. However, these games do possess their own peculiar sensibilities, though not typically in ideological form. In effect, the para-environmentalism of free-running, BASE jumping or kindred activities functions as an un-stated, embodied 'model in action', guided by a practical logic that leads to an inescapable, though implicit, intimacy

with architectural entities. These seem to actively issue a challenge. A subversive unfolding directly inside the layers of the city-scape rather than upon it, appearing to belong as much to its physical interior as to the rough textures of its outer surfaces.

From this position of intimate interiority, practitioners of urban exploration are predisposed to accept the invitation of structural features. They enter into a mutual exchange process rather than a subjugated one. Such layered forms of play occupy—in creative partnership with the built environment—a light-hearted whilst deadly serious system of reciprocity. Thus, the urban metropolis provides the exploring protagonist with the goal of the game: the roof to jump off, the wall to climb, the underground depths to crawl through. Likewise, adventure seekers add cultural value to the city, with minimal physical transformation, by naming, storying, sometimes even protecting or restoring it. In this way, they generate a distinctive hybrid of human and architectural agency, dramatically encapsulating, without having to discursively enunciate the bricks, glass and steel of a depth-conscious relation.

The daredevil dimensions to these pursuits have been popularised recently by real-life adventure television. The series *Jackass*, initially produced in 2000 by MTV and now distributed as feature films provides a case in point. The premise of this group is to constantly modify things like skateboarding, kayaking or BMX-riding into new bizarre hybrid stunts. They have a strong following among younger audiences mainly because their objective is to perform satirical pranks on each other or on an unsuspecting public.

Among the solitary modern-hero role models are stunt-persons such as Sébastien Foucan, the instigator of *le parkour* free-running, where practitioners weave through urban environments, hopping over barricades, debris and other obstacles. Also well known, the French spider-man, Alain Robert, has climbed over 100 of the world's tallest structures without safety equipment. Other contemporary examples include street illusionists, acrobats and tightrope walkers such as Dorothy Dietrich or Philippe Petit. By performing

bullet catches or balancing on high wires, they equally aspire for recognition alongside magicians such as Copperfield, Chung Ling Soo and of course Houdini.

Many adventure sport activities are either borderline legal or even illegal. This 'alternative' component and its consequent relations with authority is one of the defining characteristics of these pastimes which helps distinguish them from other non-competitive leisure pursuits. BASE jumping is the most common example and there have been recent attempts to ban tombstoning in the UK and waterfall jumping in New Zealand (Abramson, Laviolette 2007). So alternative sports have not just become a way of pitching the individual against the environment (built or otherwise)—they are also used subversively—to pitch the self against the State. For instance, in April 2003 Alain Robert scaled la Tour Elf in Paris wearing a 'No War' sign on his back to encourage Chirac to veto the UN resolution authorising use of force by the US against Iraq. Upon his arrest after climbing Shanghai's tallest building, he is reported to have said 'If you obey all the rules, you miss the fun'.

This cultural turn of physical performativity, in societies that have themselves become obsessed with danger and risk (Beck 1992, Douglas 1992, Le Breton 1991), is both poetically and politically meaningful. Such games come to mean more, signify more, carry more weight than they did in the early colonial period. Adventure is indeed becoming more serious while war and political strife become ever more strategic—more game-like as it were. And so, because they are dangerous, take players to the limit, hazardous landscapes can inhabit a paradoxal space in-between peacekeeping and violence. For instance, many are used for creative endeavours as well as law enforcement or military training purposes. In an increasingly pacifist context in the 'western world', where most violent conflict is carried out in liminal cultural areas by professionals, the bourgeois classes are converted into spectators. War and strife are hidden, themselves transforming into bloodless spectator sports.

Meanwhile, danger amongst the citizenry has become more serious than the play between life and death. This is one reason its seriousness is sought out (Stebbins 2006). That which it offers in its anomalous character becomes a collective social quest to find significance. In these terms, such anti-aesthetic devices signify the newness of creative social action which is more game-like than it used to be and yet just as important for the future (Fig. 4).

(Ir)resistable conclusions

Writing against the perjorative typecasting that occasionally resulted from their own participation in activities like cave exploring, Vanreusel & Renson have written: “The process of negative labelling may lead to the ascription of social stigma to the participants in dangerous games” (1982: 188). Despite the potential dangers involved in such lifestyle practices, I completely concur. The idea is not to argue against risk. Nowhere is it suggested that the stakes are too high to partake in the activities described. Nevertheless, I am certainly not promoting risk for its own sake either. Rather, what I’ve intimated is that there is an urgent need to better understand how humans manage risk in all its colourful diversity—from promiscuous sexual practice, through to fiscal market exchanges as well as attempts to generate models for predicting environmental and technological catastrophes. Such debates and enquiries must now include the alternative practices that have helped so many of us develop the personal skills needed to self-reliantly manage risk as well as to overcome fear. These pursuits have emerged rapidly at the heart of counter-cultural currents to the point where they are far from meaningless or marginal to the values of western societies. Studying urban exploration may therefore give us a purchase on understanding some of what is shaping our world today in terms of those forms of leisure and pleasure which are sought through adventure. Such endeavours might even help us rejuvenate our disciplines a little along the way.



Figure 4. *Artistic implosion in the cloak room of an atomic bunker.*
Sammlung Boros · Private Collection Gallery, Berlin, Germany
(Jan 2013, photo by Kerstin Kary)

This means that the adventurous experience invites interpretation. It even begs for it. But as soon as attempts to provide these are offered, we simultaneously realise the absurdity of trying to capture the fleetingness of such moments. Adventurous experience acknowledges the un-representability of the emotional situations encountered. These experiences attempt to address those aspects of humanity that are shadowy, half apprehended, on the edge. In other words, beyond the ability of verbal or written representation to describe. They exist to remind us that the sum-total of our encounters with the world do not amount to straightforward sequences of events. That, however hard we try, life is not a rational or predictable process, even though coherence is sought and can be achieved in hindsight. Such experiences are thus about the density and interwovenness of existence. These are the moments when feeling

exceeds perception, when the world of outside sensation prefaces the world of inner thought. When feeling, emotion and the intuitive un-problematically reside at the surface of our constructions of reality.

Such experiences are dream-like, they carry an uplifting charge, loaded with significance that cannot be articulated with any exactitude. In this way, they endeavour to remain as resistant to simplification yet as fundamentally ungraspable as any transcendental episode. Indeed, the hazardous use of landscape, when linked to positive encounters with danger, allows extreme acts to be interpreted beyond the notions of aesthetic performance. As events related to the creation and contention of identity and sociality, practices such as sewer scrounging, chimneying and fence vaulting are clearly performative acts. However, the dynamics governing them are more subtle than this. They are also part of an essential search for the survival of freedom through danger. We must therefore look instead to ever more comprehensive rationales whilst realising that true justifications are beyond comprehension.

Forms of deep and dangerous play are thus enactments of epistemological and ontological awareness. No longer are they simply about hedonism or performing identity. Now they take on relevance in relation to overcoming life's adventurous absurdities. They give meaning and subvert the abstraction of the body while creating an aesthetic for life and the decay of city-scapes. Ludically conceived, the muscularity of these quests calls forth explorers as *players*, ready to fully embrace and work the tangible immediacy of the elements within the technical and ethical constraints of their particular games (Huizinga 1938). Indeed, offering a series of amateur niches for such risky play, urban environments continue their mutations as playgrounds or, more precisely, as hyper-zones. In possessing a heightened concentration of bridges, catacombs, roofs, sewers and so on, derelict urban spaces have fast become another epitome of recreationally adventurous activity in the turbo-capitalist world. In this respect, such areas develop in a rapid symmetry to a range

of popular, semi-rural thrillscapes such as Interlaken, Newquay, Queenstown or the Zambezi River basin.

Indeed, where it prevails and in its playful capacity, the city zone no longer figures as an urban jungle of expanses, vistas and panoramas. Rather it is a beckoning foreground of special sites, niches and locations. Each is significant for how it engages the body in bouts of risky play. The urban explorer encounters the epic cityscape technically—exploring, testing and evaluating the patchwork of mechanical and kinetic possibilities with learned rules and a singularly trained body. To this specialist's imagination and synergistic sense organs, otherwise subtle assemblages of architectural features transform into overt arenas which invite exploration, naming, commentary, repetition and reputation. So that, whereas the idyllic landscape of the spirit offers the alienated subject the sublimely panoramic envelopment of sensuous background, the city-scape of the technical body (Mauss 1934) provides a setting for jumps, routes and scampering. That is, for highly differentiated foregrounds which anchor the body and rivet its attention. Hence, panoramically centred landscapes give way to heavily littered, technically disconnected fields of culture, each awaiting further development and differentiation at the hands, feet and whole corpora of new generations of explorers. These players arrive not to holistically commune with primordia lost to history, progress or civilisation. Rather, their goal is to spontaneously create newness from the constantly decaying materials of urban civilisation.

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THE TRANSGRESSIVE GEOGRAPHIES OF DAILY LIFE¹

Alastair Bonnett

Introduction

This chapter is about the transgression of everyday space. It started with me running across an inner-city motorway in Newcastle sometime in 1994 and nearly getting knocked down by a Nissan Bluebird. Not an uncommon thing of course, dashing between cars, squawking with fear. But, nonetheless, unsettling.

That small but traumatic incident is connected in my mind with beginning to think about the way everyday acts of geographical disobedience intersect with the city's spatial conventions. In other words, I began to take more notice of how spatial transgressions are woven into the prosaic culture of urban life.

Previously, in some vague, un-thought-out kind of way, I had tended to assign creative spatial behaviour to artists and other specialists in provocation. I guess I just assumed that they, somehow, owned the creative imagination. Yet, once you start looking, and categorising, it quickly becomes apparent that ordinary urban behaviour fairly sizzles with innovative activities: people tarrying; trespassing; hiding; fiddling about; leaving behind them odd runes, strange gifts; dumbly skipping into traffic.

All those manoeuvres. All those itchy, scratchy little initiatives. Yet this disparate energy has remained largely invisible to social theorists, most of whom appear mesmerised by the most spectacular aspects of modern urban dissidence, such as avant-garde adventures

¹ An earlier version of this essay was published in *Transgressions: A Journal of Urban Exploration*, as 'The transgressive geographies of everyday life', 1996.

and riotous assemblies. These moments, so glittery, cinematic and exceptional, are certainly alluring but are a narrow reflection of the quotidian life of the city. I'm intending here to pace out a somewhat different terrain. I'm going to kick off with the avant-garde, and try to work out how and why the most savvy cultural workers are opening up the exploration of everyday creativity.

There are three steps to my chapter:

step one: I begin with the group that has traditionally monopolised discussion of creative interventions in the city: the avant-garde. I argue that the avant-garde's colonisation of everyday space displays an interesting tension: that it represents both a critique of the conventions of art practice and an extension of its domain. I also note that many contemporary artists who work with geographical themes have turned their backs on the ideologies of avant-gardism and began to both engage and play with the everyday spatial imagination.

step two: Here two instances of transgressive spatial routines are introduced. I go back to that motorway where I nearly lost my life and observe some loutish behaviour from similar road-runners. A second example is found around a supermarket till in Essex. Spatial transgression is woven with, and constituted by social identity. It is, as my two examples show, a site of contestation that is both gendered, and age-specific.

step three: I look through three windows onto everyday spatial creativity: the notion of the *flâneur*, de Certeau's reflections on walking in the city and Colin Ward's book *The Child in the City*.

Just Drifting?: The Avant-garde's Colonisation of Everyday Space

Avant-garde adventurers have been depicted as the city's most creative force. In numerous testimonials, avant-gardists are portrayed as the 'provocative' and 'radical' undercurrent of, and antithesis to, alienated city environments (for example, Timms, Collier 1988; Goldberg 1988; Cohen 1993). Thus the notion of 'transgression' is conceptualised as a synonym for avant-garde intervention. Yet, as we shall see, this elision is based on a misunderstanding of the social role of the avant-garde.

WHY THE AVANT-GARDE WANTED TO COLONISE EVERYDAY SPACE

Myths of its own demise are central to the reproduction of the avant-garde. Mirroring the economic dynamics of capitalist society, the content of avant-garde production must be perpetually challenged, overthrown, and superseded, in order to secure its structural survival. As this implies, announcements of the avant-garde's imminent death are as old as the institution itself (a similar point is made by Poggioli, 1968; compare Bürger, 1984). Consideration of this process also exposes the ravenous nature of avant-garde production. For, again like the expansionist economic system that surrounds and enables it, avant-gardism demands and feeds upon dynamic growth, upon the extension of its range and ambitions. If for one moment it grows weary and lays its head in some museum cabinet, then new mutant breeds will instantly appear to denounce the very idea of stasis and propose new explorations. It is, at least in part, this extraordinary momentum that explains the avant-garde's attempts to colonise everyday space. The street has been appropriated by the avant-garde in order to extend their praxis and gesture a rebellion against the specialised artistic spaces of art galleries and concert halls. The history of this complex ideological manoeuvre may be traced over the past 100 years or so. However, we can chart

roughly its development by mentioning just three seminal avant-garde moments: Dada, surrealism and post-modern art.

THREE MOMENTS IN A COLONIAL HISTORY: DADA, SURREALISM AND POST-MODERN ART

The desire to break away from the ghettoisation of creative activity to specialised artistic spaces was signalled by the Dadaists through a preference for clubs and public halls as venues. The Dadaists also used these arenas to expose and break apart another convention, that between audience and performer. Their favourite means of expression, the anarchic cabaret show, was expressly designed to subvert this traditional division (for discussion see Greenburg 1985, 1988). Tristan Tzara (1989: 236) notes how on one 'Dada Night', on July 14th 1916, "In the presence of a compact group we demand the right to piss in different colours", leading to "shouting and fighting in hall" and a "police interruption". However, another intent also guided and animated Tzara and his colleagues. For the Paris and Zurich Dadaists performed as agitators against convention but for art. Theirs was "a desperate appeal, on behalf of all forms of art" (Janco quoted by Erickson 1984: 116). The surrealists too voyaged into everyday life as missionaries for art. And they too staged 'provocations'. However, they also devised creative work that abandoned venues altogether. Thus, the surrealists enjoyed randomly wandering the streets and markets of Paris as a way of opening themselves up to unpredictable emotions and events. A more orchestrated event of this type was held in 1924 when Breton, along with three other surrealists (Aragon, Vitrac and Morise) picked out a town at random from a map of France (it was Blois) and walked out from it, as Chenieux-Grendon (1990: 87) records, "progressing haphazardly, on foot".

Since the 1960s various forms of artistic wandering have become a staple diet of avant-garde activity. A post-modern example, characteristically indifferent to its own political or social meaning, is offered by the French artist Sophie Calle (Calle, Baudrillard 1988;

see also Calle 1989). For fourteen days in 1980 Calle, supposedly unobserved and in disguise, followed a man she called Henri B from Paris and to, and then around, Venice. Calle's choice of victim, who she had briefly met only once before, was random. In the sequence of photographs that Calle took of him he is seen only from behind. He is an anonymous person in the crowd, an ordinary person who the extraordinary artist has chanced upon and absorbed into her specialised realm of creative manufacture

Throughout the twentieth century avant-garde artists have been making sporadic attempts to highlight the geographical routines of everyday life. Within this history an important and serious attempt to challenge the conventions of creative specialisation, and relocate creativity from the galleries onto the streets, can be glimpsed. But only just. For every time the avant-garde has promised to transgress the institutionalisation of creativity it has immediately reneged; subverting its own radical potential with the moribund clichés of artistic individualism, genius, eccentricity and spontaneity. Twentieth century artistic production has become increasingly littered with such self-defeating incursions, they are strewn around wherever and whenever arts funding permits. Yet they lack both honesty and conviction. They dare not confront the fact that their subversion of the everyday is also an act of colonisation from a realm of specialised cultural production.

FROM THE SITUATIONISTS TO THE NEW PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY

The most interesting forms of avant-garde spatial praxis are those that seriously and effectively call into question the status of the creative specialist. Two examples may be offered, situationist psychogeography and 'new psychogeography' (which overlaps with urban exploration). The 'drift' and other techniques of situationist psychogeography blurred distinctions of artist, event and audience. However, when the situationists shoved aside bourgeois conventions of creativity they tended to replace them with the closely related

mythology of the bohemian political activist and extremist. Over the last two centuries the two roles have grown up together.

The so-called “most dangerous subversion there ever was” (Debord 1989a: 175), was organised around a set of very recognisable stereotypes: the individual genius; the glory of isolation; fierce ambition; the arrogance and pride of young men. These attributes may be seen to structure the Situationist International’s (SI) psycho-geography, of each and every blokish left-bank bar-crawl dignified with the label *dérive*. One suitably rakish drift from 1953, the International Lettrist phase of Debord’s career, and which is recalled in his essay ‘Two accounts of the *dérive*’ (1989b), begins in an Algerian “dive” “in which [we] had spent the entire previous night” (p. 136). As the White anarchists barge their way through multicultural Paris, the colonial incursions of the avant-garde into everyday space are mapped onto a more familiar kind of colonial encounter. Accompanied by a nameless “quite beautiful West Indian woman” the evening is spent “speaking incessantly and very loudly in front of a silent audience in such a manner as to further aggravate the general unease” (p. 137). The next day Debord and his pals totter off to yet another exotic bar equally determined to display their quixotic temperaments and capacity for intimidation: “[Our] arrival in the bar renders instantly silent about ten Yiddish-speaking men seated at two or three tables and all wearing hats” (p. 137).

The International Lettrists and their situationist antecedents opened geography to creative play. Yet they did not overturn but deepened the myth of the avant-garde. The new forms of psycho-geography and urban exploration that emerged in the 1990s continued but also challenged and changed both of these trajectories. They also had a more immediate predecessor in so-called ‘new genre public arts’. One of the best-known examples of new genre public art is Martha Rosler’s project ‘If You Lived Here’ (see Wallis 1991). This project addressed the ‘production of homelessness’ in New York and progressed along a number of pathways, some of which are pretty conventional. However, ‘If You Lived Here’ also enabled

the development of what might be termed an agitational sociology of everyday creativity. In other words, some participants sought to imaginatively engage, and otherwise involve themselves, with the spatial struggles of New York's homeless population. Another example of this process was Lurie and Wodiczko's (1991) 'Homeless Vehicle Project'. The vehicle, a wheelable bullet-shaped living space for the homeless, was explained by Lurie and Wodiczko as 'a strategy of survival for urban nomads—evicts—in the existing economy' (p. 217).

However, the early 1990s also witnessed the birth of an intriguing political subculture that introduced new horizons, new vocabularies and a new audience to dissident geography. Across Europe and the USA local psychogeography groups sprang into existence. They charted novel, idiosyncratic, terrain. From the late 1990s activity among these revolutionary groups diminished and interest in psychogeography passed to the arts community (where it remains vigorous, for example, Conflux 2007, Hart 2004, Pinder 2005, Psy-Geo-Conflux 2013) and 'urban explorers' (see Deyo, Leibowitz 2003; Ninjalicious 2005; see also Solnit 2006). However, although the work of the British agitational groups which I shall discuss here ceased some years ago, they remain one of the most provocative recent reinventions of the radical tradition. They also represent the most explicitly activist example of the turn in the 1990s towards the politics of everyday space.

The originality of these groups arose, in part, from their willingness to play with notions of revolutionary intent and folkish anti-modernism. Out of this intersection came a highly self-conscious deployment of the rhetoric of class struggle. Indeed, they aestheticised and ironised communism so heavily as make it appear more akin to a cultural provocation than a political project. This process was also bound up with other novel ideas which sought to remythologise and re-enchant the landscape. In part these agendas reflected the influence of the sensuous, irrationalist situationism of Asger Jorn and a politicized version of New Age notions of sacred

landscape. The influence of Iain Sinclair's London novels (such as *Lud Heat* [1995, first published 1975], which offers a 'high occulting' [1995: 113] mapping of the city) may also be discerned. The main thesis of the London Psychogeographical Association (LPA) and, somewhat less explicitly, the Manchester Area Psychogeographic (MAP) group, was that class power relies on and demands the analysis of hidden knowledge and undisclosed networks and traditions. It was argued that the nature of power can be disclosed through an understanding of the way these concealed forces have been deployed and imposed upon the landscape. It is important to stress that this analysis does not accept or offer occultism. Rather it seeks to scurrilously construct and imagine occultism (along with other hidden forms and sources of power) as a class strategy, a technique of control in the management of the spectacle. These ideas came to be categorized as 'magico-Marxism'. The first usage of this term appears to be Bin (1996; apparently unnoticed by Andy Merrifield, whose *Magical Marxism*, published in 2011, focuses on 1960s situationism and literary magical realism). As with many avant-garde interventions magico-Marxism is determinedly disorientating: it is evasive, infuriating, constantly asking that we see the city in new, unexpected, ways. However, I would also argue that the disorientating game played by these psychogeographical groups acted to conceal and cohere the tension between anti-nostalgia and nostalgia, modernist and anti-modernist politics, that animated their project.

Magico-Marxism and its kindred re-enchantments combined communist militancy with a romanticisation of landscape and memory. The most outrageous examples derive from the London Psychogeographical Association, which was 'brought back into being in the Rosicrucian Cave at Royston Herts' in 1992 (Tompsett 1998: 2). The LPA's characteristic style was an ingratiating amalgam of class struggle rhetoric and antiquarian dottiness.

The numerous trips it organized to ancient and otherwise mystic sites were frequently turned into excuses for nostalgic regression.

Participants were advised to 'bring stout shoes in case of rain' (LPA 1994: 4). The 'motor car' became an object of affected fascination: 'This device, little more than a box with wheels and an internal combustion engine, enabled [psycho geographers] to roam around at high speed' (LPA 1993a: 2). The LPA's report on a visit to the ancient earth figure, the Cerne Giant (on the day that its 'penis is directly oriented towards the sunrise'), recalls that 'as we sat eating our sandwiches, two comrades emerged from the swirling mist. They were using a map of Canada to guide their way' (LPA 1993b: 3).

The LPA made use of humour both for its own sake and in an effort to disorientate and denaturalize authority. Their account of the London Marathon in 1996 provides a helpful and typically startling example. The LPA Newsletter mapped the run onto a set of ley lines. It claimed that the route 'snakes around a conflux of ley lines' and, hence, would induce 'mass psychological processing' among participants. For reasons too obscure to detail, this ruse of ruling-class power is claimed to be 'part of the preparation of a site for ritual murder' (replacing Prince Charles with a monarch more to the liking of 'the establishment').

...the essence of our approach is that we seek to prevent that which we predict from happening. If our goal is achieved, and it is impossible for the ritual murder to take place, we will have substantially weakened the psychogeographical subjugation of the proletariat. (LPA 1996 [dated 397]: 4)

It is pointless interrogating the validity of such assertions, or even whether they are seriously meant. What is of interest is how a revolutionary rhetoric can be spliced with an overt rejection of modernist rationality. It is a combination that is genuinely unsettling. Yet it also has the unintended consequence of satirizing class politics. The use of the term 'the proletariat' in the passage above elicits a smile; it has a self-consciously anachronistic quality that topples into farce by virtue of the framing discussion of 'ley lines' and other esoteric mysteries. Another illustration of this same process came with the LPA's

decision to abandon the Christian calendar, and adopt an ancient Egyptian alternative. ‘How can we expect the working class to take us seriously’, the LPA explained, ‘when we still use the superstitious calendar of the Christians imposed by the bosses?’ (LPA 1997 [dated 398]: 4). Such playful ideas absorb class within an aesthetic of provocation. They rely on a sense of nostalgia for ‘real’ class politics but exhibit a brazen confidence that revolutionary rhetoric is today so hollow that it can be scripted as an elaborate joke.

The determinedly eccentric nature of the LPA’s activities attracted a small amount of media attention (Gill 1996, Hugill 1994). *The Observer* published ‘A Psychogeographical Gazetteer’ in 1994, in which the LPA was described as at the ‘outer edges of reality’ (Hugill 1994: 3). Another militant group that courted this label was the Manchester Area Psychogeographic (MAP). MAP members’ desire to ‘to walk unregulated, unrepaired, atmospheric streets’ was first provoked by urban gentrification (MAP 2007). This concern was soon aligned to an interest in the rites of capitalism, for only those who ‘open their mindset to invisible forces can comprehend the mental, imaginary fields where the post-industrial landscape is being mapped’ (MAP 2007). Like the LPA, MAP’s effort to ‘disorientate the public and destabilise the scientifically-enforced version of the present’ (2007) reached back to pre-modern sources not simply to engage the modern landscape but in order to find a radical rhetoric that uses the past to supersede the present. As we shall see, the combination and confusion of the ‘conservative’ and ‘radical’ can also be picked out within less esoteric forms of spatial transgression.

Roadrunners and Till Talkers

I am going to describe a couple of everyday examples of spatial transgression. The first I call ‘roadrunners’, the second ‘till talkers’. I shall introduce each through a thumbnail paragraph on their social and physical context.

ROADRUNNERS: NEWCASTLE'S SWAN HOUSE ROUNDABOUT

Inner city Newcastle: one of the poorest of Britain's large cities. A motorway (the A167(M)) and several other multi-laned roads thrust their fat tarmac tongues right inside the city. They squelch and curl around awhile before lolling off down south. These roads isolate the eastern part of Newcastle from the rest of town. They form a complex set of barriers that reinforce social alienation. Of course, some people don't see it this way. Car drivers find this welter of autoroutes essential for avoiding contact with the rundown and squalid acreages that surround the metropolis's relatively affluent core. However, I'm not concerned here with this group, or indeed any other 'legitimate road user'. I'm interested in those folk that have to walk out from the city centre and make their way a short distance east. These are the people that are forced to duck and weave amongst the traffic. And these are the people that have etched a complex system of illegal short-cuts across and alongside the A167(M) and its tributaries.

In the early 1990s to get to the city centre's multiplex cinema on foot a short cut had been forged alongside the southbound carriage-way of the motorway. This muddy track trespassed behind various corporate properties. It passed by abandoned wooden shacks before ending in a short sharp scramble to the cinema's huge car park. Wire fencing of various kinds, designed to make the track impassable, was periodically erected, but soon trampled down. However, there are many other forms of geographical refusal associated with Newcastle's road network. I shall return to the incident with which I opened this essay in order to introduce my principal example.

The Swan House roundabout—the place where I was so very nearly run down—is slap-bang in the centre of Newcastle. At the time when I was almost killed in its shadow, Swan House was a largely empty, off-white 1970s office block (it is now an off-white block of up-market flats). It is still surrounded on all sides by a busy multi-lane roundabout. It's a grim place, today as in the 1990s; made all the more unpleasant by the litter-strewn mouths of pedestrian

underpasses. These come gulping out of the pavement in windy spots. They were once decorated with barely legible maps of a subterranean pedestrian system and blue direction arrows to non-existent destinations (such as the mysterious ‘Australian Centre’). So people ignore these invitations, and fling themselves over the safety railings and onto the road, darting for the sanctuary of the sharply tilted, ‘anti-pedestrian’, cobbles beneath Swan House. And from here they have to take their chances again, slipping off that unfriendly incline into the murderous road.

I will be arguing in the next section that these manoeuvres are forms of transgression in and of alienated city space. They are forms of practical and creative critique, physical strategies that contain an immanent imagination of resistance. However, any desire to develop such a reading of everyday spatial usages cannot progress without an appreciation of their contradictory nature. We need to ask who is involved in these transgressions. We also need to question what social identities enable and structure them.

I shall broach these topics by mentioning just one of the identities that appears to be implicated in the road-running described above: masculinity. To get a feel for the way gender may play a role, I present below some observations—made a few moments before I was nearly run over—on a group of three late teenage lads trying to get home. One of them begins the process. He just darts out into the traffic from the Mosley Street side of the roundabout. The other two haven’t joined him, but they watch and yell from the pavement. Their friend looks like he is going to pelt across the road, so the cars aren’t slowing. But then he very artfully slows down, does a sort of shimmy, moves suddenly onto his back leg and pirouettes, mockingly, in front of a red hatchback. A panicked driver swerves his car, grinds to a near halt. Other cars are now lining up behind. Someone honks their horn. The two fellas on the pavement are having a rare treat; one bawls a gleeful compliment, something like “you fucking twat!” At this point they run to join their friend whilst he scamper off to the cobbled slopes at the foot of Swan House. They are

all yelling their heads off now, taking huge leaping strides, ignoring the traffic. They arrive, almost simultaneously, at the roundabout's centre, panting and laughing. I imagine this incident was all over in 15 seconds. But you can have a lot of fun in heavy traffic in a quarter of a minute.

The young men wander off, rolling their shoulders, affecting nonchalance. At the corner of City Road, they act out daft, 'playful' slaps of each others' faces, and then disappear from sight. I'm pleased to see the back of them. For, as well as being transgressive, and kind of funny, their performance was an assertion of hostile masculinity. In Newcastle, where men always seem to be yelling, pissing in the street and bullying everyone and anyone, these boys' activities must be judged as, at least in part, both normal and normalising. Overt acts of physical display and aggression are part of being, or becoming, a man in Newcastle. So are acts of an anti-social nature that ritualistically insult the alienated city. The latter is spat and urinated on, graffitied, vandalised and mocked. The city is cast in the role of woman, of the feminine, to be harassed and seduced (that appalling shimmy of the hips...) by a combination of physical courage and grotesque sensuality. In Newcastle there is a desperate tone to such street performances. It is as if the men there feel that the city is slipping from their grasp, that traditional gender roles can only be staged as pantomime, as exaggerated, empty displays of potency. Hence, an ugly tinge of violent bitterness, of macho-nihilism, regularly creeps into this urban play.

In summary, the activities of the roadrunners are structured as a performance that is playful, masculine and transgressive. The avant-garde have rarely understood the connection between conservative identities and transgressive praxis. Of course, other identities, apart from gender, are also at work in the activities of the boy's performance: for example, race, class, sexuality and physical ability. In my next example, set at a shopping till in Epping, I show how transgressions that draw on gender categories may also be bound up with ideas and assumptions about age.

TALKING AT THE TILL: EPPING TESCO'S

I was born and raised in Epping, a dormitory town 15 miles east of London. It was where I first learnt to run over busy roads. So I know that everyone in Epping sees the supermarket, Tesco's, as the town's central institution. So central that other places in Epping are described as 'near Tesco's', or 'at the Tesco's end of town'. Tesco's, then, is an urban hub. But it's an odd sort of centre. It has, after all, been, purpose-built as an entirely commercial space. It has been scientifically designed to create the psychological and physical conditions for maximising sales. As with nearly all modern British supermarkets, one is channelled in at the left, and circulated clockwise through the building; past tempting bready wafts from the bakery, meaty smells from the delicatessen, past strangely appealing mounds of neat and reasonably priced food, before being expelled, loaded down with far more purchases than you actually wanted, at one of the tills. The spatial experience of Tesco's is obsessively controlled and narrowly directed. There is, or so it seems, only one spatial ideology at work in this place, the geography of consumerism.

The efficient alienation of the modern supermarket can make it both a compelling and lonely destination. It is an environment that encourages shoppers to take a certain bored pleasure in casting themselves as perfect shoppers, busy, focused and willing. However this predictable performance isn't the only show on offer in Epping Tesco's. There are other things occurring. Things that haven't been legislated for by Tesco's spatial scientists.

Over by two of the tills groups of older women are failing to circulate in the prescribed fashion. They are standing and chatting. Other shoppers, especially younger ones, are looking 'held up'. They stare at the floor, glancing up occasionally. The blotchy, acned faces of single impeded teenagers express passive contempt; a virulent but immobile hatred. The objects of their derision make symbolic gestures of accommodation. The young shoppers are apologised to. The

fact that they are “in a rush” is understood, allowances will soon be made; “go on, you go in front love”; “don’t mind us dear”; “we’re just enjoying ourselves, you go ahead”. So it is that the conformists are separated from the subversives, the former’s eyes tightened to avoid facial contact, to avoid contamination with this unwelcome and discordant sociability.

What particularly bothers and, it seems, disgusts, the two teenage boys queuing at till 5 is that, not only is there a group of 4 older women (aged 65+) in front of them, including the till operator, talking to each other and failing to move on, but that two of these women are actually eating. And not only are they eating, they have actually brought food in from outside the store. To be more precise they have brought in what appears to be a selection of cakes in two Tupperware containers. Two people have come into Tesco’s, and not circled round the store clockwise. They have gone straight to their friend at till 5, and begun sharing out food. And the teens, whose sphere of transgression is so different, so spatially and socially removed, are appalled and concerned.

One of the central ironies of routine transgression is that its agents tend to be the ones who feel they have power within—perhaps even dominate—their chosen geography of play and resistance. The lads running across the traffic and the women in the supermarket are both disobeying on terrains in which they feel comfortable. As this implies, the transgression of everyday space is only partially experimental in nature; it draws on traditions and knowledges of ‘what has gone before’, of what ‘we are allowed to do’. The refusal of Tesco’s spatial discipline is carried out by these women both as something spontaneous and challenging and as something that accepts and accommodates itself to the limitations placed on women’s spatial activities.

Or it was. Perhaps, since I first witnessed these events (perhaps two decades ago) the store manager has changed. Anyway, someone in charge seems to have disbanded these gatherings. Certainly, the last time I went to Epping Tescos all the people on the tills were of

the young and blotchy variety. And there was no hanging around, no idle chat, no scone crumbs needing to be brushed from the glass screen of the bar-code reader.

Three Windows onto Creativity In Everyday Space

So far, I have talked about the ways the avant-garde have explored the city and introduced, through two examples, the contradictory nature of prosaic, non-specialist, transgression. I will conclude by opening three further windows through which we can observe errant urban manoeuvres. More specifically, I shall engage with three texts: Keith Tester's *The Flâneur* (1994) an essay on walking in Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) and, finally, Colin Ward's (1978) *The Child in the City*.

Everyday space, and people's movement within it, seems to be a topic that a lot of people have recently become intrigued by. Indeed, the categories and intellectual traditions through which the subject is currently being explored have a decidedly hasty feel to them. It's as if people are anxious to talk about everyday space but don't yet quite know how. The spate of writings on the *flâneur* that came out in the 1990s was an instance of this trend. Reading Tester's edited collection *The Flâneur* it is striking how many times the inadequacy of its central category is alluded or admitted to. The contributors appear to want to write about people's changing physical incorporation into the modern and post-modern city. But they constantly have to view this process through what is, as Tester's introduction makes clear, an anachronism. The *flâneur* was an urban idler who roamed early-to-mid- nineteenth-century Paris. He was a dandy in search of the hidden pleasures of a city that had not yet been subjected to the bureaucratisation and spatial authoritarianism of modern urban development. "Any such pinning down", Tester notes (p. 14), "makes *flânerie* impossible since it establishes the meaning and order of things in advance". Benjamin (1983: 47) reminds us that the late nineteenth century poet Baudelaire, often considered the epitome

of the decadent French fop, “roved about in the city which had long since ceased to be home for the *flâneur*”. This implies the *flâneur* is not an appropriate model to explain, or judge, late twentieth century urban culture. Measuring contemporary people’s behaviour against such a model will always them wanting. Thus, for example, Bauman post-modern metropolitans are uncreative, automatonised *flâneurs*. In his essay in Tester’s book he represents the post-modern city as a site of endless play (“Game has no end” is Bauman’s pithy comment, p. 153) but it is mindless, uncreative and enforced: “the freedom of the *flâneur* to set, playfully, the aims and meanings of his nomadic adventures, the original attraction of his lonely places, has been appropriated” (p. 154).

Yet this depressing vision of urban life is enabled by the imposition of an anachronism as the measure of contemporary geographical play. It is no surprise that the forms of adventure and experimentation achieved within early nineteenth Paris are not available today, but that cannot be taken to mean that real, as opposed to simulated, spatial creativity is now dead. [This point is further exemplified by the resolutely and, I would suggest, properly historical focus of studies that addresses the invisibility and/or impossibility of the female *flâneur*; for example, Wolff, 1989; 1994] A similar critique may be proposed in relation to Richard Sennett’s (1994: 374–375) thesis that the contemporary city “has ended in passivity suspending the body in an ever more passive relation to the environment”. Here we find yet another urban theorist insisting that creativity has fled the metropolis, the streets and roads of which are now filled with people whom Sennett at least seems to find less than fully human. And here again, this conclusion is in part derived from a conflation of the very idea of spatial creativity with the social and geographical praxis of nineteenth-century (and in Sennett’s case, pre-Enlightenment) cities.

It is at this point that de Certeau’s writings may be usefully introduced. De Certeau’s chapter ‘Walking in the city’ in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, refuses backward glances at lost urban pleasures. Indeed, he takes a clear delight in depicting the inevitability

of the “contradictory movements that counter-balance and combine themselves outside the reach of panoptic power” (p. 95). Far from being vacant zombies, the users of urban space are necessarily and constantly creative. De Certeau explains that,

if it is true that a spatial order organises an ensemble of possibilities (e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g., by a wall that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualises some of these possibilities. But he also moves them about and he invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements the walker transforms each spatial signifier into something else. And if on the one hand he actualises only a few of the possibilities fixed by the constructed order (he goes only here and not there), on the other he increases the number of possibilities (for example, by creating shortcuts and detours) and prohibitions (for example, he forbids himself to take paths generally considered accessible or even obligatory), (p. 98).

Although it is, admittedly, not always clear how literal de Certeau’s references to ‘walkers’ are meant to be (one could, after all, do all the above in a car), his analysis provides a useful counterpoint to the more historically attuned but cloistered pronouncements of so many other urban theorists.

As the passage cited above implies, de Certeau is proposing a linguistic model for the analysis of spatial movements. Thus, he talks of the “rhetoric of walking” of “composing a path” (p. 100) and of how the “long poem of walking manipulates spatial organisations, no matter how panoptic they may be” (p. 101). Indeed, almost everything he has to say about walking is rooted in structuralist theory. This procedure may provide some helpful insights but it also contains a series of problems. More specifically, de Certeau’s analysis depoliticises everyday life, spatial actions are construed in a social vacuum; their ability to make sense confined to the terrain of locutionary principle.

This problem in de Certeau's work is closely related to a second, that his walker in the city is presented as a generic type. Indeed, de Certeau conveys little sense that gender, age, or class even exist, never mind that they might structure people's urban manoeuvres. Revealingly, his book is dedicated "To the ordinary man. To a common and anonymous hero". Such a figure is a necessary fiction for de Certeau's asocial structuralism.

I want to end with Colin Ward's *The Child in the City* (1978). It is a deceptively simple book, full of photographs of children playing in the city in a myriad of different ways. But it offers an open-ended and very ordinary delight in city play that I think is worth celebrating. I'm particularly fond of a series of five, which start with a toddler walking along the pavement with a cardboard box on his head, then falling over, sitting on and squashing his box and finally booting it into the gutter. This event is labelled 'Using Found Objects' (p. 82). Through both images and text Ward presents a portrait of the diverse ways children colonise hidden and 'unused' corners of the city. He looks at the way children, as children, have specific experiences of city life but intercuts this analysis with depictions of the role and impact of other social identities: for example, the apparent invisibility of girls in street-play. As this implies Ward finds the city populated neither by post-modern zombies (unlike Bauman and Sennett) nor generic sign manipulators (unlike de Certeau) but rather by specific groups with specific identities and with imaginative and politically fertile sets of spatial practices. Indeed Ward stresses time and again that the city is full of child explorers:

For the [child] explorer, apart from the excitement of change and the new experience it brings, the personal satisfactions to be won from an environment include the extent to which it can be used and manipulated, and the extent to which it contains usable rubbish, the detritus of packaging-cases, crates, bits of rope and old timber, off-cuts and old wheels. (p. 40)

Ward provides numerous anecdotes of children's ability to re-imagine everyday space, to ignite its possibilities and provocations. He is not entirely sentimental: children's play can, he knows, be depressingly destructive and anti-social. Nevertheless, Ward implies that children's spatial transgressions contain within them forms of practical and positive critique. He intimates that to create and enact "eerie encounters, forbidden games, and destructive passions" (p. 41) is both to engage in, and say something about, the existing structure of urban life and its possible transformation. It is true that Ward fails to move any theoretical distance beyond the vaguest allusions to this process. Nevertheless, he provides us with a clear taste of the kind of analysis of everyday creativity that I have been advocating in this article.

Within the everyday we find patterns of resistance and play. The politics of this kind of activity is rarely clear or uncontradictory. Indeed, it is, in part, the fact that such activity escapes politics—or at least escapes our current lexicon of political positions—that makes it transgressive. It is a process once associated with the avant-garde. Their interventions remain important and today the new psycho-geographers are opening up new and often extraordinary horizons. But ordinary people have their own extraordinary ambitions. From the roadrunners in Newcastle, to the till talker at Tescos, or Ward's urban children, we find the city being re-encharmed. The way we use everyday space reminds us that the city is a landscape of drama, scope and possibilities.

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FLEA MARKET AND URBAN THEATRICALITY

(CASE STUDY OF BERLIN MAUERPARK)

Oleg Pachenkov and Lilia Voronkova

Introduction

Basically everyone knows what a flea market is. By flea market, it is usually meant a market place where non-professional vendors ('ordinary people') sell second-hand (usually their own) clothes and other goods, sometimes handcrafts, sometimes vintage and antique things. However, not everyone may know that in fact, any flea market is much more than just a cheap marketplace, where people can find an old stuff to furnish their apartment, to repair broken objects or just to spend time hanging around. What is most important in understanding the phenomenon of a flea market is the recognition that it is not only an economic, but also a social and cultural institution (Damsar 1998; De Bruin, Dupuis 2000; Sherry 1990a, 1990b).

The scientific literature on flea markets is innumerable. But even those innumerable social scientists who investigated flea markets have always taken the challenge of proving them to be not only a place where goods are exchanged with money, but a site of social activities, of communication and face-to-face interaction, of "action".

In existing scientific literature flea markets are described and analyzed in the following ways:

- in terms of theater, play, performance, festivity¹ (Maisel 1974, Sherry 1990b), as sites of "hunting" and a "discovery of unexpected" which is quite unusual for the mass production/

¹ It is distinctive, that the metaphor of play, theater and scene is already mentioned in Maisel's text by 1974, i.e. in one of the first texts dedicated to the flea markets; I will come back to these metaphors at the end of this article, claiming this is one of the

- consumption oriented society (Damsar 1998a; Sherry 1990a, 1990b),
- as rare spots of interpersonal communication in the impersonal “western” world (Damsar 1998b),
 - as sites of urban life that provide “participants with a sense of risk, uncertainty, consequential chance – and thus produce vivid experience usually absent in ordinary social life” (Maisel 1974: 503),
 - as a “mirror of the society”, reflecting main social processes and relations characteristic for the latter (Damsar 1998a: 96).

At the same time, flea markets are rarely approached within the context of the city—as phenomena of urban life; they are rarely linked to the issue of the public realm and urban public spaces. We tried to place the flea markets within the urban context, to bind it to the life of the city. In the course of our analysis we have found more and more evidence showing that one of the dimensions in which relations of the flea market to urban life is the most obvious and exciting is the one of carnival and theatricality.

One can notice, how often theatricality, carnivalisation, performativity and the notion of transgression are mentioned insofar as medieval markets, oriental bazaars and other forms of contemporary, deregulated street vending (such as ethnic markets, street vending and flea markets (for instance, Zukin 1995, Ch. 6) are discussed. The metaphors, comparisons and analogues are continuously drawn between these two sets of activity. One of the most famous adherents to the point of view towards consumption spaces as a stage where social life of the city is performed was Walter Benjamin, a nostalgic *flâneur* addicted to Parisian Arcades and flea markets, who recalls the city of his childhood in the following way: “... I got to know ‘the town’ only as the theater of purchase... An impenetrable chain of

key features of the flea market, that to great extent determines the role it plays in the contemporary urban life.

mountains, no, caverns, of commodities — this was ‘the town’” (Benjamin 1978: 40).

Along with *flâneur* activities performed in department stores and contemporary Arcades, the practice of visiting a marketplace—especially on Saturday—stayed an acknowledged and legitimate form of public life in European towns until ‘late modernity’, and the theatrical experience of ‘seeing and being seen’ is an intrinsic part of it. It proves that binary opposition between (passive) consumption and (active) production is a sort of simplification, reducing the complex, multifold and contradictory reality of urban experience to a very simple scheme. In real life, consumption activities are also connected to the opportunity for resistance and subversion of consumerism:

“the consumption of not only things, but of services and culture gives the city its color and carnival-like qualities, constantly full of novelty and the unexpected, and is also the location of the subversion of the dominant codes though ... the transgressive possibilities inherent in consumption practices.” (Clammer 2003: 96)

Subversion, often characteristic of particular types of experience of consumption, implies manipulation, the notion of giving something out to be something else, of play and swindle, and therefore—somehow the one of mimesis. In fact these two sets of public activities—market and theater—which from first glance seem to be quite distant from each other, in fact have a lot in common—historically and essentially. And, as we will show, the contemporary urban flea market, more than any other market activity of nowadays, kept the complexity of medieval markets combining consumption with sociability, shopping with communication, trade with entertainment, and therefore preserved elements of carnival and theatricality, which it keeps on conveying into the current urban culture.

Market and Theater in European cities

The connection between a marketplace and a theater sounds a bit strange for us because we are familiar with modernist cities where these two sets of activities or realms of life—economic and cultural—are separated. However this division is recent and not ‘natural’.

Initially in Europe the markets were often located outside the city walls; but gradually as European cities were growing beyond the original walls, the market area included all the most important functions of the medieval city. At this time, “the market square was a center par excellence of a medieval town. It was a location of great urban festives and public events including executions” (Nijsten 1994: 241). In medieval Germany “the market square was shown as a vast regular space” and significant public spaces “celebrated by chroniclers and painters sprang up in the late fourteenth century” (Calabi 2004: 47). Actually, the entire medieval city was a market itself, and one or more market places played the role of the main public spaces of the city (Madanipour 2003: 196). Therefore, in medieval times we see no difference between the market and public activities of the cities; on the contrary, Max Weber, for instance, considered the presence of a market the most characteristic feature and condition *sin qua non* of the medieval town (Weber 1978: 1328).

This situation has changed in so-called Modernity. What used to be mixed and interwoven had to be separated and isolated². Already

² The first changes took place in the minds. The story is rooted in the 17th century when the coherent sphere of daily culture fell apart into the three separate spheres of *science, morality and art*. Since that time the modern world has basically been living in *three separate domains*, each arranged under specific aspects of validity and its internal logic: based on *knowledge, justice and taste*. “*There appear the structures of cognitive-instrumental, of moral-practical and of aesthetic-expressive rationality*” (Habermas, 1983: 9). Although all three domains were proclaimed independent and each oriented towards its own intrinsic logic and laws, science based on cognitive logic, and the instrumental rationality characteristic of this domain, has taken primary dominance over the rest two realms. It is characteristic of a social order of what we are used to call

in 16th century scholars denote the first signs of transformation of the image of the medieval cities, which implied that “the transition from medieval public spaces to a clearer system of Renaissance piazzas”, i.e. the processes when “open areas occupied by similar or repetitive uses were gradually replaced by more differentiated and regular squares”, which corresponded to a city’s “repolarisation” (Calabi 2004: 43). While the medieval city rather demonstrated the mixed use of the squares and was characterized by bringing together different activities into the same space, the modern spatial order of the cities was oriented rather to the ideas of the functional and spatial divisions among the city spaces, already formulated by Aristotle³. The modernist obsession with the principle of order, hygiene and aestheticization, led to the vanishing of street vending and “cleansing” of marketplaces in European cities. In according to Dennis (2008), the problem of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century urban managers “was their inability to distinguish between disorder and diversity”, they assumed in fact that “any violation of their ideal of public order necessarily equated with anarchy” (Dennis 2008: 146).

Thus in medieval towns market activity was complex and included lots of different types of interactions and events, so market squares served as theater stages as well. It was a location of urban festivities and carnivals, as well as a place where vagrant musicians and strolling actors presented their performances to the townsfolk. Consumption of goods and foods, and theater were at that time two parts of the same phenomenon—of public life of the town. Kings, nobles and town’s rabble entertained themselves more or less in the

‘Western civilization’. The status of moral and expressive rationalities intrinsic to the two other domains maintained was legitimate but secondary.

³ Aristotle associated public life of the city and citizens to the freedom understood in terms of leisure, and therefore opposed it to the “functional”; that is why he distinguished and suggested to keep a spatial distance between the square for public life and a “market square”: marketplace is for him an area where business is done, while the public square, “on its higher ground, is assigned on our plan to leisure: the market square belongs to the necessary activities” (Aristotle 1998: 279).

same way and the same spaces. The division between entertainment and trading activities took place only in the beginning of Modernity (Fischer-Lichte 1995: 85) when the concept of theatre has constantly changed from the sixteenth century:

“The emergence of music halls took place through the differentiation of specific types entertainment, territories, the commercialization of their operation, the professionalisation of their labor force, the standardization of entertainments offered, the fixing and stratification of the physical and social positions of their audience (seats were gradually fixed to face the stage, and the architecture was renovated to permit clearer stratification between the pits and the boxes), and the syndicalisation and integration of their ownership structures.” (Berland 1992: 42)

Before that time fairs played the role of the most prominent entertainment events and spaces:

“the largest entertainment institutions were traveling fairs, complete with melodramas, menageries, tricksters, ballad hawkers, and peddlers of food and drink. The fairs were above all occasions for social and sexual transgression, for dramatic lapses of the taboos of everyday life.” (Berland 1991: 41)

By the mid 1850s, fairs were perceived as ‘out of date’, ‘too rowdy’ for the ‘respectable mid-Victorians’. A new style of performance and entertainment—very much social status-concerned and—was introduced. It implied certain architecture that effected the performance and audience: the latter “started as crowds, and ended, due to these architectural, economic and regulatory actions, as audience” (*ibid.*: 42). Markets and fairs were cut off as entertainment and had ceased to be acknowledged legal spaces for such activities; they were reduced to the single-dimensional activity of the exchange of goods with money.

Here one can observe the same process that affected the markets: specification and division of the former rich yet sometimes chaotic

complexity of social relations into particular isolated spheres with the hegemonic position of the economy over all of them: “The theater, in its original sense... was the medium of culture before culture got separated into its elements in modernity and the stage became separated from everyday activities” (Askegaard, Firat 1997: 135).

City markets and theaters were affected by the same processes: the emergence of the gap between the observers and participants: “Theater became, indeed, a “staged” event where most of people were left out as the audience” (*ibid.*: 135).

Richard Sennett considers this a “general malaise in modern society”, which he calls “passive spectatorship” as a part of the general “passivity” induced by the modernist ideology and represented in the city’s built environment in particular (Sennett 2010: 267):

“The major buildings in the city came to be conceived as objects to be looked at, to be viewed, as would other theatrical spectacle... The boundary between exterior and interior grew more defined in terms of inside and outside; the public at large was imagined on the outside, viewing the exterior without the expectation of penetrating the structure.” (Sennett 2010: 267)

In this sense, modernist spectatorship is rather associated to the phenomenon described by Guy Debord in his book ‘Society of the Spectacle’ (1967). But this notion urges us to draw a distinction between the modernist theatre as a social institution, and theatricality as a cultural phenomenon, a significant characteristic of the social interaction, an intrinsic idea of any performance, a feature or quality that could be “abstracted from theater itself and then applied to any and all aspects of human life” (Davis, Postlewait 2003: 1).

And, as we will show, the contemporary urban flea market, more than any other market activity of the present day, kept the complexity of medieval markets combining consumption with sociability, shopping with communication, trade with entertainment, and therefore preserved elements of carnival and theatricality, which it keeps on conveying into the current urban culture.

Berlin Mauerpark: flea market of a new concept

The culture of flea markets in Germany seems to be rich and its history is quite long. Historians point at a *Trempelmarkt* hold in Nürnberg since 1494 as a predecessor of German flea markets (Heller 1984, Damsar 1998a: 2). The blooming of flea markets in Germany was linked—as everywhere—to the wars, as it was called to supplement or replace the disturbed economic system of the country with people's own economic activities of trade and exchange. After the Second World War, flea markets were prospering in Germany and afterwards this wild and basically 'black' market activity developed into a 'secondhand market', which mostly existed in the indoor forms (Damsar 1998a: 2). Its current form, German flea markets, were received in the 1960s and 1970s, when open-air flea markets emerged in many cities and towns in West Germany⁴. In 2010, there were about 40.000 flea markets in Germany and 10% of Germans visited them two-three times per month (Kampmann 2010, Münz 2008).

Berlin seems to be a leader amongst German cities in the number of the flea markets it hosts. The official website of the city government is listing 17 flea markets in the city. In 2007, there was a map published in Berlin titled 'Flohmarkt-Stadtplan Berlin'; there were 41 flea markets indicated on it, and still there were several flea markets we knew, which were not on the map. Therefore one can estimate the total number of flea markets in the city as about 50, and some experts said they could be up to sixty⁵.

It seems to be a challenge to start a new flea market with such a level of competition and only really creative and fresh ideas have a chance for the future in this "dense" context. Still in 2004 two young

⁴ In East Germany this kind of private economic activity was bounded by the same anti-capitalist and anti-free market ideology and by similar regulations as in Soviet Union

⁵ However, it is to be mentioned, not all of them function every weekend, some only take place once a month or even more seldom.

business-concerned Germans, Lars and Oli started one more flea market—Flohmarkt am Mauerpark—one with a new concept that seems to be quite successful.

It is situated in a very interesting and meaningful part of Berlin—in Mauerpark (Wall park). For 38 years this area was divided into two parts by the Berlin Wall, and in the 1990s it was turned into a park, which was a memorial for the unification of Germany at the same time. Replacement of the Wall by an open green public space was called for symbolize the end of the split of Germany and its people. The market is stretched along the park from Bernauer Street, which is a border of two Berlin districts—Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte, towards the Gleimtunnel located already in another city district called Wedding.

Lars and Oli rented this land from the real estate agency that was not ready to invest in it at that time and was thinking about the possibility of “temporary use” (*Zwischennutzung*) of the area. The young businessmen found this area, its size and location just perfect for the realization of their idea, and since a flea market as a kind of a temporary use activity is very well known and widespread in the urban area development in Europe and in Germany in particular (Urban Pioneers 2007: 115), both sides found the deal appropriate.

On 11th of July, 2004 flea market at Mauerpark opened its doors with only 66 vendors. In 2 years this flea market became one of the biggest and the best-known flea markets in the city, mentioned in the majority of the famous tourist guides.

The market in Mauerpark operates only on Sunday. One can rent a stall here for 30 EUR or just come and rent a square meter for 7 EUR. There are about 500 vendors (400 stalls and about 100 to 150 sell from the ground). However, the number of visitors (as managers of the flea market have reported to us) can approach 30.000 per day!

In 2006–2009 when we did our fieldwork, Mauerpark flea market was dominated mainly by three categories of vendors in a comparable ratio:

- about one third were selling handmade art and designed goods,
- another third were re-selling second-hand, rubbish and knick-knacks picked up in the streets or empty premises,
- and the last third was formed by non-professionals –by people selling their own second-hand goods and clothes, coming here for fun and pleasure, in order to get rid of old stuff and to replace it with new things, some of which they bought right there.

The managers of the Mauerpark flea market claim they pay significant attention to the ratio of professional and nonprofessional vendors at their market—in order to keep it diverse and attractive, changing and dynamic (the market gets boring when people always find the same professional vendors with the same assortment here).

Of course, seasonal variations are to be taken into consideration: in winter and autumn, on rainy and cold days, professional traders dominate and represent 80% of all the vendors represented at the flea market, while on warm sunny days and all the summer through the number of non-professional traders increases and reaches one third of all vendors.

Managers of the Mauerpark flea market claim that its location is very important. Quite a different contingent of people dwelling in the three quarters of the city that share the flea market—Prenzlauer Berg, Mitte and Wedding—are represented here both among vendors and visitors, and the organizers of the flea market believe this ‘detonating mixture’ is a part of its reputation and commercial success.

Berlin Mitte mostly supplies this flea market with visitors, namely tourists and wealthy Berliners, hunting for souvenirs and ‘funny’ things.

Wedding furnishes the Mauerpark flea market with migrants and Berliners with Turkish, Arab, Polish or Bosnian background—both as vendors and consumers.



Figure 1

‘Prenzlberg’ too provides the market with both vendors and visitors, but of different types: it delivers another portion of foreigners (that is why one can hear a lot of English, Spanish and French in Mauerpark), though the majority of them have been local dwellers since the 1990s and are not tourists anymore. Since Berlin and Prenzlberg in particular became a Mecca for alternative- and sub-culture adepts, they moved in and stayed there. They are widely represented among vendors selling handmade design and art things: photographs, paintings and prints, clothes, bags, jewelry... In terms of visitors, Prenzlauer Berg also provides the market with young families with numerous children and dogs, as well as with artists and designers who come here for pleasure and communication and just trendy and freaky-looking yuppies, searching for odd goods like clothes or the interior elements, vintage sunglasses or rare LPs, or just hanging around and drinking beer and *mojito* with their



Figure 2

friends, whereas dozens of their children are romping in the mud and sand at the local playground.

Clearly the flea market in Mauerpark is a part of a cultural life of Berlin today: hundreds of youngsters hang around its four cafes and park area every Sunday; live music bands and live DJs play at 3 stages one can find at the flea market, and usually another couple of bands play in the park just next to the market. Open-air karaoke organized by some Irish guy in the park is also “at your service”. It seems to be the biggest flea market in Berlin and a very successful social and cultural project in the city.

The vendors themselves look not the least bit as extravagant as their goods: t-shirts, handmade bijouterie and jewelry, clothes, bags, photographs, pictures and so on, and so forth. A kind of match between the vendors and their goods produces an affect of harmonic complexity that results in a particular feel of the atmosphere.

Last but not least, the visitors of the flea market complete the picture. One of the specificities of almost any flea market is the very blurred border between vendors and customers, as the former are at the same time the latter and vice versa. A socially significant characteristic of the Mauerpark flea market ‘audience’ is that the majority of both its vendors and customers are mostly young people: curious young tourists and young dwellers of Prenzlberg—strange looking artists, designers and just freaky ‘Lebenskuenstlers’⁶.

Altogether, the public of Mauerpark flea market looks like a colorful, motley, noisy and merry crowd of alternative-looking young people. We must admit, we have never seen such a density of Berlin ‘freaks’ per square meter as at Mauerpark flea market on Sunday⁷, though it is much harder to describe it in words than to show it in pictures... The overall impression of the place and the people producing this particular atmosphere is described by one of the habitué vendor as follows:

“It’s special place. ... I do not know how they do it, but... It has special audience... Bohema people... The laws [that regulate the life in a wider society] does not work here... More crazy you look like—better it is, more strange you look—better you fit to this place” (designer, around 30 y.o., Russian, lives in Berlin for more than 10 years; sells hand made & designed clothes at Mauerpark flea market).

⁶ A very interesting German word and concept. It consists of two words—Leben—life and Künstler—artist, and characterize people who, on the one hand, not obligatorily do art professionally, but who try to make their entire life a piece of art itself, and on the other hand, people who know, so to say, the art of living, who live in a creative way and can enjoy live.

⁷ The word “freak” seems to be significant for Berlin’s culture and for Mauerpark’s culture in particular. This word was very often used in interviews with people about the Mauerpark flea market; but one also can see the word all around in the city’s visual-scape. For instance, the word “freak” is widely used in the names of the shops specialised in some strange and funny goods; the word is used as a logo and label for the designed t-shirts and bag prints. “Freak” therefore seems to be a typical Berlin inhabitant, a local ‘typus’ and a part of the Berlin image and identity.



Figure 3

These observations brought us to the idea that the concept of a ‘city scene’ (Blum 2003) could be applied to an urban market and a flea market in particular. Besides, it explains not only the phenomenon of the market itself, but also the relation between them and the cities where the markets are located. These relations in our view could be characterized as *reciprocal*: the more the flea market takes from the city, the more it gives back; it takes the city’s and its particular areas’ theatricality, reworks it and enriches, then gives it back to the city, making a significant input in the production of its atmosphere and charm.

A 'city scene'

In Germany the word *Szene* is used all the time in a mundane language. Germans speak about the 'club scene', 'fashion scene', 'café and restaurants scene', a 'city' or a 'district scene'...⁸ One can say that, in everyday German, this word is used pretty much in the same way as Goffman's description of 'stage' (1959). This connection brings the notions of action, interaction, theatricality and performance to the table. In fact, Alan Blum refers to Ervin Goffman, but wants to extend the concept of scene, on the one hand, and to make it more precise and to bind it to the urban experience, on the other hand.

Blum describes a 'city scene' as a purely urban phenomenon. Any café, bar, restaurant or nightclub could be called a city scene⁹, writes Blum, however not all of them play the role of a 'scene' in the city life, in fact. Blum is trying to catch and describe the characteristics distinguishing an 'ordinary' café or bar, or any other public place in the city from the 'true' city scene, such a place which "contributes to making a city itself a place" (p. 165).

First of all, a true city scene is always someone's project, considers Blum. There's some idea standing behind it and a vision of the scene that is put into practice by someone's will.

On the other hand, a city scene is always a part of the public life in the city. Therefore, a city scene by definition implies a contradiction and internal conflict between private and public. However, in accordance with Blum, a city scene is characterized by some "fundamental ambiguity" which eliminates this contradiction of public/private by making it more dialectical than irreconcilable. As an empirical phenomenon of city life, a scene is made from this conceptual tension, Blum says; a scene is a "city's way of making place for intimacy in collective life", so he speaks about the scene in terms of

⁸ Thus the application of this word as an analytical ('ethic') category in the analysis of the German city life seems quite 'natural' as it is an 'emic' category at the same time.

⁹ Actually, Blum says, city scenes tend to be represented in the guidebooks, and special maps and routes.

the “pleasure” of being private in public. He appreciates the notion of *shared experience*, so for him a scene is “a site of communicative energy where private affinities are collectivized as a shared practice that is enjoyable simply by virtue of being shared”. The scene, Blum believes, is what makes the experience of sharing privacy enjoyable in some “creative way” (p. 179). This creative way of bringing private matters to public Blum binds to the theatricality and performative character of a city scene.

Another key characteristic of city life is its intrinsic theatricality that emerges from the specificities of urban public life, namely from the very fact of the co-existence of strangers in the public city space. He believes the scene is potentially a practice that in some senses “dramatize the aesthetic, leisurely, and playful character of a mundane sphere” of a city life (Blum 2003: 182).

So, for him a scene is rather a *performance*, and the key feature of any performance he defines as a “reciprocal view”—“one comes to view as being seen seeing” (p. 172); so this mutual reciprocal view is at the same time a constitutive feature of a scene. What is performed at a scene, Blum says, is “not just shopping, art, poetry readings, music, dance and the like but seeing and being seen” itself (p. 174).

The notion of the “being seen seeing” Blum links to the extraordinary and transgressive experience of exhibitionism and voyeurism, which allows him connecting a scene to the concept of *transgression*. In the case of the city scene, transgression means crossing the borders—the borders of daily routine, the ones between private and public, between the seer and the one being seen, between the performers and audience. The scene is transgressive not just because it celebrates “countercultural values” or “lifestyles”, “but because its transgression resides in its exhibitionism and in ... its claim to mark itself off from the routinisation of everyday life” (p. 174). It binds his concept of a scene to the phenomena of carnival (Bakhtin 1941).

Surprisingly or not, we find the majority of these characteristics at the Mauerpark flea market of Berlin, which compels us to make assumptions about the scenic character of it.

The flea market as city scene

Although there are different types of flea markets in terms of ownership and intention, it is quite often *a project* that combines business and creativity, and Mauerpark flea market, as we have shown, is such a case.

Blum characterizes a city scene *as a dubious phenomenon*, of “the two-sided nature of its engagement, as both a way of doing business and as exciting departure from the routines of doing business, making pleasure functional and functional relations pleasurable” (Blum 2003: 188). In this mixture we find the best characteristics of a flea market, noticed already by the majority of scholars writing about it (Maisel 1974; Sherry 1990a, 1990b; Damsar 1998). A flea market by definition is a market place where money is exchanged with goods and vice versa. But just as promenade or as Arcades for Walter Benjamin, a flea market is at the same time a place for *flâneur*, a place related to the pleasure that is not closely connected to passive consumption, but rather to observation, to being private in public and to the ability (or potential) of encounter and communication with unfamiliar people—which is one of the classical definitions of the *public space* as the one of *sociability* (Sennett). Being at the flea market means being at a shopping place and promenade, at the market, and in a theater at the same time.

The flea market is a unique phenomenon of a city life where the gap and *contradiction between private and public* are expressed and somehow solved. The flea market offers a marvelous opportunity to be private in public, and provides anybody who comes as a vendor or a customer with what Baudrillard calls the “thrill of being both part of and apart from, the crowd” (Blum 2003: 180).

The market makes relations impersonal, but performance can start here at any time and it might make you an actor on the stage visible for everyone. Your conversation with a customer or vendor could be very short and superficial (you can enjoy your time and freedom of being alone), but be aware: at any moment a

superficial conversation about price could turn into a very emotionally expressed story of someone's unhappy life or broken love. The borders between the different forms of activities (trade and communication), between different modes of being at this space, between privacy and publicity are blurred and could be easily played. Anybody can turn the particular encounter into bargaining or into a small talk or performance, and thus—to turn the place itself into either market place or theater and carnival. At flea market you never know where you are, and what is going on, are you alone or a part of the crowd and action? It always has the potential to become another scenario.

Apart, the *dialectics of private and public* is represented at the flea market in *objects*—in goods. Here the pieces of someone's private life are brought and exposed in the public, for not only a glance but also for a gaze and discussion. A vendor selling his/her own things brings to the view of public his/her personality, private life, private space and habits embodied in the objects. It makes obvious and intrinsic for a flea market both the notions of voyeurism and that of exhibitionism. Shamelessness in the exhibition of privacy makes flea market vending a revealing performance.

Yet vendors here also have a power of 'doing seeing'—towards customers who are therefore seen in their turn while doing their own seeing towards the vendors and their goods. Therefore the flea market is an excellent example of the "reciprocal view", a natural site for the "being seen seeing" performance.

At Mauerpark the readiness for "being seen seeing" seems to be very obvious and easily performed by both vendors and customers. People come here to see and to be seen, they present and expose themselves, they show up, and expect the same from the others. Altogether these people produce the atmosphere and spell of this scene that attracts more performers and more idle lookers, some of whom, however, become a part of the scene pretty quickly (first via regularity, and then—by the participation in the theatricality and the local version of play of being seen seeing).

What hides behind this masquerade and surrealist picture? Our guess is that it is on the one hand a particular *lifestyle* or a set of such styles which are different and could represent different social groups and classes but share some conscious aspiration to *alternativeness* and *protest* against mainstream patterns (Crew, Beaverstock 1998: 303); and on the other hand, it is a particular *theatricality*, a wish for *performance* for the sake of performance itself. In Blum's terms, it is both the "*transgression of doctrine*", characterized by the celebration of countercultural values and lifestyles, "marginal ... doctrines or even subversive philosophies", but also the *existential transgression*, one that signifies the very break, not just with different lifestyles, but with the routinisation of everyday life (Blum 2003: 174).

Our experience of photography at Mauerpark proves the theatrical and performative nature of the flea market. There one sees a lot of visitors taking pictures, and vendors, as well as customers accepting it with patience if not with a pleasure—because this is a part of being seen seeing, a part of their scenic experience, of the rule of the game they accept. But it could look quite different at other flea markets.

The 'sceners' of Mauerpark seem to be *open* and *prepared for transgression, for crossing borders*: between public and private, between mundane life and theater, between their individuality and performed carnival characters, between the audience and performers. Both vendors and customers come to Mauerpark to see and to be seen, they present and expose themselves, and they show up, and expect the same from the others. Altogether, these activities produce the atmosphere and charm of this scene. Of course not all people are like this—there are different types of vendors, as we said. However, in general, the atmosphere of this market is mainly produced by those 'sceners' who came here 'to be seen seeing'.

Conclusion

We did not make our aim an exhaustive analysis of the flea market as a phenomena, neither a “thick” description of a particular flea market in Berlin. Our aim was to stress the role that flea markets can play—and often do—in the life of the city, and to prove that this role is, to a great extent, related to the carnivalesque and transgressive experience of a flea market. That is why we have chosen a ‘city scene’ concept by Alan Blum as an analytical tool: following Blum we believe a city scene is a phenomenon that unfolds urban theatricality and thus makes a city itself a ‘scene’. With the example of a case study of Berlin Mauerpark flea market we tried to discover and expose the scenic characteristic of the latter.

A ‘city scene’ concept allows the conceptualization of phenomenon such as the flea market, it explains why a flea market could be or could be not a scene, and why one flea market could be a city scene to a lesser extent than another—because it possesses (or does not) particular characteristics of a city scene to this or that extent.

On the one hand, any flea market seems to have a taste of carnival and a shade of theatricality: this is always a place where people come to be taken off the routine of their everyday life (probably, that is why flea markets only work on weekends), to experience something unusual.

On the other hand, a flea market could be more of a ‘scene’, when its participants love the taste of carnival and give it some space; when those performing are ready for shameless exhibitionism of their intimacy. Or a flea market could be more commerce-concerned (as some Berlin and other German flea markets are). Or it could have a taste of sorrow and regret—as Russian flea markets where the principle of “reciprocal seeing” is not admitted freely by sellers and is imposed on them instead, or is perceived as such (Pachenkov, Berman 2007; Pachenkov, Voronkova 2008).

At a flea market we see the unusual and evident merging between market and theater, between economic, societal and performance activities. One can find some traces of such a mixture at basically

any marketplace or even other spaces of consumption in modern cities¹⁰, but these relations between market (as economic activity) and carnival are never expressed so obviously and explicitly as at (particular) flea markets. This probably happens because at flea markets economic transactions of exchanged goods to money are surrounded by a myriad of transactions of a noneconomic character due to the deep involvement of social, cultural, personal and private spheres and activities in the flea market trade.

In the sense of a particular spirit and atmosphere caused by such mixture, the flea market is the most direct and close successor of the ancient (actually, medieval) urban marketplace that used to be a natural part, as well a source, of the entire urban theatricality.

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¹⁰ Think of music playing in shopping malls and departments stores' shops, especially those of "street fashion"; or of stages for fashion shows installed in some department stores aimed at mixing consumption with entertainment; or even think of the "shopping mall guerillas" the poor and the most productive consumers, who practice consumption for creative production of their identities and "whose creativity is not determined by the cost" (Friske 1989: 37).

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SOME PLACES WHERE MY HEART WAS BROKEN 2005–2010

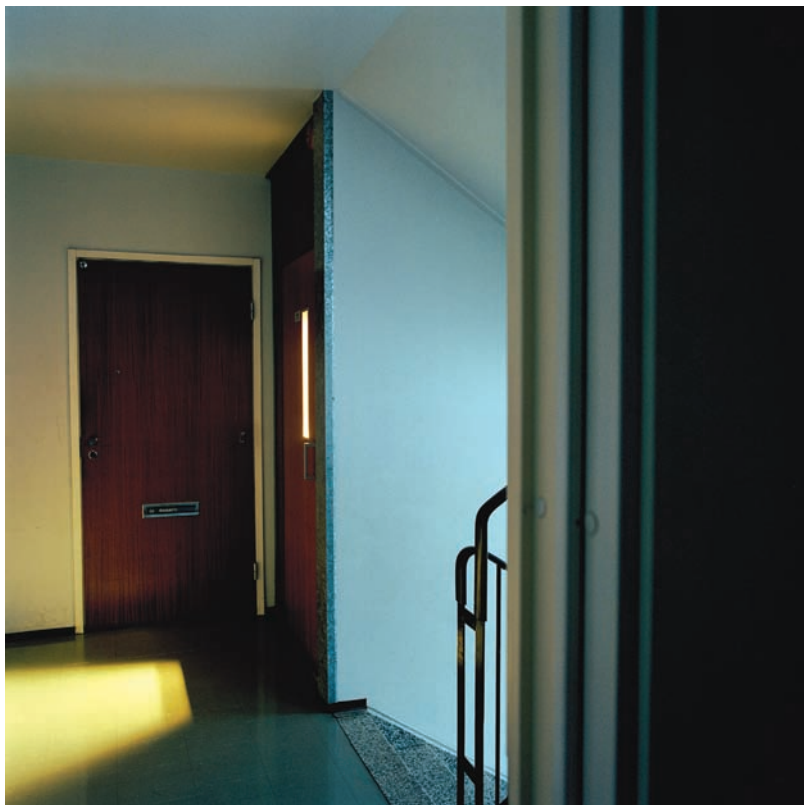
Anne Vatén

'Some Places Where My Heart Was Broken' is a series about situations, in which the truth came out time and time again. It is stories from different years with different characters, and it takes place in a couple of Finnish cities, or somewhere between them.

1x 60x60cm, 9x 30x30cm, 20x 15x15cm, lambda, aluminium



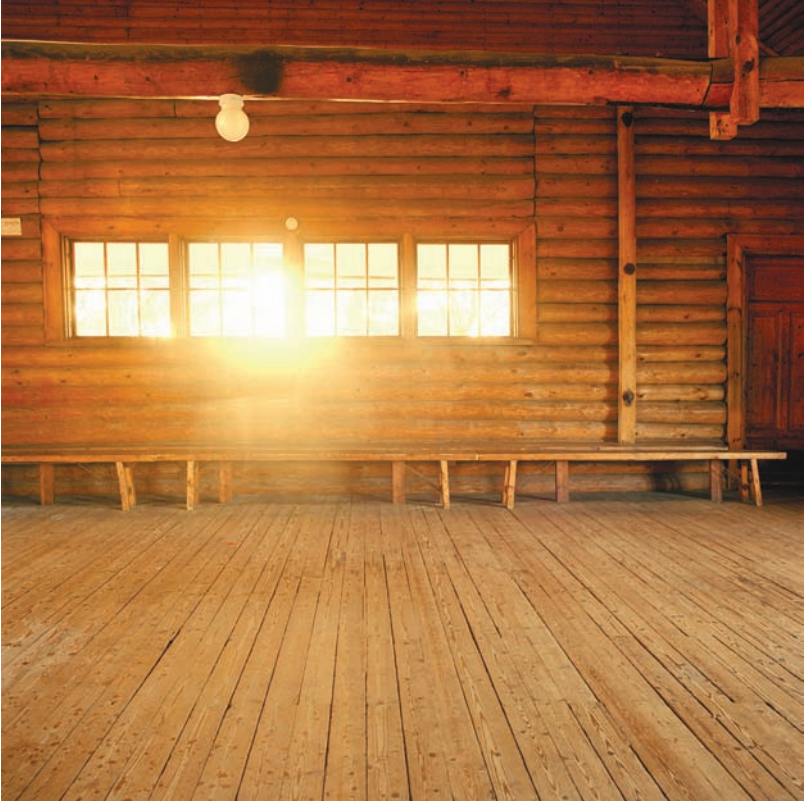
Right at the start of the First of May party he dumped me.



Kari and Jani came over to tell me that he had cheated on me.



He said he's back with his previous girlfriend.



I said let's dance some tango. He said no.



I offered him my help. He said he didn't need it.



I asked him at the garage disco if we could start dating. He said no.



He woke up and said we couldn't be together anymore.



I called him to ask when we could meet again. He told me that he had his own life as well, you know.



This girl came to tell me that he has a girlfriend back home, and that they are living together.



“I have to be alone for a while, so my eyes would become brighter again.”

“Fuck this! That’s something straight out of my exhibition!”

“Well make art out of this, too, then.”



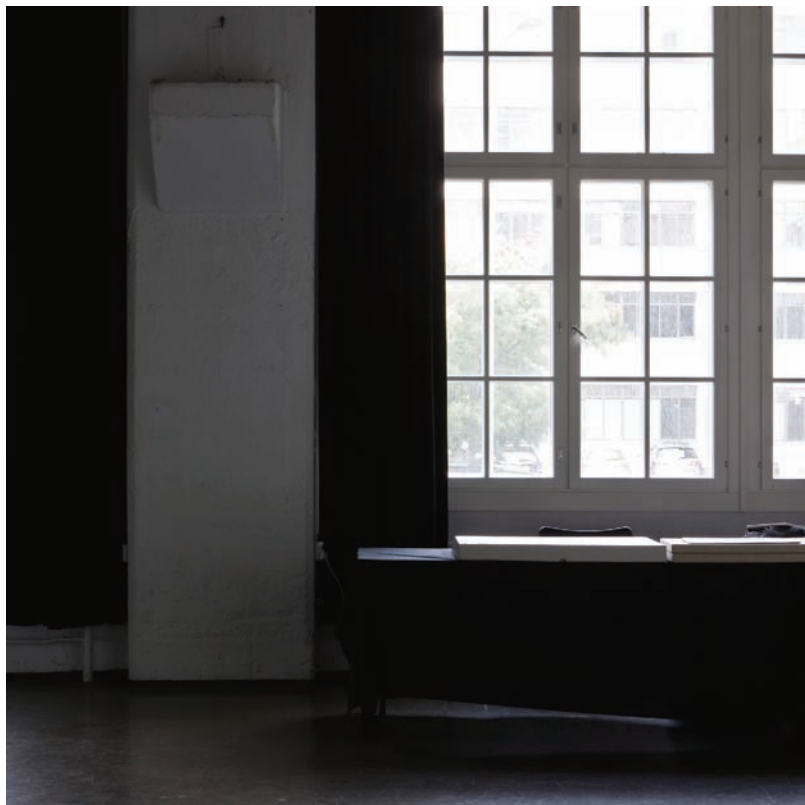
He said he isn't sure what he is doing tomorrow.



*He said good girls go to heaven, but bad girls get to go everywhere.
Mari was smiling beside him.*



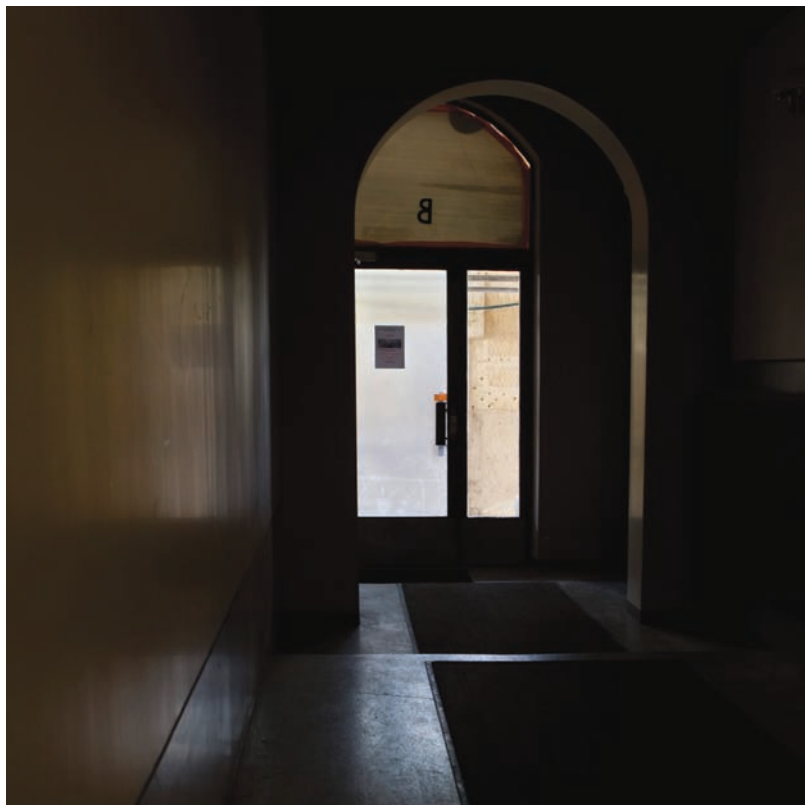
He said that the hickeys on his neck were made by his male friend Pertti as a joke.



He called me while I was putting up my exhibition and said that our relationship was over now.



He went home to pack. I was left standing by the grocery store.



He said that dating didn't seem to work for us anymore.



I saved a place for him beside me, but he went to sit at another table.



He said he wouldn't swap school photos with me.



We were talking on a phone. He would move abroad, I would stay here.



He said he loved me like a sister.



Katja told me over the phone that she had been kissing a boy, who had some girlfriend called Anne.



I gave him my phone number. He freaked out.



I phoned to let him know the time of my arrival. He told me he was going to spend midsummer with the boys after all, so I could take the next train back home.



He threw the ring into the snow.



I was waiting for an answer. No answer meant no.



I wanted to talk about our relationship. He thought that we had broken up already a month ago.

D.

ANOTHER SIDE OF FREEDOM

THE URBAN GEOGRAPHY OF SWEDISH NON-CITIZENSHIP¹

Helena Holgersson

Some kind of Gothenburgers

Ramberget is located on Hisingen in the northwest of Gothenburg and is a part of Keiller's Park. Standing at the top of this mountain, looking out, you can see large parts of the city, from Göta Älv Bridge in the centre to Älvsborg's Bridge in the west. This is where one of my informants brought me when I asked him if we could take a walk at a place in Gothenburg—anywhere—that meant something to him. Wherever he found himself he sought out high places, he told me, as we looked out from the viewpoint. He often returned to Ramberget, sometimes with friends to barbecue, sometimes on his own, just to get out of his small apartment. I pointed out my house on the other side of the river and we discussed different areas in Gothenburg. He had lived here for almost five years, mostly on Hisingen. However, now it seemed like he would have to move to Hjällbo, a high-rise suburb in the north-east of Gothenburg. Even though he had received a deportation order he had chosen to stay in Sweden and try to appeal the denial of his asylum application, and he spoke of himself as a "hidden refugee". It was late summer and on our way down we picked blackberries on the slopes.

¹ This article is a revised and extended version of Helena Holgersson, 'Hidden refugees' as municipal headache'. – Helena Holgersson, Catharina Thörn, Håkan Thörn, Mattias Wahlström (eds.), *(Re)Searching Gothenburg: Essays on a Changing City*. Gothenburg: Glänta Production 2010.

In the debate about housing for asylum-seekers, local politicians describe Gothenburg as a segregated city without much to offer. People will be able to find neither reasonable housing nor work here, they say (Lövkvist 2007). However, in the separate discussion of how Gothenburg is to be transformed from a harbour and industrial city to an event and knowledge city, the city is described as a place with enormous potential, often by the same politicians. The municipality emphasises the need to *decrease* the uncontrolled inflow of asylum-seekers—and thereby in the long run the number of “hidden refugees” and “immigrants”—while at the same time stating the ambition to *increase* the city’s population by tens of thousands to become a large city region. “Size is decisive for growth”, claimed the then-chairman of the municipal executive board, Göran Johansson, in an interview in 2006 in the *Göteborgs-Posten* (TT 2006).

When Saskia Sassen was asked to reflect on the future of urban sociology in 2005 she argued that the City, after having had a peripheral position during the second half of the 20th century had now become a strategic site to research social conditions once again. This is where a lot of issues come to a head (Sassen 2005a: 352). In contemporary Sweden, cities like Gothenburg are where questions concerning the presence of non-citizens are being debated, but also where people like my informants—literally—are making room for themselves in society. This is why I characterize Gothenburg as a *space for negotiation* (Cf. Lefebvre [1974] 1991). Using the concept playground when analysing people struggling to avoid being deported does seem insensitive. My informants rather describe Gothenburg as a *minefield*, but like other authors in this volume, I analyse the relation between urban space, everyday hardships and political mobilization. Although my perspective is not Marxist, this study can be placed within the field of critical urban studies, where the phrase “the right to the City” is central and the discussion revolves around issues of social equality with a focus on access to public space (Marcuse 2009: 189). With reference to literature on urban citizenship, in this article I look at how people like the man above actually make

use of Gothenburg. Geographer Engin Isin calls acts by which non-citizens challenge the law that discriminates against them *acts of citizenship* (Isin 2009: 372). People who inhabit a place must be considered some kind of citizens. What kind is what is being negotiated.

The sociology of everyday urban geography

The contracts that in different times and spaces have been called citizenship are very different. They have been tied to different units; in both ancient Greece and medieval Europe, citizenship referred to a person's bond to a city rather than to a state. In many cases people have been excluded; for instance, in ancient Greece only free men were recognized. And, as Thomas Marshall writes, focusing on Europe, citizenship came to include civil rights in the 18th century, political rights in the 19th century, and social rights in the 20th century (Marshall [1950] 1992: 8). Gøsta Esping-Andersen's ideal-typical description of different welfare regimes shows how social rights differ within Europe, depending on how relations between state, market and family/civil society are organized (Esping-Andersen 2002: 11ff). In my analysis of how citizenship is being negotiated today I mostly draw on the work of American researchers that emphasize the historical, cultural and legal structures that create the non-citizen, and with this figure as a lens they analyse how our society is organized (E.g. Bosniak 2000, De Genova 2002, Sassen 2005b, Coutin 2005, Varsanyi 2006). This is also my ambition. However, in reading the work of these scholars it is striking how the Swedish context differs from the North American context. Neither these American researchers nor I make national comparisons, but by introducing the concept of a *Swedish non-citizenship* I want to point out that non-citizenship—just like citizenship—differs between countries. De Genova argues that illegality is lived through the palpable sense of *deportability*, that is the constant risk of being deported (De Genova 2002: 439). I argue that this condition is always experienced and dealt with in a specific location.

In Europe, research on undocumented/irregular immigration started in the 70s, but did not really become a common field until the 90s. The situation in the Nordic countries was practically uninvestigated until a couple of years ago (Düvell 2010: 3). Consequently, I have not had much previous research to relate to, but parallel to my project a number of other scholars have been also been studying the Swedish context (e.g. Khosravi 2010, Sager 2011, Sigvardsdotter 2012). I have been trying to develop a *place-sensitive sociology*, and my analysis is based on interviews with 15 people (women and men, from 8 different countries, between the age of 18–50, most of them rejected asylum seekers, but a few still waiting for the verdict), “mental” maps that the informants drew of “their Gothenburg” (e.g. Soini 2001), notes from participant observations at voluntary organizations, walk-alongs (e.g. Kusenbach 2003), reports from parliamentary committees, records of proceedings in the Chamber and media coverage of immigration, asylum and integration politics (Geiryn 2000, Holgersson 2011). Throughout this chapter I will be *zooming in and out*, as sociologist Alex Rhys-Taylor puts it as he argues we must not think we can make sense of social formations by looking at the city from above, starting with some ethnographic illustrations of how paradoxical the societal position of non-citizens is in a Swedish context (Rhys-Taylor 2010: 8).

Swedish non-citizen paradoxes

“HIDDEN” | VISIBLE

A man around 35-years-old works in a small neighbourhood shop in one of Gothenburg’s high-rise suburbs. I have spent some afternoons there with him. On the way home from work, people stop to buy cigarettes, snuff, soda and maybe an evening newspaper. They never need to say what they want. When he sees them in the doorway, he immediately picks out their items, and then he writes how much they have shopped for in a notebook he keeps under the counter.

Probably none of these customers has ever thought that he could be a “hidden refugee”. The concept is clearly linked to expressions such as “underground” and “outside society”, and it creates a notion of spatial demarcation. It also makes the presence of this group in Gothenburg seem somewhat mythical.

“ILLEGAL” | LAW-ABIDING

Living under the threat of deportation one always has to have a valid ticket on the tram. If someone gets caught by the ticket inspector and cannot be identified, the police are called in. Although non-citizens are sometimes referred to as “illegal”, they are probably among Sweden’s most law-abiding citizens. At any rate, they are if you ignore the fact that they have not accepted their deportation orders and are referred to the black housing and labour market. They cannot take any risks. A man I interviewed laughingly told me how he had trouble getting his friends to keep to the speed limit when they drove somewhere together.

POLITICAL OBJECT | POLITICAL SUBJECT

On 7 May 2005, the campaign *Flyktingamnesti 2005* (Refugee Amnesty 2005) organised protests in cities around Sweden. When the Utlänningsnämnden (Aliens Appeals Board) was replaced by the Migrationsdomstolar (Migration Courts), the campaign’s goal was to get the government to give residence permits to those asylum-seekers who had been refused by the previous system. Thousands of people participated. In Gothenburg, the protest march started at Götaplatsen on the main street Avenyn and went to Gustav Adolfs torg. I met two people in the crowd I had previously interviewed. Today, non-citizens are the subject of heated political discussion, but at the same time they themselves can be very politically engaged. Another of my interviewees had done volunteer work with homeless people in Gothenburg during his time “in hiding”.

REFUSED | RETAINED

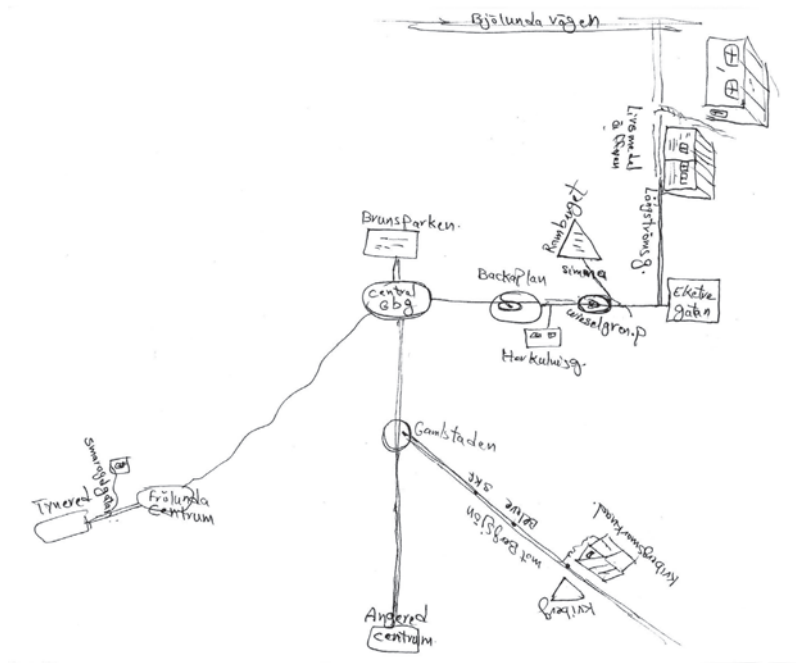
A man said that during the years he had been “hiding” from the Swedish authorities in order to avoid being deported, he had successfully focused on his music. His video—filmed in a park in Gothenburg filled with summer flowers—had been shown on international satellite channels from the region where he had grown up, which had led to offers of concerts in Canada, the US, Germany and England. Various TV shows had also invited him to perform and be interviewed, but since he did not have a residence permit, he was forced to say no. “Hidden refugees” have no right to live in Sweden but at the same time they are stuck here (if they want to continue applying for asylum, that is).

GUEST | RESIDENT

After each interview, I asked the person to draw a map of “his or her Gothenburg”. The man who drew the map below is the same man who took me to Ramberget for a walk, and he also included this mountain in his drawing. He had lived in Gothenburg for over five years and his map stretches over large parts of the city and includes stores, a sports hall, a market, parks, two shopping centres and a number of places where he and his friends live and have lived. He is not recognised as a resident, but he is hardly a guest.

HUMAN | CITIZEN

Sighing, one woman recounted how she was once asked for her national identity number when she was picking up a wristwatch that she had had repaired at a watch shop in Gothenburg. Another interviewee had been refused the purchase of a computer in instalments for the same reason. The *last four digits* of the identity number can be said to symbolise Swedish citizenship (or in any case a residence permit). Without them, a person has very limited access to the



Map A

fine-meshed social security net. What makes people like my interviewees so hard to handle bureaucratically is that they are people without being citizens. And judging from their stories, it seems that in a Swedish context, exclusion is not limited to the public sector.

GOTHENBURG AS A SPACE FOR NEGOTIATION

It is in this web of paradoxes that the Swedish government and Gothenburg municipality have to handle the presence of non-citizens. Today, thousands of people live in Sweden without legal permission to do so. “I don’t want it to be this way”, said the Social Democratic then-minister of health Ylva Johansson in 2005 during a radio debate about the right of “hidden refugees” to get health-care. (Fridén 2005) From the state’s perspective, the ideal situation

would be that everyone whose applications for asylum are rejected accept the fact and willingly leave the country. However this is not the case. Since the end of the Second World War, Sweden has grown accustomed to its role of international role model and tries to get *other* countries to agree to and follow various conventions regarding human rights. A few years ago, however, the Swedish Government was heavily criticised by the UN's special reporter Paul Hunt because it offers "hidden refugees" emergency healthcare only and also makes them pay for it themselves. Hunt said that this did not follow the guidelines set out by the UN's Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) (Hunt 2007).

But Swedish policy is completely understandable within the frame of the Scandinavian welfare model, which, more than other systems, is built around *the citizen*. In the radio debate mentioned above, Johansson explained that if Sweden were to offer "hidden refugees" education and healthcare, as is the case in many other European countries, there would be a risk of creating a society with first-class and second-class citizens, a development she does not want to see in Sweden (Fridén 2005). In order to avoid what Johansson calls "parallel systems", the country is using a lot of resources to *enforce* the rejections; that is, to make sure that the rejected asylum-seekers actually leave the country. The consequence is that *because of* general welfare—which was created to guarantee everyone the same provision—it is in many respects more difficult to live in Sweden without legal permission than it is in other countries. This distinguishes the *Swedish non-citizenship*.

Scholar of cultural studies Ien Ang suggests that while nations can be viewed as imaginary communities, cities can be understood as *concrete realities*. They cannot control their borders, but are nevertheless to some degree responsible for the people who reside there. Even if the setting of laws on immigration and asylum takes place at a national level, it is in big cities that the consequences become visible (Ang 2006). Here one cannot wish away people. Like geographer Monica Varsanyi, I have looked for examples of how the presence

of “hidden refugees” is dealt with at the local level, and I found that governmental authorities in Gothenburg, at the same as offering “hidden refugees” a certain amount of provision, attempt to make it harder for them to settle. (Cf. Varsanyi 2008)

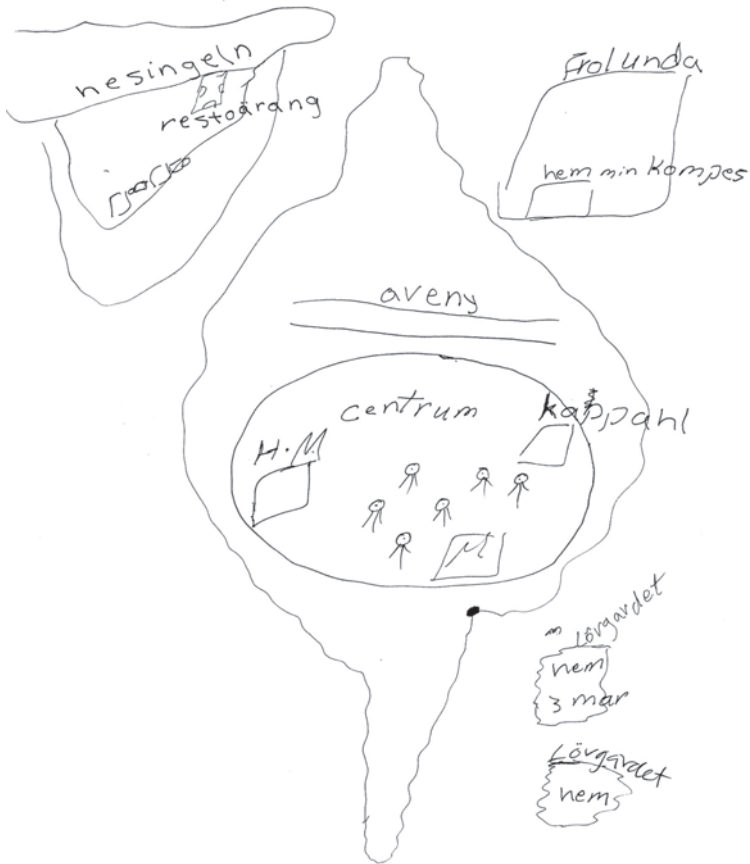
In 2006, without a national directive, the Sahlgrenska University Hospital decided to offer every patient the emergency care required, regardless of his or her ability to pay. At seminars, the staff got information about how this would impact routines. (Leikin 2006) Also, with reference to the Convention on the Rights of Children, many headmasters in the Gothenburg municipality welcome “hidden” children to their schools, even though they are not economically compensated for this. (Sjögren 2007) At the same time, Gothenburg, primarily along with Malmö and Södertälje (south of Stockholm), is pressuring the government to minimise the opportunity for asylum-seekers to arrange their own housing, because in practice this system leads to many people moving to “immigrant-dense suburbs” in big cities (e.g. Johansson, Lago, Reepalu 2007). In the spring of 2008, the local municipal housing companies introduced laws regarding how many people can live in each flat, a measure clearly justified in terms of refugee-policy (Förvaltnings AB Framtiden 2008). The local authorities’ various—and often contradictory—ways of handling the presence of “hidden refugees” in Gothenburg cannot be easily summarised. It is hard to see a linear development. The situation can instead be characterised as *continuous negotiations*.

A local geography of exclusion

Having zoomed out, looking at how national and local authorities deal with the presence of non-citizens I will now zoom in again. In order to fully identify the Swedish non-citizenship you need to look at ethnographic encounters. As already mentioned, deportability cannot be discussed without reference to global structures, but that does not mean that it can be characterized as a general phenomenon. In order to pass unnoticed my informants needed knowledge

of, firstly, national and local legislation and policies, and secondly, the specific urban space through which they had to navigate. What sociologist Les Back refers to as *the local geography of racism* is a landscape where places are coded as dangerous or exotic based on their inhabitants' ethnicities (Back 2007: 51). My informants also refer to such patterns. In their stories of dangerous and safe places, the categories of "immigrants" and "Swedes" are central. "Immigrants" is here a very ambivalent category since they are the people that both had helped them in finding apartments and jobs, and the ones that had charged too much rent and paid very low salaries. The people I interviewed had for the most part been staying in the northeast high-rise suburbs. This is the part of Gothenburg with the highest proportion of the population born outside Sweden, and also where the incomes are the lowest. By the sea in the southwest the statistics are reversed in both of these respects. To my informants "the suburb" seems offer anonymity since they blend in there appearance-wise, but for those who considered "immigrants" more likely to report them than "Swedes" it was considered an insecure environment.

My informants describe Gothenburg as a place in which they *chose* to live in, but the suburbs where many of them had found apartments and rooms as somewhere to which they had been *deported*. When I asked one woman where she had been staying, she answered: "Not in Bergsjön". Places are seldom described without reference to their inhabitants, and Bergsjön is one of the most "immigrant dense" and poor areas of the city. Using Loïc Wacquant's conception this suburb in the northeast of Gothenburg can be characterized by a *territorial stigmatization*. (Wacquant 2008: 183) But navigating through a geography of exclusion does not just mean trying to avoid places where you might get arrested or that reinforce one's subordination, but, as Les Back emphasizes, also trying to create spaces where one can just be. (Back 2007: 70) Ramberget was such a place for the man I initially described. For a woman it was a shopping centre in the inner city. It makes up the most part



Map B

of her map (Map B), and this was also where she took me for our walk-along. In the crowd she forgot about her troubles for a while, she told me.

The three areas around the shopping centre in the map above are all high-rise suburbs in the outskirts of the city. Generally, the part of Gothenburg that is missing in the informants' maps is the garden suburbs by the sea. Even though the beaches are public, as a whole these areas are not somewhere people go without an invitation, and

most of my interviewees did not seem to know anyone who lived there. Knowing how central the sea is in the marketing of Gothenburg I still find this remarkable. What the informants drew can be characterized as the *local geography of exclusion*. The tourist brochures and the maps my informants drew shows parallel images of the city, but also different parts of it—the seaside and the high-rise suburbs respectively. Interestingly though, they both include the inner city.

Conclusion

Many researchers on Swedish immigration policies are pointing to the ambivalence between the ideals about a sustainable welfare system and multiculturalism as well as a growing structural class and ethnicity-based inequality. (Schierup, Hansen, Castles 2006) This issue is brought to a head in cities. (E.g. Sassen 2005a, Back 2007) Sweden is now a part of the EU, and during the last decades the welfare regime has changed in the direction of what Esping-Andersen calls the liberal welfare regime. In Sweden you find a collective narrative that looks nostalgically back at better days when the country supposedly “had it all”. (Abiri 2000: 25) Interestingly enough my informants in Gothenburg also refer to this narrative. For instance, one man told me of how refugees were met with flowers on arrival to Sweden in the 60s, 70s and 80s. With that background, it is understandable that the critique by UN special reporter Paul Hunt attracted so much attention in 2007. The on-going transformation of the welfare state is a growing field of research in Sweden, and given the image of Sweden as a “model country” that has often been presented in sociology, these studies provide interesting case studies in international discussions on national politics (e.g. Larsson, Letell, Thörn 2012) as well as urban politics (e.g. Thörn 2011). Hopefully this article does as well. Focusing on non-citizens many of the dilemmas that Swedish politicians are facing today, nationally and locally, become visible.

During the past five years the expression “without papers” has come to challenge the expression of “hidden refugees” as the most common way of referring to people risking deportation in Sweden, and I argue that it indicates that Swedish politicians and activists have come to consider the issue of non-citizens’ living conditions as more of an international one than before. While “hidden refugees” is a product of Swedish immigration policies that have been very focused on asylum, “without papers” is rather connected to the French social movement and expression “sans-papiers”. Talked of as “without papers” my informants appear as more active than if they are talked of as “hidden refugees”. However, within this discourse they might not necessarily be seen as in need of protection. Also, after the nationalistic party the Sweden Democrats entered the Swedish parliament in 2010 the expression “illegal immigrants” has become more frequent in the political debate, and this connects Sweden to yet another, more xenophobic, international discourse. All together, this provides an illustrative example of what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe refers to as a *discursive struggle*, and of how dependent political solutions—and more broadly, democracy—are of how political problems are defined (Laclau, Mouffe [1985] 2001).

To summarize, the situation that my informants find themselves in is structured by legislation, policy and discourses on multiple scales, for instance international agreements such as the Geneva Convention and the Human Rights Declaration and EU legislation such as the Dublin Regulation and the Schengen Agreement. At the local level it is structured by Sweden’s social democratic welfare regime and the dominating discourse of “hidden refugees”, and in Gothenburg by local policies such as Sahlgrenska University Hospital’s system for registering people without the personal number and the Public Transport’s ticket checks. I argue that this can be characterized as the Gothenburg version of the *Swedish non-citizenship*. In their everyday life my informants navigate through its urban geography, and through these *spatial practices* they become co-producers

of this space. Lefebvre's spatial triad has two more elements—*representations of space and representational spaces*—and while cities are never planned for non-citizens this group is no doubt part of its contemporary imaginaries. (Cf. Lefebvre [1974] 1991) Consequently, my informant's choice to reside in Gothenburg, although they have been denied a residents permit in Sweden, might be considered as an act of citizenship. (Isin 2009) In this article I argue that non-citizenship ought to be studied ethnographically, in different national contexts and preferably in cities.

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THE SPANISH 15M MOVEMENT AND THE RETURN OF THE POLITICAL

Patricia García Espín and Manuel Fernández García

I. Introduction

Since 2011, a cycle of protests has emerged in Spain. The mobilizations were headed by the social movement known as “*Indignad@s*” (“*outraged*” in Spanish) and the “*15M*” (as the first demonstration took place on May 15th, 2011). This social movement started with a variety of *pro-democratic demands* (fighting corruption, democratic change, popular participation) and *socio-economic demands* (the right to a decent housing and employment) in the context of a deep economic crisis. Within a year, the *15M* social movement enlarged its demands and expanded into the territory, and it devised a thorough critique of the political system and the management of the economic crisis. Did the *15M* put back on the table the discussion on politics beyond the mere “technical management” of public affairs? Did we witness a return of “the political”?

The *15M* is contextualized in a new wave of protests emerging in 2011 throughout the Western world, a wave which included #*Occupy London*, #*Occupy Wall Street*, *Indignati* in Italy and *Geração à rasca* in Portugal. These movements had in common its pro-democratic discourse and an intensive use of TIC’s for mobilization. They made the Internet not only a communication tool but a specific dimension in which the protest developed, while squares, neighborhoods and public places were also the scene of the contention. The *15M* reflected a paradox that deserves to be thought: we are facing a *pro-democratic movement* in a country with a consolidated liberal-representative democracy. Can we learn something about *this paradox* (Brown 2010)?

To understand this paradox we will work with the concept of “post-political consensus” (Rancière 2006, Žižek 2007). The idea underlying this theoretical frame is that “the political”, that is the fundamentals of the political and social systems, have been increasingly excluded from the public discussion in the context of present Western countries. The political fundamentals by which Occidental societies were organized were left apart under an alleged technical and managerial consensus. This consensus is what it has been called the “*post-political condition*” (Rancière 2006). The main thesis of this article is that new type social movements such as the *15M* have produced a *return of the political* in the public discussion since they have brought the fundamentals of the political system under consideration. After the *15M* movement, it seems like if the political, economic and social fields could be challenged in a legitimate way. Are we meeting the end of the “end of history” ideology?

To work with this hypothesis we will analyze two key aspects of the *Indignad@s* movement. Our strategy consists, firstly, in assessing the precedents and the context in which the *15M* emerged. Secondly, we tried to isolate some of the political attitudes which were mobilized by the *15M* and that gave, in turn, political legitimation to the protest. As Rebughini has written, “the critique is born in a local, situated and contingent way, but in order to consolidate and defend itself it needs legitimation, and therefore needs to refer to more universal types of validity and normativity that are transcendent to the context” (Rebughini 2010). So we were interested in two moments of the protest: *its creative-conjuncture moment* and *its universalization and legitimating attempts*.

2. The Background: from Genoa to # Sol.

The Spanish mobilizations of May 15th, 2011 are impossible to understand without taking into account two factors. On the one hand, the social movements’ recent history favored the confluence of multiple activist networks both locally and at national level. These networks

paved the way to the existence of a common *know-how* based on ideas and practices. At the local level, this confluence made possible the crystallization of the 15M beyond the initial call. Furthermore, as we will discuss in the next section, 15M provided support to a number of demands that made sense in the Spanish context. Putting the focus on concerns shared by an important sector of the Spanish population and building on an inclusive praxis, the 15M was able to mobilize a large number of people and to achieve high levels of acceptance.

In this sense, surveys showed that the social movement enjoyed a deep sympathy among the population and a high percentage said to have participated. According to *Metroscopia* survey, the 64% of respondents endorsed the 15M in June 2011.¹ In another survey in October 2011, a 73% of respondents felt that *l@s Indignad@s* were right in their demands.² This survey also revealed other interesting data: "A 20% of those surveyed by *Metroscopia* said that they had participated in the 15M protests and only 8% had attended to its assemblies. The 63% said that this protest should continue". The fact that 20% of respondents declared to have participated in 15M protests is an extraordinary event in the contemporary Spanish history.

The success of the protest is partially explained by the practices promoted by the movement, though the novelty of these practices is questionable. The analysis of the *repertoire of practices* of the 15M movement is consistent with the *modular development* of the social movements proposed by Tarrow (2001). In this sense, we can put the 15M repertory of practices close to the anti-globalization movement (Tilly 1986). As it is well known, the *anti-globalization movement* appeared with the *anti-WTO* protests in Seattle, 1999, and it dissolved in 2003, after the large demonstrations against the Iraq (Calle

¹ Metroscopia. 'El 15M mantiene su apoyo ciudadano'. – *Survey Report Metroscopia for El País*, June 2011. http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2011/06/26/actualidad/1309109837_951838.html.

² Metroscopia. 'El 73% piensa que los indignados tienen razón'. – *Survey Report Metroscopia for El País*, October 2011. http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2011/10/23/actualidad/1319392784_983542.html

2007; 2003; 2005). Within this global movement, we can find most of the practices and methodologies that the *15M* and the new-type protests have used. There is a social inheritance. Thus, the activist stock in the *15M* was identified, for example, in the intensive use of assemblies, the horizontal ways of linkage, and certain mechanisms such as the use of deaf language to manage large meetings. The consensus as an instrument to make decisions was also part of an old activist know-how (Della Porta 2009).

Horizontalism, popular participation and non-violence were among the practices of a substantial part of the anti-globalization movement (Della Porta, Diani 2012). In addition, massive *symbolic blockades* over the *G-8 Summits* were the hallmark of the protests and they have been incorporated by the *15M* in different moments. For example, peaceful blockades took a place in the constitution of municipalities in June 2011 after local elections. Later, when the Catalan Parliament passed the first package of budget cuts, blockades happened too. This symbolic confrontation with the “constituted power” (Iglesias, Errejon 2004) was a clear legacy though it was implemented by the *15M* with a constant concern about the nonviolent character. In this sense, there was *a learning process*, an evolution from the late 90’s. The possibility of avoiding criminalization and to denounce repression also evolved. Intensive and tactical use of ICTs enabled the social movement to break the media silence and to generate its own contents in real time, being able to denounce repression with graphic and visual documents circulating worldwide.

At the local level, there were also a number of precedents that help to understand how the *15M*’s *repertoire of practices* forged. The starting point of the anti-globalization movement in Spain was the *Acampada Del 0.7* (the “0.7 Camp”) in 1994.³ Camping in public

³ The “0.7 Camp” was an initiative organized by the *Plataforma 0.7* which main objective was to increase the Official Development Aid to the 0.7 of the GNP. To find more information: <http://www.plataforma07.org/>

places appears to be a constant in subsequent protests.⁴ Another mobilization anticipating the practices of 15M was the protest of the March 12th, 2004 outside the headquarters of the governing PP (*Popular Party*) after the Islamist attacks on Madrid. This mobilization was performed before parliamentary elections as the 15M was, defying the “Day of Reflection” (a day before voting when political activity is forbidden to leave way to citizens’ individual deliberations).

March 2004 was also one of the first examples of the tactical use of new technologies for mass mobilization (in that case, a chain of text messages was the main tool for the dissemination of the call) (Sampedro Blanco 2005). But it was repeated for the diffusion of the *V de Vivienda*⁵ movement (the right to housing protests) in May 2006. They organized public meetings and “sittings” in public places in the downtown of cities. There are some other similarities between the *Indignad@s* and the right to housing movement, for example, the call for decentralized meetings and rallies at the local level, the use of non-partisan messages (no flags, no party or unionist symbols), a deep concern regarding social marketing (slogans such as “*¡No tendrás casa en tu puta vida!*”, “you won’t have a house in your fucking life!”). All this iconography and provocative language was recovered by the 15M movement.

From this point of view, we can say that the 15M was a confluence of old and new trajectories and popular knowledge. But the “activist stock” was pledged, they chose not to give visual prominence to their militancy and organizations. There was a desire to do *tabula rasa* to include all demands into a unitary space without divisive “flags”. Nevertheless, militants brought with them an important experience

⁴ For example, in a famous protest of the workers of the old telephonic company Sintel. They camped for months in the center of Madrid. More information in the website: http://elpais.com/diario/2001/08/04/economia/996876005_850215.html (06.16.2012).

⁵ The right to housing movement “*V de Vivienda*”: http://madrid.vdevivienda.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=19&Itemid=93.

http://madrid.vdevivienda.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=43&Itemid=57 (06.16.2012); <http://www.sindominio.net/v/> (06.16.2012).

and *know-how*, both in the coordination of mobilizations, building teams for communication, legal-mediation, strategy-building... as for participatory techniques in assemblies. This *know-how* shared by old militants was taken up by the new movement and replicated in social networks. But apart from this methodology to practice the protest, collective action is fed with discourses and feelings which are mobilized and that give sense to the experience of participants (and supporters). In the following epigraphs (3, 4 and 5) we will deal with some hypothesis about the resonance of 15M and its discursive framing.

3. Breaking the *post-political consensus*? A philosophical critique

In Spain, the economic crisis was having a major impact socially and politically. This critical scenario explains much of the success in the mobilization: a very high unemployment rate, particularly, among the youth, the housing bubble burst and the public debt problem. The fall of the GNP produced a significant increase in the number of unemployed people (more than 24% of the active population in 2012⁶) and the risk of housing evictions for thousands of people.⁷ The political scene was not in a better juncture: Western governments moved from the announced “reform of capitalism” (in the G-20 Summit), to the economic recipes for national debt control, the management of public debt speculation and budget cuts. The economic collapse of Greece was the point of no return in this period and Spain was pretty close to crossing the line. Clearly, the economic depression and the management of it drove the political arena to

⁶ Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, INE (06.16.2012).

⁷ In 2011, the unemployment rate reached 20.8% of the workforce, with a 46'12% of young unemployment (EPA, Instituto Nacional de Estadística, July 2011). The number of families with all active members in unemployment was 1,367,000 (EPA, 2nd quarter, 2011) and 15,491 families were evicted from their houses only in the first quarter of 2011 (PAH, *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca*, July 2011).

a crisis. The imposition of “technical governments” in Italy and Greece and the adjustment plans required by supranational bodies, presented neoliberal reforms as the only possible way. There is no discussion about alternatives because there was just one possible way, a “technical solution”.⁸

In this atmosphere⁹, the critique to the *post-political paradigm* emphasized the moral, non-neutral and non-technical character of neoliberal reforms: international markets, “austerity” policies, minimal State and cuts in social rights were not a consensual program based on scientific neutral accounts. According to *the post-political critique*, after the Soviet Union collapse, the neoliberal paradigm had reached a consensus among the Western elites. Discussions concerning the status of this political orientation were removed from the scenario of dominant politics. What were the moral fundamentals underlying the neoliberal program? Who were their beneficiaries? What were the possible alternatives?¹⁰ As Chantal Mouffe has written, “The limiting of democracy to a mere set of neutral procedures,

⁸ In November, The Guardian published an editorial which called attention to the “rise of technocracy” in Europe, specifically in Italy and Greece. This editorial offers a reflection on the character of technical governments: *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/nov/13/europe-rise-technocracy-editorial>. November 2011 (06.16.2012).

⁹ W. Brown (2010) characterized this panorama in the following terms: “We assist in large democracies to a merger between corporations and the political power, this merger goes through, for example: in a widespread outsourcing of the state functions that is felt from schools, to prisons and the army; in the elevation of the top executives of financial banking and the senior managers of companies for the posts of minister or head of cabinet; in the fact that the states are becoming the owners of incredibly large portions of capital, and especially in the fact that the state power is shamelessly fused to the project of the capital accumulation which is realized in the taxes, labor reforms, environmental, energy, social and monetary policies. As well, this alliance can be witnessed in the infinite flow of direct aid and grants that provide support to all sectors of the corporate capital. The population, *the demos*, can not calibrate or follow most of these changes, let alone challenge them or counterbalance them.” (Brown 2010: 62)

¹⁰ The case of Greece is illustrative in this respect. For this country, there is no alternative but the adjustment plan designed by the EU, the IMF and the WB. The President of the European Commission put it clear some weeks ago in the face of Greek elections. J. M. Durao Barroso, ‘Speech 12/362’. – *European Commission Press*, 06.05.2012.

the transformation of citizens into political consumers, and the liberal insistence on a supposed 'neutrality' of the State, have emptied politics of all substance" (Mouffe 1993: 111). The negation of critical voices to the neoliberal consensus led to the emptiness of politics itself. If there is not profound debate about different collective ends and horizons, what remains for politics? According to Mouffe, "the current blurring of political frontiers between left and right is harmful for democratic politics, as it impedes the constitution of distinctive political identities. This in turn fosters disaffection towards political parties and discourages participation" (*ibid.*: 5). Thus, the neglect of political conflict as an expression of existing social cleavages can lead to apathy, disaffection and low rates of political participation.¹¹

In the same intellectual current, some authors identified a decline in the quality of democracy. W. Brown (2010), for example, points to a *des-democratization process* in which the capacity of popular intervention in the government is increasingly limited. There are several devices which contribute to the separation between popular intervention and decision making: the influence of corporations over governments, the marketization of electoral campaigns, the extension of a *business rationale* to all State and community functions, the expanding power of executive and judicial bodies over deliberative ones, the erosion of the power of nation-States as a consequence of globalization, etc. (Brown 2010: 61–68). In summary, there are several processes which undermine the capacity of democratic communication and control, and the perception of internal and external efficacy among citizens.

¹¹ In the empirical literature about the causes and constraints of participation, the role of conflict is not clear. There are studies which make emphasis in the dissuasive character of political conflict (D. Munt, *Hearing the Other Side*. Cambridge University Press 2006). On the contrary, other research has found evidence of the activating role of the conflict, in this sense, people would participate more when controversial issues are at stake (F. Bryan, *Real Democracy: the New England Town Meeting and How It Works*. University of Chicago Press 2004).

Another characteristic of the post-political condition would be the predominance of technical and expert criteria in the arena of politics (Žižek 1999). Complex social conflicts are tackled as “technical problems”. In this sense, a groundbreaking study on North Americans’ attitudes toward political processes showed that a significant proportion of citizens preferred “governing experts [that] will implement decisions in the most efficient manner, and the public will not have to hear about delays, debates, compromises, gridlock, egos and agendas” (Hibbings, Theiss-Morse 2005: 158). Indeed, “the ideal form of government, in the opinion of many people, is one in which they can defer virtually all political decisions to government officials but, at the same time, trust these officials to be in touch with the American people and to act in the interest of those people” (*ibid.*: 159). According to this study, people did not want to participate in politics; they just wanted to have their problems solved by non-corrupt officials and experts. Although the data contained in this book has been criticized (Neblo 2010), we are interested in the way these political attitudes that Hibbings and Theiss-Morse call “*Stealth Democracy*”, represent the post-political condition in the field of political citizen attitudes. Post-political attitudes would consist in: *a*) citizens perceiving themselves as basically non “ideological” and “non-political”. There would be a generalized consensus about collective aims. Thus, *b*) people do not want to participate in politics and to defend their own interests (others can do it for them), and *c*) they prefer experts to define the agenda and the best solution for collective problems.

In Spain, there are some recent works that approach the attitudes and preferences towards political processes. Though Spanish prefer more participatory processes, they are also quite pro-experts and pro-technical criteria (Font *et al.* 2012: 107). In other words, Spanish people want more popular participation in the political processes, while more experts and informed politicians at the same time. Consequently, we can say that post-political attitudes were not as strong among Spaniards as they are among Americans.

Chart 1: *The main ingredients of the post-political consensus according to critical theory*

Post-political condition main ingredients
Neoliberal Reforms
Predominance of Technical Solutions and Expert Criteria
Limited popular participation
Post-political attitudes among citizens

Source: own elaboration

Did the *15M* social movement react to this political frame? How did the social movement collide with it? Political actors, including social movements, emerge in a very concrete playground, with its particular rules, collective aims, functions and sources of legitimacy. Each playground reflects stable relations of forces, in this case, social and political forces. Thus, the *15M* can be interpreted as the rise of a new actor which was born as an outsider but entered in the game redefining the rules and putting them—partially—into question. But, how was this possible?

4. The social movement looks for legitimacy: an approach to a complex problem

In its origin, the *15M* could be conceived as a heterogeneous claim against the post-political consensus (see the chart below).¹² But why was its campaign so mobilising? Why did its slogans connect to so many people? We are interested in the explanation of the *15M*'s success and its high popularity in such a short period of time. Actually, the protest started in May 2011 and in October surveys reported that

¹² For example, the Manifest of *DRY (Real Democracy Now!)* which was so famous at the beginning of the protest. This document suggests that the protest was born as a reaction against the neoliberal consensus and the management of the crisis. To read more: <http://www.democraciarealya.es/documento-transversal/> (05.10.2012).

more than 70% of people had sympathy towards it and 20% said to have participated). To understand this favorable attitude towards the *Indignad@s*, we need to address the climate of opinion and the political attitudes in which social mobilization emerged. In some way, this is an attempt to go from the *moment of creation* of the 15M, its very juncture (financial crisis + recent history of the social protest) to the *moment of universalization and legitimacy*. This is, the moment in which the social movement seeks to legitimate itself through the connection with popular feelings and beliefs.

We assume that a social movement is a *product* (Melucci 1996) of a system of action based on collective ends, means and an *environment or climate*. Collective actors bargain along the time the environment in which they move (this is: they negotiate the playground), as well as other aspects of collective action. How are the negotiations / interactions with the environment? The *framing theory* (Snow, Benford 2000) helps us to explain the resonance of the social movements, the construction of public discourse frames, the alignments and the social protest cycles (Tarrow 2004). We can hypothesize that the 15M was the result of a process of "frame bridging" which involves linking the political actor to feelings and public opinions previously unarticulated and demobilized. The framing process involves catching attitudes and opinions already existing, to transform and mobilize them into collective action.

What feelings did the 15M movement "move"? What were the perceptions of the Spanish people about the political system? To what extent the 15M connected and absorbed the popular views on the political process?

Chart 2: *Some of the core ideas of the movement, at its origins in 2011*

Post-political condition	15M
Neoliberal Reforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Critique to the “privileges” of the political class - Social Reforms: distribution of employment, right to housing, quality public services of health care and education, progressive taxation, etc. - Bank control, public banking. - Libertarian interventions: squatting houses. - Self-management experiences
Predominance of Technical Solutions and Expert Criteria	Political alternatives to the financial crisis different to those of economic “experts”
Limited popular participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct Popular participation - Referendum - Participative Democracy - Internal democracy in parties - Critique to parties - Electoral reform
Post-political attitudes among citizens	Popular Mobilization Assembly Occupation of Public Space

Source: own elaboration

In the months leading to May 15th 2011, an investigation was carried out on the perception of political processes in Spain. Our team was responsible for the qualitative part consisting in several focus-groups in different cities, among different sectors of the population (socio-economic status, age, location, etc.). Participants in these focus-groups were asked about their perception of the political system and their preferences among different political processes (from more popular participation to less). The findings of this study were

revealing. Many of the discursive cornerstones of the 15M were “there” before May 2011. For example, the problem of corruption, the low value given to politicians, the concern about the lack of internal democracy in political parties, the shortcomings of electoral system and, fundamentally, the gap between parties, representatives and those represented. These problems were perceived as extremely serious by most of the participants in focus groups. The 15M collected all these concerns and gave an answer to them in the form of collective action.

In the second round of our study, we repeated the focus-groups in April 2012. The perception about the political system was deteriorated, there were more critical elements and people were more informed. The 15M appeared in the discussions and found high support, though many doubts were expressed about its development and performance. There was a widespread view that *Indignad@s* were defending general aims, that their demands were generally shared. In the following section, we will analyze some of the conclusions of our study and we will argue, first, that 15M absorbed many of the political concerns and criticism that already existed about the political system in Spain. This is absolutely relevant to explain its legitimacy. Finally, we will argue that the 15M movement was an opportunity for *the return of the political*, that is, an umbrella to cover and to promote a growing discussion and criticism on the current political processes, also an increase in the search and imagination of alternatives. Thus, *were we witnessing a growing crack in the post-political condition in Spain?*

5. Political Attitudes before and after 15M¹³

In February and March 2011, focus groups were organized in several Spanish cities to talk about political processes.¹⁴ Participants had different profiles: members of associations, voters of left or right parties, young people, educated professionals, retirees, etc. Ten months later (after May 15th), we organized another eight focus groups. These were a replica of the previous round but we also included a question about the *Indignad@s* movement. Groups focused on the perception of the Spanish political system and the democratic preferences. From the analysis of these groups it is possible to draw an overall picture of the discourses and counter-discourses on the political system (Callejo 2002). There were certain latent ideas in the society which were central to the 15M mobilization. In other words, the movement caught these concerns and gave a positive answer to them.

Perception on politicians

Firstly, in the focus groups we identified the perception of a profound separation between citizens and political representatives. The perception of politicians was very negative, and the problems of corruption were strongly reflected in discourses. There was an idea underlying public discourse which implied that politicians should provide a service to the community; but this was not real anymore, for politicians worked for their personal private sakes:

“All [politicians] look just for their business, because we are directed by a party, and those who are behind the parties are worse and much more thief.” *Group 1_03*

¹³ For the purpose of this article, we will do a very brief summary of the findings and data located in the focus groups. Further discussion of these findings will be found in a forthcoming paper.

¹⁴ Córdoba, Seville, Madrid, Getafe, Zaragoza, Alicante, Barcelona and Conil de la Frontera.

“I have no direct communication with my political representative, the one in my area or province, in the Senate or in the Congress. That is, this person has not come, not to see me, but to see the group of people that is supposed to represent. So here political candidatures are distributed in an arbitrary manner, not close to the citizens. So I think that this is the main problem: the channels of communication between citizens and the political class.” *Group 1_01*

The negative perception on politicians and their deep discredit was related, according to the participants, by the numerous cases of corruption, but also by their egoistic character and their separation from citizens. Actually, chants like *¡No hay pan para tanto chorizo!* ([We have] *Not enough bread for so many thieves in this country*) and *¡No nos representan!* (*They [politicians] do not represent us!*) reflected this reality.

In April 2012, this discourse seemed somewhat more defined. The relationship between representatives and those represented appeared to be seriously damaged.

“I want to know my representatives and to meet them, I want to know that they are close to us, because they are not, they are people with a higher economic position and upper-middle class situations, and they have their position in the public service normally because they are friends of “somebody” or they are protected by... within political parties everyone knows ...” *Group 2_04*

These political attitudes are not new in Spanish society (Bonet, Martín, Montero 2006: 113). *Disaffection* towards political actors and institutions in Spain is one of the highest in Europe (including Eastern European countries) (Torcal, Montero 2006). Actually, this trend seems to have increased in the last years. With the economic crisis, it blossomed and the social movement gave meaning to it.

Critiques of Bipartisanship and the Electoral System

Another discourse which was constant in the focus groups was the criticism of bipartisanship in a political landscape dominated by two major parties (PP, conservative and PSOE, social-democrat). We could also identify a deep concern on the consequences of the electoral system, the lack of representativeness and the distortion in the results. Thus, participants suggested changes in the way of electing representatives: citizens should choose directly their representatives, a relation that should not be mediated by parties.

“At this stage of democracy, there is an unjustified fear *open lists*, so that politicians are bound by the territory and its people. Therefore, most candidatures come from above, from the “heads” that make the lists. This is my idea.” *Group 1_03*

A year later, the ideas noted above were present in focus groups, but we could also identify a critical discourse to the linkages of the political class and the economic strong interests. Moreover, the competition among parties was not interpreted as a matter of plurality or an expression of heterogeneous social interests, but a battle for power within the political elite. Political class was seen as a close elite looking for its own interest.

“The dissolution of the ideas, the party ‘red’ and ‘blue’, put them whatever color, because they have no ideology, no one is identified with anything, eh ... led me to think that all these proposal, especially since the crisis emerged, they make me think that political parties are merely puppets in the hands of the economic system, I think that this is almost right. In other words, they take turns in power, is a succession of two parties and all they do is take turns in power and ... they make laws to accommodate the interests of the business. So, I think that people are a little ... as previously said, *a little disappointed*. Since there are no changes, you can be ... you can go to a party or another but there is no real alternative to what happens” *Group 2_05*

As shown in these remarks, the discourse of disappointment and *disenchantment* towards the political system was related to the lack of representativeness perceived. Though it was also connected by an idea that the 15M movement had proclaimed in each *mise en scène*: the motto *¡Nos somos mercancías en manos de políticos y banqueros!* (*We're not commodities in the hands of politicians and bankers!*). This was a central motto in the 15M campaign of protests, and it told a story giving meaning to the disenchantment towards politicians. The story can be interpreted as: the political elite and the business were not giving an answer to popular demands, but to their own reproductive interests.

Citizen participation and democracy

There was another theme which was of sound relevance in the focus groups: the advocacy for civic participation and the need for direct democratic channels. Participants in our groups considered that voting every four years was insufficient and they raised the possibility of new mechanisms of direct participation, such as the referendum. This claim was publicly discussed in groups situated in the political left of the political spectrum, but those to the right brought this possibility too.

“They do not pay attention to the opinions that come from people on the street. The culture of the political system should be working to channel the opinions of people, but it does not work. Our level of participation is elections every 4 years, or the vote, and that is not enough.” *Group 1_03*

In 2012, when we asked in the focus-groups about the ideal political system, all of them put in the center the participation of citizens in the political process. There was no consensus about the instruments by which this popular participation would be practiced, but the necessity of more civic engagement seemed unquestionable. Nonetheless, in the public opinion reflected in the focus-groups, we

cannot find a rejection of political representation as such. It was just a matter of representativeness.

“The current system would be better, more perfect with systems of participation and, of course, with the immediate revocation of those politicians which do not follow the indications...” *Group 2_02*

After May 15th: giving value to the Indignad@s movement

All groups, throughout the ideological spectrum and heterogeneous social conditions, showed affinity to the *15M* movement. Although there were different degrees of acceptance and different discourses expressing support, most of participants in the groups discussed that the protest was a necessary and a legitimate way of intervening in the political process.

“I met many people of centrist parties, i.e. PP-PSOE, who went to the streets and squares because they were dissatisfied with the current situation, with politicians; with the management of crisis ... There people saw that they could do something, didn't they? But things raved in the movement...” *Group 2_02*

The high rates of sympathy towards *15M* registered by surveys were, in some way, confirmed by our focus groups. Among different ages, professional backgrounds, territories and political identities, *15M* received an extraordinary support. The *Indignad@s* movement was perceived as an expression of the critical attitudes fostered by the economic crisis and it was also perceived as a claim against the shortcomings of the political process. Most of the members of the focus groups saw the movement as an opportunity to express general concerns.

“I think that the *15M* was, in the end, the expression of the general unrest of people...”

“A mobilization so that the politicians knew that there is a general unrest, that they understood they had to change the direction of politics, to change the system...” *Group 2_0*

However, there were also negative discourses, particularly, regarding the evolution and the radicalization of the protest. These views emphasised the aesthetic aspect of the activists. Actually, the label “*perroflauta*” (as a pejorative proxy for “hippy”) appeared several times in some groups to refer to the social movement. As the consequences of the protests were limited in the short-term, participants in the groups were pessimistic about the possibilities and effects of collective action. This is also a typical feature of the Spanish political culture: the lack of internal and external efficacy (Bonet, Martín, Montero 2006). However, a counter-discourse on internal efficacy emerged from the experience of collective action and it praised the outcomes produced by the protest. Thus, some participants gave value to the building of a new collective identity and to the learning during the protests, while the majority were driven to fatalism and a feeling of powerlessness.

“I think a new social climate has emerged. I think that those that don’t go to the protests, to the blockades against forced evictions, nevertheless, they begin to consider that this is not fair...”
Group 2_1

“But, what is the summary of all of this? Does it matter what we do in this country...? It doesn’t matter...”

“No, the summary is that we should make an effort, all of us, we should not waste our time in making demonstrations and protests.” *Group 2_2*

Though the focus groups deserve in depth interpretation, they clearly showed how 15M was an opportunity window to express and articulate the general unrest of people. The public discourse reflected in focus groups registered a general critique to the performance of the political system. The discussions on the representativeness, the gap

between representatives and those represented, the disconnection of a self-interested political elite, the claim for a more participatory and close-to-people politics... they are demands which found an opportunity to express in the context of *15M*. Indeed, the social movement framed these demands and reframed the public debate. In other words, if all those political concerns were present in a disperse manner in the collective imaginary of large segments of the population, and they were “translated” into collective action by the *15M*, we can say definitely that this actor was able to modify—at least for a short period of time—the playground where it played. Can we also say that it brought a *return of the political* into public opinion?

6. The *15M*: “the political” under scrutiny

As we have analyzed the *15M* movement appeared in a time of serious economic and political depression in Spain. From inside, the confluence of a number of new type activists combined with traditional social militants was a key to build a political actor from heterogeneous disperse demands.

Inclusiveness was reflected in its *repertoire of practices*. The assemblies, camps, and the large demonstrations without party flags and symbols... These elements became *the methodology of the protest*. A distinctive emblem of *15M* was its methodology: its “way of doing”. Furthermore, the intensive use of ICTs allowed the flow of information in real time, the sharing of information among different levels of the movement (territorial levels) and the opening of a new space for protest. This way of doing gave, for some time, cement to very heterogeneous causes and profiles. From this point of view, the *15M* resembled populist movements as Laclau described them, “the unification of a number of demands in an equivalential chain, providing an external border which divides the society into two fields, the equivalential chain consolidated by building a popular identity which is qualitatively more than a simple sum of the individual demands” (Laclau 2005: 102). Here, popular identity works as

a signifier that tends towards emptiness. This is so because all unification populism happens in a highly heterogeneous social field in which the leader is the unifying individuality. For the 15M, no personification existed, but there was a set of clear enemies and a methodology which generated equivalence. It was a chain of demands and actors that met at the public square, the assembly, the demonstration or the network.

Regarding the discursive frame generated by the *Indignad@s*, as mobilizing ingredients, we could identify that the general concerns towards the political system—before 15M—fell well within the window of political opportunity that the protest represented. The negative perception on the political system was aggravated by the economic crisis. And the social movement was able to build a frame to catch the unrest that remained dispersed before the events. From a discursive point of view, the 15M put into question the post-political consensus underlying the management of the economic crisis. So, the critique of what was not susceptible of critique in the formal arena of politics (the arena of big parties and institutions) was the frame of the 15M and it was effective, at least to mobilize previous feelings of unrest and disaffection. This frame has been called the “post-political consensus critique” in the realm of theory. It was called “*Lo llaman democracia y no lo es*” [*It is called democracy, but it is not true*] in the realm of protest’s mottos. Are we witnessing, thus, *the return of the political?*

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THE ART OF CAPITAL: ARTISTIC IDENTITY AND THE PARADOX OF VALORISATION

Benjamin Noys

I want to consider the paradox of valorisation for the artist and for artistic practice in contemporary capitalism. This paradox is simply stated: on the one hand, the artist is the most capitalist subject. The contemporary forms of artistic practice mesh with the forms of contemporary value-extraction: precarity, flexibility, mobility, and fluidity. In this way the artist becomes *the* figure of contemporary labour. On the other hand, the artist is the subject most resistant to capitalist value extraction. It is the excess of their creativity that can never be contained by the limits of capitalism. The practice of the artist prefigures non-capitalist relations of the refusal of work, creativity, and play; in Marx's words: "to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise [or make art] after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic [or an artist]." (Marx 1845)

The classical resolution of such a paradox, derived from Marx's analysis of the position of the proletariat, is to argue that those most subject to capital can be transformed into those who escape capital. The paradox is, in fact, a contradiction that can be resolved into liberation from capitalist value. To use Marx's description of the proletariat, those with "*radical chains*" are the dissolution of class society because they suffer a "general wrong", and so also suffer "the *complete loss of man* ... [that can] hence win itself only through the *complete re-winning of man*". (Marx 1843) The artist who is radically chained to capital would also offer the possibility of "re-winning" a new post-capitalist "value" detached from capital's continual processes of valorisation.

This account has been disputed both empirically and conceptually. For example, Jacques Rancière argues that this model of emancipation through development implies that to be emancipated the subject suffers from “impotence” and “disempowerment” (2010: 171). This will only be corrected by a superior subject who can see through this “impotence”, and this implies “a culture of distrust based on a presupposition of incompetence.” (Rancière 2010: 172) The failure of Marx’s dialectic, of the transformation from impotence to power, leaves us back in the paradox with which we began. This is true for both the artist and the proletariat. The alliance of the artistic avant-garde with the proletariat, as complex and often imaginary as this was, now seems definitively ruptured on both sides. We witness a broken dialectic. The result is that rather than the artist prefiguring a new “artistic communism” (Martin 2009) we instead find that we only have an “*artistic capitalism*” (Martin 2009: 482).

This is a common story today. I want to probe this story in the work of three contemporary philosophers who have been highly influential in the art world: Antonio Negri, Alain Badiou, and Jacques Rancière. My concern is with the contradiction and tensions in their discussions of art as they try, in various ways, to resolve this paradox. I will not be proposing my own resolution to this paradox. Instead, I will consider the different ways in which they pose the problem of this paradox and the limits of their attempted solutions.

The Art of Life

In one of his Letters on Art, written 1 December 1988, Antonio Negri remarks that: “Art has always anticipated the determinations of valorisation. So it became abstract by traversing a real development, by creating a new world through abstraction” (2011: 4). What Negri suggests is that the plunge into abstraction of high modernism anticipates the developing forms of capitalism’s abstract forms of value. The artistic “reduction” of objects to pure signs, such as Cézanne’s apples, prefigures the tendency of capitalism to reduce all

objects and experiences to the commodity form. In Rilke's acerbic remark, "An American apple is not an apple" (Goux 1990: 219). The "pure" apple of the artist becomes reduced to the "spectacle" of the apple as aestheticized commodity (Goux 1990: 219). We are back again with the paradox of the artist who seems to exceed capital, but only to predict its future.

This leads us on the well-worn path of anxieties concerning recuperation—the capacity of capitalism to absorb and rework artistic and political challenges to the status quo. In its most pessimistic form we can even have the trope that Christopher Connery calls "always-already co-optation" (2007: 87), in which any critical move against capitalism is pre-empted from the very beginning. In this case there is no exit from the paradox, and the practice of art always leads to "aesthetic capitalism". This is the thrust of Boltanski and Chiapello's (2007) argument that 'aesthetic critique' has fallen prey to capitalism, has been internalised by it as its *modus operandi*. In fact, the work of Thomas Frank, notably his *Conquest of Cool* (1998), had already traced a disturbing narrative in which counter-cultural tropes of artistic self-expression, liberation, and play (broadly Romantic notions), were already being deployed by American advertising and business in the 1950s and early 1960s. Here there is not even recuperation, as radical artists are already working in parallel with those in advertising. It is not so much that artists become advertisers, but that we can't distinguish between the two. The work of Andy Warhol, to use an obvious example, seems a key symptom of this disturbing parallel.

In this case there is no way out for the artist, and artistic practice would seem to become nothing more than another sign of the emergent neo-liberal model of the self as "enterprise machine" (Foucault 2008: 224–5). In Negri's hands this kind of dialectic does not take place. Instead, he argues that the artist's form of value cannot be completely absorbed by capital. Negri operates from the 'tradition' of Italian *operaismo* and *autonomia*, which holds that the process of capitalist valorisation is always dependent on living labour

as the real generator of value. The result is that capitalism is only ever a parasite that is dependent on the capacity of the working class to generate surplus value. There is a fundamental contradiction between capital's processes of value extraction and the capacities of workers to exceed this through their own processes of proletarian self-valorisation. If we transfer this schema to the realm of art, as Negri does, we can see that while art might anticipate new modes of capitalist valorisation this does not simply mean that art is *merely* anticipatory. Art and artistic practice is not just a kind of laboratory for capitalism. Instead, the inventiveness and creativity of art promises a traversal, an excess, and a rupture.

Certainly—writing from prison, as a result of his political activities—Negri does argue that the 1980s are a time of reaction. He also argues that capitalism has penetrated further and deeper into our experience, commodifying all our forms of life. In this way he belongs to a common discourse at that time, notably in the work of Jean Baudrillard, which argues that use-value has disappeared and that we are all subject to the runaway forces of capitalism (see Day 2010: 182–229). The difference is that Negri does not fall into pessimism. In fact, the superior powers of the artist still remain contained within capitalist forms of value. The role of the artist is to reveal “a truth of abstraction” (Negri 2011: 5), which is the fact that abstraction is dependent on the creative powers that it subsumes. Negri argues: “We have to live this dead reality, this mad transition, in the same way as we lived prison, as a strange and ferocious way of reaffirming life.” (2011: 9) If the 1980s are a prison-house of abstraction then we don't have to concede defeat, but rather can find new modes of reaffirming the life that is the origin of capitalist value. The forces of abstraction unleashed by art that are absorbed by capital have to be reaffirmed so we can traverse and exceed capitalist value.

This process operates, according to Negri, through an uncanny reversal: “There where the abstract subsumed life, life has subsumed the abstract” (2011: 78–79). Capitalism has subsumed life under the abstract and this, according to Negri, eliminates the possibility of

“find[ing] spaces where poetic self-valorisation might preserve a corner of freedom for itself.” (Negri 2011: 67–8) This loss of freedom is not a defeat, however. The penetration of capitalist abstraction into all realms of life generates the new possibility of turning the abstract back to life. In this case, the practice of art can now prefigure a new global liberation from abstraction. For Negri, following Marx, capitalism has generated its own ‘gravediggers’ by staking everything on the abstract. The artist can now prefigure this reversal of the abstract into life by harnessing and engaging with the monstrous power of the abstract that has extended everywhere. Rather than being isolated in a small corner of freedom, now the powers of life are extended everywhere. The artist converges with what Negri would later hymn as the powers of the multitude. Using Negri’s later arguments we could say that as well as capitalism generating the ‘general intellect’, the productive powers of communication and cognition, we could add, for Negri, it also develops the ‘general artist’. The paradox of the artist is resolved, as in Marx, by the transition to a new power.

Negri’s writing in the 1980s is not quite as triumphalist as his later work. Perhaps because of the experience of defeat, Negri suggests a more modest role for the artist: the possibility, oddly reminiscent of Gyorgy Lukács, of tracing a “realism of the abstract” (Negri 2011: 54). In fact Negri will go so far as to argue for “a punk constructive realism” (Negri 2011: 56). This rather fascinating possibility is later sacrificed at the altar of the powers of the multitude. I will return later to this suggestion, which seems to me to offer something more interesting than Negri’s faith in the reversal of powerlessness into a new power.

The Art of Subtraction

Alain Badiou and Antonio Negri in many ways, as we will see, appear as antagonistic and opposed figures. We have the Platonist Badiou versus the Spinozist Negri, the post-Maoist Badiou versus the

Autonomist Negri, and so on. Despite appearances there are commonalities (Noys 2010: 134), and one of these lies in the thinking of art. What they share is a common ‘affirmationism’ (to use Badiou’s term); a belief in the power and inventiveness of art that exceeds the power of capitalism to ‘capture’ or control this inventiveness. The difference is, of course, that Badiou completely rejects Negri’s contention that the powers of capitalism are merely the powers of the multitude ‘displaced’, or ‘misplaced’. This is a position that Badiou regards as a “dreamy hallucination” (Badiou 2003: 126). In fact, in *Logics of Worlds* (2006), Badiou singles out Negri’s analysis of art as a symptom of contemporary capitalist ideology. Negri’s postmodernism is, according to Badiou, really the ideology of “democratic materialism”, for which there are only ever “bodies and languages” (Badiou 2009: 2). Negri’s attempt to fight on the terrain of capitalism means that, for Badiou, he comes to accept capitalism as the ground of liberation. In fact, we could add, and I don’t think Badiou would disagree, that Negri’s modelling of vital and excessive powers *flatters* capitalism’s self-image, not least at its moment of crisis.

What we can see is a shared narrative of the power of capitalism, but very different conclusions drawn when it comes to the role of the artist and art within that horizon. Badiou, like Negri, stresses the moment of high modernism as a moment of invention but, unlike Negri, he does not coordinate this with a prefigurative function. Instead, he insists that ‘modernism’ offers a counter-project to capitalism by developing the powers of a “monumental construction” (Badiou 2006). It should be noted that in doing so Badiou glosses over all the political and aesthetic differences between those he associates with ‘modernism’. This grandiose constructive power of modernism has been lost in contemporary art, which embraces “the delights of the margin, of obliqueness, of infinite deconstruction, of the fragment, of the exhibition trembling with mortality, of finitude and of the body.” (Badiou 2006: 133) While Negri finds the power of art in this dispersion, Badiou insists we invent new forms of concentration and construction to resist capitalism.

This analysis can be aligned with the schema that Badiou develops in *The Century* (2005). The revolutionary sequence of the “passion for the real” that dominated the short revolutionary twentieth century (1914–1989) is now saturated. At earlier moments a common vitalism, emphasising the heroic powers of the will and the body, contested the value-regime of capitalism. The saturation of these experiments, with the collapse of party-communism and the avant-gardes, results in a new dispersion that we could link to ‘democratic materialism’. Whereas once the ‘passion for the real’ animated the *collective* bodies of the avant-garde and political vanguards today that ‘passion’ has become ‘degraded’ into the sufferings of the *individual* body. If there are only ‘bodies and languages’, then this is why the contemporary artist makes their own mortality and suffering key to their art. This is evident in the turn to acts of self-mortification and self-mutilation, from the Viennese Actionists to Marina Abramovic, where the body becomes a site of playing with the ‘Real’ (in the Lacanian sense). While Negri seems to valorise this dispersion as the site of a new mass and collective power of the multitude, Badiou insists that a true artistic and political practice can only exist through concentration and subtraction from the forms of contemporary capitalism.

For the artist the requirement is that they find, or better construct, “an *independent* affirmation” (Badiou 2006: 143; my emphasis). Unable to rely on the encrypted powers of liberation secreted within actuality, à la Negri, instead the artist must refuse the horizon of the present. This working of subtraction still takes its inspiration from high modernism, but a high modernism split into two. The negative form of artistic practice is that passion for the real which is animated by destruction and which becomes trapped into the bad infinity of relentlessly trying to find a ‘Real’ outside of representation. Although Badiou does not use it as an example, we could suggest that such attempts at escape would be taken to the extreme in the acts of ‘Dada suicide’—such as that of Jacques Vaché. We could add that this ‘bad’ passion for the real converges with the ‘democratic

materialism' of contemporary art and contemporary capitalism. This destructive practice has to be traded for a modernism of subtraction. Badiou's example is of the asceticism of Malevich's 'White on White' (1918), which figures subtraction as the tracing of a pure 'minimal difference' between white and white, frame and image, rather than the maximal drive of extracting the Real itself (Badiou 2007: 56). The difficulty remains, however, recapturing and reworking this moment in the present. It is the very power of capitalism to debase any 'monumental construction' almost in advance that is problematic. In this regard it is telling that Badiou has very little to offer in the way of examples or instances of contemporary art or artists who measure up to the criteria of probing a subtractive 'minimal difference'.

If, for Negri, we are all artists, then we might say for Badiou that no-one is, or no-one should be. The last thesis of Badiou's *Third Sketch of a Manifesto of Affirmationist Art* is: "it is better to do nothing than to work formally toward making visible what the West declares to exist" (Badiou 2006: 148). This is not necessarily bad advice. We live in a time of the hyper-production of art, and in the increasing integration of art into the circuits of the market and state. It does seem, however, to leave 'monumental construction' as firmly a thing of the past. Such a risk is further reinforced by Badiou's own suggestion that contemporary capitalism is dominated by the ideology of 'democratic materialism'. His contention in *Logics of Worlds* that we live in an 'atonic world' seems to leave the purchase of any subtractive orientation moot; as he puts it: "Empirically, it is clear that atonic worlds are simply worlds which are so ramified and nuanced—or so quiescent and homogeneous—that no instance of the Two, and consequently no figure of decision, is capable of evaluating them." (Badiou 2009: 420) This lack condemns us to an effect of disorientation without any moment of construction or decision. Badiou's suggestion that we need to perform an "originary subtraction capable of creating a new space of independence and autonomy from the dominant laws of the situation" (2008: 653),

would leave us back in those little corners of freedom Negri regards as *passé*.

The point of tension, or even failure, here is in strange symmetry with Negri. In the case of Negri we have the 'positive' reading of the paradox of valorisation. The fact that capitalism is dominant indicates that it is fundamentally vulnerable to the powers of the multitude on which it depends. All that is required is a reversal. Badiou is more pessimistic. In the face of the dominance of capitalism the artist, and activist, must construct or produce new sites or places resistant to this dominance. Neither thesis seems particularly convincing. Negri requires a reversal that doesn't seem to appear, and which seems to regard contemporary capitalism as already a nascent communism. Badiou doesn't seem able to specify the actual spaces and forms of 'monumental construction' that could escape being mere ghettos of the art world.

The Art of Distribution

The work of Jacques Rancière is in explicit opposition to the kinds of framings on which Negri and Badiou depend, especially their stressing of the powers of capital. For Rancière the narratives of increasing abstraction, of real subsumption, and of the dominance of the society of the spectacle, are counsels of despair. He does not accept the alternative Negri poses between 'preserving a corner of freedom' and embracing the monstrous mutational powers of capital as our own. Nor does he accept Badiou's nostalgic invocation of a purified modernism, which Rancière regards as a 'twisted modernism' (Rancière 2004). Instead Rancière's contention is that if we break with the narrative of the totalising domination of capitalism we can also break with the false political alternatives that end in either hyper-optimism or hyper-pessimism. In staking this claim Rancière wants to pose more room for manoeuvre for the artist, who is not simply trapped in the dialectic of valorisation, which may also suggest at least one reason for his popularity amongst artists.

Rancière argues that it is necessary “to contrast so-called historical necessity with a topography of the configuration of possibilities, a perception of the multiple alterations and displacements that make up forms of political subjectivisation and artistic invention.” (Rancière 2007: 257) This means that no historical necessity dictates the fate of the artist as doomed to always being recuperated by capitalism. This kind of construction serves an agenda that flatters the philosopher or theorist who is, somehow, free of this domination and can lay down the law to the rest of us dupes. Politics has not been eliminated by an atonal capitalism, or left to the inevitable triumph of the Spinozist powers of the multitude. Instead, politics is an *art*, or more precisely an *aesthetic*, of ‘disagreement’ (*la mésentente*). This disagreement, which is a fundamental possibility in all social and artistic situations, requires the deliberate disruption of accepted roles, social stratifications and arrangements. It is “a way of reconstructing the relationship between places and identities, spectacles and gazes, proximities and distances.” (Rancière 2007: 261) To use the telling title of the interview I am quoting from, it is an ‘art of the possible’.

In this way we see in Rancière a re-working of scale—capitalism is scaled down from all-encompassing monstrous mechanism of capture. Also, the demands of political art for the fusion of art and life are scaled down as well. Instead, the art of the possible works between these two forms of fusion: the fusion of art with capital and the fusion of art with politics. The site of the political is an aesthetic site that involves a new art of distribution that does not suppose a necessary solution. We might note an echo here of the Cold War discourse which rejected the ‘totalitarian’ politicisation of art in the name of the ‘freedom’ of non-political art. Rancière also echoes more contemporary discourses that promote the network or the relational as offering modest minor ‘freedoms’, against the grand claims of heroic modernism. He also adopts the contemporary position of rejecting critique: “If there is a circulation that should be stopped at this point, it’s this circulation of stereotypes that critique

stereotypes, giant stuffed animals that denounce our infantilisation, media images that denounce the media, spectacular installations that denounce the spectacle, etc.” (Rancière 2007: 266)

While amusing enough, Rancière’s point seems to blunt the general question of critique by dismissing it totally. He then constrains the true merit of ‘critical’ art to the role of refiguration, which functions as a stand-in for critique. Rancière argues that the aim of the artist and art is: “[t]o discover how to produce forms for the presentation of objects, forms for the organization of spaces, that thwart expectations.” (Rancière 2007: 263) The suggestion is that if we scale down the role of art and the artist we actually release more powerful possibilities. In Rancière’s model of fundamental disagreement artistic possibility finds its power in disruption, re-arrangement, and the thwarting of ‘political’ expectations—whether these come from existing power arrangements or the formulation of ‘counter-powers’. He resists what he regards as the automatic nature of Negri’s dialectic and the pessimism of Badiou’s condemnation of capitalist nihilism. Instead, Rancière retains qualified faith in the possibility of the artist or artwork as prefiguring the disruption that is socially characteristic of communist ‘moments’.

There is, however, more in common between Rancière and his antagonists than might first be supposed. The point of agreement lies in the conception of the role of art and the artist. In the case of all three thinkers we can see a common dissatisfaction with any pedagogic hyper-political art. This is often couched in a critique or historicising distance from the avant-gardes of the 1920s, but I think reflects a more local rejection of the reinvention of such projects in the 1960s and 1970s. One symptom of this is a common wariness in relation to the political and aesthetic projects of Guy Debord and the Situationists. The Situationists articulation of the ‘society of the spectacle’, and their austere practice of political ‘art’ (not least in Guy Debord’s films), is seen as the final avant-garde. The problem, which is shared by Negri, Badiou, and Rancière, is to go beyond this final form of “political modernism” (Edwards 2012: 84–100).

Certainly Rancière appears to be the most hopeful or even ‘empowering’ thinker. This no doubt accounts for the attraction of his work within the contemporary art world. That said we can see that there is a degree of pessimism in Rancière’s work, and this concerns the power of the artist. The artist is limited to a power of reconfiguration or redistribution of the sensible. This could be regarded as merely the power to rearrange existing elements, and so hardly likely to differ from existing capitalist realities. In fact, we are limited in our powers of critique because Rancière associates critique with the inflation of the powers of capital. He suggests that capitalism has recuperated critique, and can get along fine with critique. Denouncing capital is, we could say, good for business. The replacement is the ‘power’ of disagreement and redistribution, which can never be eliminated. The difficulty, however, is articulating this power within and against the contemporary forms of State and capitalist power. While Rancière may object to a ‘totalitarian’ model of capitalist power, he has no analysis to put in its place. The unkind could even suggest that the emphasis on redistribution and disagreement falls within a capitalism dependent on innovation and renovation.

The Art of Abstraction

I’ve canvassed these different theoretical ‘solutions’ to the paradox of valorisation, while indicating my own scepticism with each. Here I want to draw a preliminary balance sheet by identifying what I regard as the crucial questions each of these philosophers poses to any attempt to resolve the paradox of valorisation. Rancière is correct that our narrative or description of capitalism is crucial to how we frame the problem of art and artistic valorisation. My difficulty is that Rancière simply abandons any narrative of capitalism. Instead, he replaces it with a *longue durée* characterisation of art in terms of an aesthetic regime constituted in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (what is usually regarded as the period of

Romanticism). While we could spend a long time debating Negri's periodisation of capitalism and art in terms of real subsumption or Badiou's periodisation of the short twentieth-century, we can say that they at least present a more fine-grained attempt to grasp mutational shifts in capitalism *and* art. In the case of Rancière, it seems, capitalism tends to drop out altogether, in favour of a model of the political *qua* disagreement as continuous possibility.

At least Rancière's deflationary approach recognises the reality that artists might require actual employment within capitalism. That said, Rancière persists, I would argue, in misframing the operations of capital to inflate political and artistic capacities. This is a consoling vision, but seems to miss the capacities of capitalism. In contrast, Badiou's fraught discussion of subtraction does have the capacity to realise the stakes involved. While Badiou sometimes seems to slide into recommending 'enclaves' of resistance, his stress on the difficulty of subtraction does register the power of capitalism. This is also true of some of Negri's formulations. While Negri relies on a quasi-Christian model of transfiguration of powerlessness into power (Toscano 2009: 377), his work of the 1980s offers a more critical engagement with capitalism's powers of abstraction. The stress on our immersion in capitalism—thinking of Joseph Conrad's phrase 'in the destructive element immerse'—makes this problem unavoidable. If we take a cue from Negri's 'punk realism', which unfortunately he did not elaborate, this might suggest a way to be 'within and against' these forces of abstraction. Alberto Toscano notes the continuing relevance of the problem Negri poses: "The quandary of art in the postmodern would thus lie for Negri in the invention of an unprecedented realism, a non-representational realism, capable of rearticulating the present into something other than a system of global indifference" (2009: 378). Of course, the question then is: what would that look like?

One path here is to suggest that Negri, Badiou, and Rancière too rapidly abandon the legacies and possibilities of the historic avant-gardes for their own alternatives of mutation (Negri), subtraction

(Badiou), and disagreement (Rancière). Currents within contemporary art and critical practice have argued that the way through the quandary of inventing an ‘unprecedented realism’ is through the attempts of the avant-gardes to answer this question. We might call this a creative repetition. For example, we have the cartographic work of Allan Sekula, which integrates Brechtian montage with Lukácsian realism in an effort to map the contemporary forms of capitalist power (Day 2011). There has been a series of historical and critical engagements with the experience of exhaustion, defeat, and saturation that confronted the ‘historic’ avant-gardes (Roberts 2011). This is a more patient work that does not try to recreate the ‘heroism’ of the avant-gardes, but works on unrealised potentials and possibilities to formulate an artistic practice beyond the usual binaries. There is realism in the everyday sense that we can’t simply claim past avant-gardes to justify our contemporary political identity. At the same time, pace Negri, Badiou, and Rancière, we can’t also abandon so rapidly these legacies.

Of course, advice to artists is a perilous, although popular, genre. Here I prefer to think more about the way in which the problem of value might be posed and the necessity for us to confront and *think* this situation. That said, especially considering the function of the abstract, I can’t help but quote a remark by Adorno: “Those who create works which are truly concrete and indissoluble, truly antagonistic to the sway of culture industry and calculative manipulation, are those who think most severely and intransigently in terms of technical consistency.” (Adorno 1992: 296) Again, this is an open formulation, if we leave aside Adorno’s own aesthetic choices and recommendations. What I think is useful is that it engages with what something like what Negri calls a ‘punk realism’ might be. Obviously this phrase would be anathema to Adorno, and the word ‘punk’ carries a problematically nostalgic ring for me. While we might read Adorno as recommending that the path to the concrete is attention to the ‘concrete’ of technical consistency, I think that this is too simple a reading. Instead, I think Adorno is suggesting

that the ‘concrete’ cannot simply be reached ‘as is’ but only through a process of mediation and engagement with abstraction.

Adorno poses this problem in terms of philosophy: “Because concreteness has vanished in a society whose law condemns all human relations to abstractness, philosophy wants desperately to evoke concretion, without conceding the meaninglessness of existence but also without being fully absorbed into it.” (Adorno 1992: 330) Whereas Adorno had in mind phenomenology, one doesn’t have to look far today, consider merely the ‘object’ and its recent adventures, to see this desire to *evoke* concretion at work. In fact, the relative success of such a philosophy in terms of art, which is of course often ‘composed’ of objects, indicates, I think, the problem of the jumping too fast without mediation to the ‘concrete’. This only ever results in another abstraction. Adorno, reflecting on Walter Benjamin, notes that Benjamin’s adding of ‘materialist salt’ to the object requires we recognise the object is inherently socially mediated. It is here, in this ‘realism of the abstract’, that I think a critical engagement with the paradox of valorisation lies.

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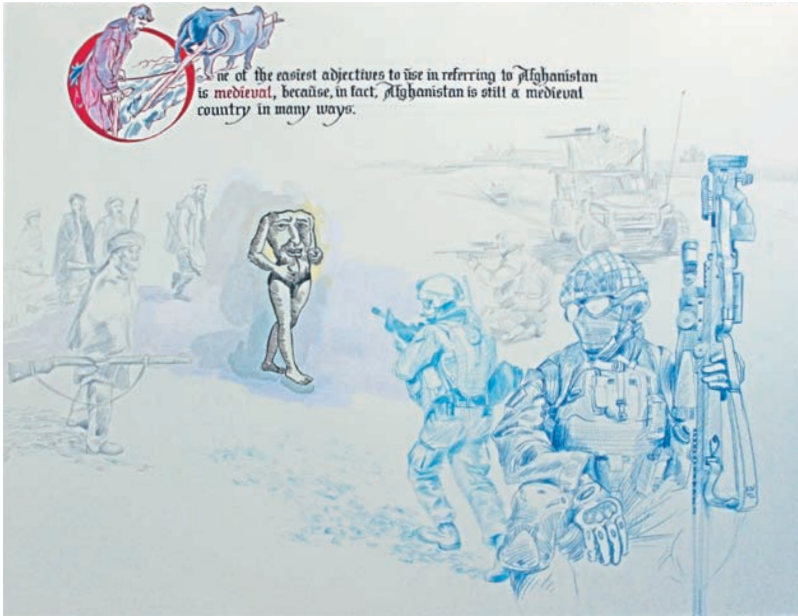
OPERATIONAL CULTURE

Kristina Norman

Series of coloured drawings, 2012.

On a mission in the war zone of Afghanistan, a Western fighter for democracy was once thrown into a strange cultural environment. In order to tell the insurgents from the civilians, and the Tajiks from the Pashto, military personnel were provided with a booklet giving instructions and guidelines for cultural and military behaviour in the region. Norman combines the imagery and titles from the NATO booklet with medieval representations of the inhabitants of the Orient, such as those well known to us from the Nuremberg chronicle.







E.

GENEALOGY OF THE FUTURE

FROM BATTLEFIELDS TO PLAYGROUNDS: ETHNIC AND NATIONAL IDENTITY OF THE CHILDREN OF FREEDOM

Madli Maruste

We are not enemies, but we are also afraid of becoming friends. We speak to each other, but we don't listen. We communicate, but don't understand. That is the essence of Estonia. (Jurzyk 2008)

The Children of Freedom (*Vabaduse lapsed*) is a term taken into use by prominent Estonian sociologist and former politician Marju Lauristin to describe a generation of Estonian young people, who have grown up in the re-independent Estonia after the fall of the Soviet Union. The Children of Freedom went to school after the 1991 and became the first post World War II generation who has been able to choose their educational and career options on a global playground. A lot of high hopes were placed on these kids as Marju Lauristin pointed out with the unifying name for them (2003).

The Children of Freedom generation is made up of young people from different ethnic backgrounds. Following the Soviet Union (1940 to 1941), Nazi German (1941 to 1944) and again, the Soviet Union's occupation of Estonia (1944 to 1991), one third of Estonia's ethnic composition changed. Due to deportations, executions and forced migration Estonian citizen's vanished and new immigration from all the former member states of the Soviet Union arrived (Kasekamp 2010, O'Connor 2003). The new immigrants were the grandparents and/or parents of approximately one third of the Children of Freedom. When the Soviet Union collapsed and the old nation states were re-established in 1991, the post-empire identity question emerged in Estonia as in the other ex-Soviet states: who becomes

who considering ones ethnic and national identity? The issue of ethnic belonging and national identity of the Children of Freedom is much more complex than has been discussed until now. It is necessary to give voice to the young people to see how they navigate their position in the politically charged reality with a complex history.

After the re-independence in 1991, Estonia has experienced very rapid changes compared to most other post-Soviet countries. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania joined the European Union in 2004 as the first countries from the ex-Soviet block and in the same year they became members of NATO, along with Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Estonia's fast economical growth was the result of the free market politics that Estonian government adapted post 1991. At the same time, Estonian neo-liberalism has not been following the traditional liberalism ideas, but instead has been a controversial combination of free market ideology mixed with national conservative politics (Saarts 2008). Fast economic and social changes have made demands on the population's capacity to rapidly adapt and have had brutal consequences on social level considering the cohesion of the society.

Young People, Politics and the Bronze Soldier Riots

One complex event that had tragic consequences for the coherence of the Estonian society and for the Children of Freedom was the relocation of the II World War Red Army monument called the Bronze Soldier. Up until the early morning of the 27th of April 2007, a monument made of bronze and stone, stood in the centre of Tallinn, Estonia's capital. This monument came to represent the different understandings along with the joint history of the Estonian and Russian speaking communities, unveiling the tensions embroiled in the society between the two main ethnic groups.

The Bronze Soldier monument, with its figure of a soldier against a stone background, was originally called "The monument for the liberators of Tallinn" and the Soviet authorities opened it

on 22nd of September 1947 in the centre of Tallinn, to represent the victory of the Red Army over Nazi Germany in World War II (Kaasik 2006). For Estonia, the ‘victory’ came to mean occupation by the Soviet Union for 50 years until 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed.

At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, when Estonia gradually got free of Soviet power, the symbolic and practical restoration of Estonian national identity started. During this time, public discussion over the inappropriateness of a monument of a Red Army soldier standing in the middle of Tallinn started as well. From 2005 onwards the monument became gradually more politicised by the actions of the Estonian and Russian governments and from both of the countries’ right-wing organisations, which had started to organise public meetings there (Tamm, Halla 2008).

On the 21st of May 2006, a political youth organisation called the *Night Guard* (Rus. Ночной дозор) was founded in Estonia. One of the founders of the *Night Guard* was Dimitri Linter, a Russian who was also the leader of Kremlin’s youth organisation in Estonia—*Nashi*. According to the founders of the *Night Guard*, the organisation was established in order to protect the memory of Russia’s *Great Freedom War*; the symbol of which was in the centre of Tallinn—the Bronze Soldier. Among other activities the young members of the *Night Guard* together with the members of *Nashi* started to stand in front of the Bronze Soldier wearing the Red Army’s uniforms to pay respects to the soldiers who fell in the Russia’s Great Freedom War (Ladõnskaja 2006).

On a political level nothing was decided until 2006, when the removal of the monument made a parliamentary election campaign promise of a right-of-centre party: *Reformierakond*. They promised to relocate the Bronze Soldier monument before the next Victory Day the 9th of May 2007. *Reformierakond* won the elections in March 2007 and the head of the party Andrus Ansip got the largest number of votes and became the new Prime Minister (Ritter 2007). Now he was determined to relocate the statue as he had promised.

In the early morning of the 26th of April 2007, the monument and the surrounding area was covered by a huge tent and cordoned off by police surrounding the area. It soon attracted the attention of the members of the *Night Guard*, the *Nashi* movement and others, mainly young people, started to gather at the site. Soon the crowd got restless and some group leaders started to make inflammatory speeches. People started to protest at the removal of the statue, screaming “Fascists!” and “Russia!” throwing bottles at the police. After a while, the police ordered the angry crowd to leave and started pushing them out of the area and in to the surrounding streets. Then the violence broke out. The crowd of around a thousand (mainly young people) started to break windows and loot shops and restaurants; the cars and bus stations were set on fire. The violence continued on until the following morning (Maruste 2008). A 20 year-old Russian ethnic man named Dimitri Ganin from Mustvee (Old Russian settlement by the Lake Peipsi bordering Russia) was stabbed by fellow looters and died (Vahe 2007).

The government decided to remove the Bronze Soldier immediately and this was done in the early hours of the 27th of April. Peace was established the following day, but some smaller outbreaks took place in other towns of Estonia as well. The turbulent events created a tense atmosphere filled with suspicion and strong feelings among the citizens of Estonia. The Russian government and media reacted fiercely to the removal. The Estonian government’s websites were attacked in a cyber-war and *Nashi* members blockaded the Estonian Embassy in Moscow for a week (Postimees 2007).

The Estonian government struck back by putting *Nashi* protesters on an immigration blacklist, preventing them from travelling not only to Estonia but also, as a member of the European Union, to most of Europe as well (Schwartz 2008). The move rankled *Nashi*, which charged the European Union with renegeing on democratic principles that European officials often accuse Russia of violating. “They are not admitting activists who are voicing their civic positions,” Ms. Skvortsova, 21, said. She was flanked by about 300

comrades dressed in World War II Soviet infantry uniforms, standing, protesting in front of the European Commission's office in Moscow. "Let them forbid us entry into the European Union," Nikita Borovikov, *Nashi's* leader told to his followers, "we will not give up the memory of our ancestors, nor will we give up our history and thanks to that, thanks to the unity of the whole country, together we will make Russia a global leader of the 21st century!" (Schwartz 2008).

After the riots on the streets and the relocating of the monument, Estonian society was shocked for many different reasons. Those people and experts, who did not want the government to react so forcefully, were shocked that the government still decided to do that risking brutally with the young lives and with the cohesion of the society. The scale of the riots that had taken place and the consequences that they brought shocked other groups, who were ignorant and were hoping for the things to settle by themselves. The wishful thinking, that after the big social and socio-economic changes that the collapse of the Soviet Union brought, the historical tensions between the two main ethnic groups would be solved by itself, was dashed.

The events and rhetoric around the relocation of the Bronze Soldier monument showed how politicised the fight over history was, and how a nation's self-image may often be created and maintained through opposition to an enemy (Kattago 2012, Lotman 2007). In addition, it also revealed how the suppressed pain and trauma of the historical events that have been silenced in people's memories for over a half a century are also having a traumatic effect on the following generations. The effect is not only present in the children and grandchildren of Estonians who were caught in the middle of Stalin's and Hitler's brutal regimes during World War II, but it also represents the children and grandchildren of the Russians, who were on the 'other' side. These events demonstrated that a war does not end when the battles finish, but carry on in people's memories and everyday interactions, generations later.

Historical tensions between ethnic Estonians and ethnic Russians became strong again and the events surrounding the Bronze Soldier monument had politicized different ethnic backgrounds also for the young people. Since Estonia regained its independence in 1991 there had been no riots on the streets or any public conflict between different ethnic groups. After the Bronze Soldier riots the two ethnic groups blamed each other for what had happened and the Estonian and Russian governments could find no common ground. The media of both countries, which strongly emphasized antipathetic sides of the story, added more fuel.

For the young people who were born during or after the 1991 this was the first political conflict on the streets of Estonia they had ever seen. For slightly older ones it brought back memories from the 20th of August 1991, when Soviet forces entered Tallinn and civilians went to protect the parliament as well as the television tower. Memories of these events multiplied the fear caused by the riots, as Gerli¹, a 32-year-old ethnic Estonian artist from Tallinn shared with me:

The next morning after the riots I called my best friend and we both cried. We decided to meet up and walk around in the centre. I felt that I could not wear my Russian folk clothes shawl that I had been wearing every day. When we walked around in the city and stopped by the crossing, waiting for the green light, I could not help recognizing who is Estonian and who is Russian on the other side of the road. (Interviewed 16/06/2010)

From Gerli's story, it becomes interestingly evident how the visual signs communicated through clothing started to mark nationality and created divisions between 'us' and 'them'. Although Gerli had been herself wearing the Russian patterned shawl prior to the riots, she claims that she and her Estonian friend were able to identify who is Estonian and who is Russian by the visual markers only. Gerli's behavior demonstrates symbolically, how the riots divided the

¹ All the names of my informants have been changed in order to protect their privacy.

society, placing people on the opposite sides of the road being suspicious about the motives of those who are on the 'other' side.

The highly complex nature of the Bronze Soldier created the possibility for different powers and groups to use it as a sign that connotes different meanings for different people. An explosion of meta-texts occurred in various disciplines, including art and literature, commenting on each other². However, on the political level the polarization between the two main ethnic groups of Estonia was played out as the root of the problem and that was reflected in young people from Estonian and Russian speaking backgrounds. They were under emotional pressure from their families to take sides on the basis of family loyalties and histories, not according to their current friends, colleagues or partners. The provocative question that was asked in the media and among people was: which side would you be on if a war started tomorrow?

Carrying the burden on: the trauma of war

The complexity of the Estonian and Soviet Russian historical and political relationship is manifested in the statue of the Bronze Soldier. The young generation of Estonian twenty to thirty year olds are not free from this past, even if they personally have been living most or all of their lives in the free Estonian Republic. Their reality is also made up of their parents and grandparents' pasts and presents. The re-independent Estonia is only twenty-two years old and the wider public discussion about the emotional costs of the 20th century history for people living in Estonia has not started yet. Legal and economic analyses have been conducted (Mälksoo 2001: 757–787, Kramer 1999: 33–261), numbers more or less verified, but the psychoanalysis has not been really carried out. We

² Dimitri Petrjakov book "Kaarli Golem"; Kristina Norman art-project "After-War"; Meelis Muhu documentary "Aljoša"; Tõnu Virve and Juta Kivimäe documentary "The Monument".

know more or less how many victims of the Soviet system there were (Naimark 2010: 80–121, Snyder 2010: 409–415, Applebaum 2003: 578–587), but there is still very limited knowledge of how it affected people emotionally and of the mental baggage that has been carried on by their children and grandchildren (Figs 2007: Introduction: xxxii).

The unacknowledged in Estonian public consciousness is filled with political manipulation and it affects both ethnic Estonian youth and Russian speaking Estonian youth. Estonian psychoanalyst Andres Adams has emphasized that war has a long lasting impact for different generations: “People who have been on different sides in the war will carry on the tensions in themselves. There are loads of emotional tensions and strong feelings, which will continue to live on. We saw the awakening of those feelings and reactions with the erecting and taking down of the monuments in Tallinn and in Lihula” (Jõgeda 2010). If the situations people were involved in the war are not openly discussed, it is easy to connect a certain ethnicity with a certain side, although the history of Estonia has always been very multi-layered.

The process of uncovering the ghosts of the past in order to liberate the people in the present has been addressed by Estonian composer and poet Jüri Reinvere, who wrote an essay for the book *Behind Everything Was Fear*: “Estonians are terrified. They are afraid to mourn, because the mourning would relieve what they are scared of. [...] Estonians feel the fear, that rushes out as unexpectedly as a panic attack and it happens in very complicated situations. The incipience of this fear was the first and in my opinion the strongest reaction—what Estonians felt during the Bronze riots week. [...] In the background there was always another archived trauma, a memory that is passed on from generation to generation and what has become a forgotten memory. *Lingua morta*” (Reinvere 2010: 456).

The same fear rushed through the veins of a 35-year-old ethnic Estonian lawyer Kristel from Tallinn when she was caught in the middle of the Bronze Soldier riots with her friend:

We were eating with my friend and her five year old son in a cafe in the city centre when the rioting begun. We heard shouting and glass breaking outside and I felt huge fear. I felt we needed to take the child out of town quickly. We rushed out of the cafe leaving the small boy very confused and we immediately drove out of the city to my friends house. The next day I took a taxi back to the city and when the taxi drove by the beautiful coastline of Tallinn I cried during the whole journey. The taxidriver, a middle age Estonian man, looked at me and said that he had cried yesterday. (Interviewed 2/03/11)

Kristel's terrified reaction was not only the result of seeing a few broken shop windows, the fear and sadness that she experienced was rooted in the archived trauma Reinvere is talking about. Kristel was scared that the fate of her grandparents in the Second World War might catch up with her as well. She was afraid that history might be repeating once again.

With the Bronze Soldier riots it became clearly evident, that the Children of Freedom are not a homogeneous group of young people, but there are differences considering ethnic background, language, class, gender and education. Living with the interrupted history, with the political powers, ideologies and ideals changing rapidly, is a complex and overwhelming experience for anyone, but especially for the young people, who are trying to figure out their position and future possibilities in the society.

Family narrative inheritance

Due to very fast economic, social and political change, unlike Western Europe, differences in Estonian society do not run along generational lines alone, but as often as every five to ten years. It is most common that in one family the grandparents, parents and children have been living in completely different states and societies without ever leaving the country. Brothers and sisters born with few years' differences in these generations can have absolutely different

experiences as well. The children who grew up after 1991 listen to the stories of their older brothers and sisters' childhood in the Soviet Union as some sort of weird fantasies, where you could not buy bananas from the shops nor watch foreign cartoons. These older siblings born around 1980 listen to the stories of their parents about the adult life in the Soviet Union as some sort of absurd theatre, where taxi drivers earned more than university professors and travelling was prohibited along with The Rolling Stones records. The generation that was in their 20s in the 1970s heard from their parents that there was a life existing in another state in the same land before the Soviet Union took over. A life in the republic that embraced functionalist architecture with bourgeois interior design and in 1925 was the first country in the world to establish cultural autonomy for the Jews (Alenius 2007: 445–462). With such a fragmented history it is difficult to believe that there even exists any sort of inter-generational mutual understanding at all. It also becomes clear that to understand the parallel universes running in the family histories of the other ethnic groups living in Estonia takes a huge effort. It is especially challenging for young people, who's personal experiences are still forming.

The process of understanding one's position in the context of hyper-fragmented family history is one of the main concerns for Vadim as well. He represents the Children of Freedom, who has an ethnically mixed family background. Vadim is a 23-year-old art student who has always been living in Tallinn. Vadim's mother is Estonian and father is Russian. He grew up in the Kopli district of North-Tallinn, that used to be an industrial, shipping and border area during the Soviet times, when a mainly Russian speaking community used to live there. Vadim is a well known graffiti artist forming a group with his two Estonian friends, but they operate undercover in order not to be caught by authorities. For the last few years he has also been doing a personal art project, tagging buildings in public spaces with a sign he created that represents positivity for him. He says he wants to spread this sign, carrying out his own

personal revolution to make the world a better place. Vadim tells me that his complicated family history has influenced him to establish this mission:

My father was a soldier in the Afghanistan war because he was in the Soviet Army. He really wanted to go to Afghanistan, but at first he was not chosen. He sent them all sorts of applications and was accepted in the end. So he went there, killed human beings, his friends got killed as well. He was a huge Soviet Union patriot—a nationalist. I am not a nationalist myself. So in the end, what did this war give him? Nothing, but it took a lot. The Soviet government promised him pensions, apartments, all sorts of things, but instead of the promised land he got lots of problems along with insomnia and became an alcoholic. Most difficult for my father is the fact that once he had done so much for his country—for the Soviet Union—but now we know that actually the foundation of that country was wrong and all this time Estonia could have been an independent country. All this makes me feel disgusted. In the end it influences me as well, although my parents are so to say Soviet people and I am not. I feel that it is deeply wrong how this system influenced all of us. (Interviewed 30/08/2010)

Vadim's sadness over his father's experiences in and after the war, illustrates how traumatic events have a long-lasting presence in the following generations. It is always painful for a child to see their father mourning the loss of his youth, health and ideals for the dreams that never materialized, but it is much more difficult to realize that their father is mourning a state that used to be the occupier of the country that the young person is currently living in. This schizophrenic duality is a cause of frustration for many Russian-speaking young people living in Estonia. To negotiate the different narratives that are communicated at school and in the family creates a tense situation and leads young people to question their identity and sense of belonging.

H.R. Goodall has described inheriting a family's incomplete and unfinished narratives as the "*narrative inheritance*"—frameworks left for us from our forebears for understanding our identity through theirs. It helps us see our life grammar and working logic as an extension of, or a rebellion against, the way we story how they lived and thought about things, and it allows us to explain to others where we come from and how we were raised in the continuing context of what it all means. "We are fundamentally *homo narrans*—humans as storytellers—and a well-told story brings with it a sense of fulfillment and of completion. But we don't always inherit that sense of completion" (Goodall 2005: 497).

Another young man from Tallinn tries to cope with the narrative that he inherited from his father. He's name is Viktor and he is a 30-year-old Russian from Tallinn, who founded, along with his Estonian friends, the *ArtCafé Tallinn* in the centre of the city on Pärnu Road. According to Viktor the idea behind the cafe was to bring Russian and Estonian young people together, providing a program of musicians, DJ-s and artists from both countries and ethnic groups. Viktor and his friends had been thinking about why Estonians go to Estonian parties in Tallinn and Russians stick to their own events, so they decided to create a new place to bring people together. While talking about the inter-generational family relationships with Viktor, he said that the Russians who were living in the Soviet Estonia felt that with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 *their* narrative was interrupted:

If you migrate from India to London then you have to go by airplane, you change your location and you go to different culture, but the local Russians were already living here and then overnight the rules of the game changed for them. It is like first we were playing the Soviet Union and we were the bosses and now suddenly the situation has changed—you are the bosses and we're not anymore. Russian people find it impossible to deal with: how come, we are the conquerors, so who are you? My own father is Russian so at home I am constantly fighting with this attitude. I am trying to

explain to him that if you do not like our government then no one is forcing you to stay here, you can buy a train ticket and leave the country. But he does not want to leave either. (Interviewed 30/08/2010)

Viktor, expressing his concerns in August 2010, stated that the *Art-Café Tallinn* was not bringing together as many people as they were hoping for and that due to this they had difficulties managing the place financially. When I passed the café in the summer of 2012, the place was closed down. The short existence of the café reflects the fact that in Estonian society forced integration does not really work, even if it is carried out through organized citizen activism. When young people feel that they are supposed to mix in order to become friends, they are reluctant to do that. On the other hand alliances are formed on everyday bases, when the focus is off the ethnic background differences. On these occasions the question of communication language becomes important: will the interaction take place in Russian, Estonian or in some other mutually understood language? This depends on a young person's access to education. Young people, who have been able to learn different languages, often choose English language in their interactions, as English is more neutral and does not carry political connotations.

Conclusion

In this short text I wanted to demonstrate how the unresolved and not-talked-about traumas of the past are affecting the life of the Children of Freedom—the generation of young Estonian and Russian speaking Estonians, who have been born or have been living most of their lives in the re-independent Estonia. Most of those young people do not have any personal memories of living in the Soviet Union or about the Singing Revolution in 1991, but their ethnic and national identity is influenced and shaped by the stories told to them by their parents, grandparents, teachers and last but not least the politicians.

Nikos Papastergiadis has stated discussing the ethnic identity, that “Identity is not the combination, accumulation, fusion or synthesis of various components, but an energy field of different forces“ (ed. Webner, Modood 1996: 258). In Estonia the energy field of identities has a threat of becoming a battlefield when the different forces are turned against each other by the political players. Politicians from Estonian and Russian governments are eager to use the emotionality of the historical issues for their own advantage in a way that not only creates hatred among different ethnic groups, but also results in civilian victims as happened in 2007 during the Bronze Soldier riots.

The emotionally loaded history that stretches out to the current day holds young people hostage at multiple levels. The Estonian and Russian speaking families contribute to oral history by communicating their family narratives that have been running on parallel tracks or are as painfully intertwined as a barbedwire. The parents and grandparents of the one-third of the Children of Freedom came to Estonia during the time when there were no borders inside the biggest country in the world. The Soviet Union had one currency, one official language and one official history. If you moved from one Soviet member state to the other it was not considered to be a migration, but just a change of location in your own country. So when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 many people who had migrated and settled in the Soviet member states found themselves in complicated situations. The collapse of the Soviet state created a sudden change in ethnic and national identities, which had a serious impact on people.

Both Estonian and Russian speakers are caught up in the cross-fire between an Estonian government attempting to build national identity and political security and a Russian government in the process of deciding which parts of Soviet history to claim and which to disown. Russia’s government has never officially apologized for the crimes against humanity of the Soviet Union. At the same time Russian authorities are claiming that Russia is the successor of the

Soviet Union protecting the monuments and symbols of the Soviet Union as the Bronze Soldier. For young people and school children the issues are highly significant and extend through both the politics of language and the politics of historical representation—both issues are made more complex by the existence of parallel Russian and Estonian educational practices within Estonia.

Estonia, as a re-independent state, did not start from a blank page in 1991, nor did it continue straight from 1939, but it is carrying a difficult legacy of the Second World War and the Soviet Union, which is affecting the Children of Freedom of today. It is evident that the inter-generational realities are complex for both Estonian and Russian speaking young people. Estonia's identity and integration politics should become more inclusive, turning away from polarized and highly politicised options of belonging. Instead the formation of the national identity should be taking into account the generational differences and different historical experiences of all the ethnic groups living in Estonia. Estonia would need a wider discussion on the topic of how the post-Soviet legacy is influencing ethnic and national belonging of the people living in Estonia since the re-establishing of the nation states in 1991. Otherwise the identity field would still be tied to the old battlefields, keeping the Children of Freedom as the hostages of the past.

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CHILDREN AND THE CITY: IMAGINING URBAN SPACES

Pille Runnel and Ehti Järv

In the heart of the city, surrounded by parks and pedestrian walks, cars give signals on a big intersection. A dog barks. It is getting darker, but the streets are still full of people. Are some people fighting? Or is it a guy with a gun going to the store? A boy is sitting in his hiding place on top of a tree. He doesn't want to go home yet, as so many stories roll out around him.

People are drawn to cities and seek points of identification within the urban world. Public urban spaces, such as squares, parks or pedestrian streets are continuously re-appropriated by their users and are re-created with different meanings and practices. They unfold abundant personal and shared meanings.

In order to explore how children perceive contemporary urban spaces, how they conceptualise and understand them and where they find points of identification in the urban world, a drawing competition for children was organised by the Estonian National Museum. The objective was twofold: to document personal narratives and to approach children as research subjects who are somewhat different from adults, possessing different competencies and engaging in different modes of communication: telling tales, writing stories or drawing pictures. Through these communicative tools they skilfully express their engagements of the complexities of the social and physical worlds.

More than 400 drawings were submitted by the 6–14 year olds, showing what kids do in the cities, what they dislike or are afraid of, where their favourite shopping malls, cinemas, but also secret hiding places are. Fear, security, freedom and play. Noise and anxiety,

but also excitement related to the events and social interactions in the city space. On the drawings public urban spaces were often equated with consumer zones, represented by favourite shops, eating places or brands. But on several drawings public and private merged. A lot of this apparently has to do with seeing and experiencing other people. People are the most exciting attraction offered by public spaces—more interesting than buildings or streets which rather form a stage for city lives to happen.

Mediated city and urban decay

Kids' urban experiences and their representations of the complex environment found in cities converge with representations produced by media and popular culture. These often have to do with risks, harms and threats associated with urban environments. Here the complexity of kids' city representations is manifested perhaps in its fullest, as not just kid's own perceived or experienced threats merge with media representations of urban space, but through this, city and media are merging, becoming an interspatial flow of images and experiences. It calls for further explorations in the ways media representations of urbanity actually contribute to understanding urbanity, as on the one hand media might be seen as adding layers not immediately experienced by kids themselves, thus extending their own (assumably) simple perceptions and imaginations. On the other hand, various media processes interacting with cities might be seen as reducing the actual complexity of both material and imagined space (Couldry, quoted in Fornäs 2006).

It is noteworthy that media and popular culture interact with personal experiences especially when children look at the city as a dystopian zone of disorder and decay. It might be enforced by the fact that essentially both media and the cities act as sites for fears, chaos and risks as well as efforts to overcome those. A drawing by a girl called Ellen (Figure 7) approaches disorder through

disintegration and ruins as a condition to be removed. More often, children draw a city they dislike as an eventscape. Disliked urban space is an intersectional interplay between various groups of people. These events are full of tensions and (potential) conflicts between criminals, drunk or speeding car drivers (Figure 6) or simply people disobeying common norms—making bonfires or creating noise (Figure 4).

Playgrounds and hiding places

For children as well as for popular celebrities, urban spaces are border zones wherein public and private interact. Indeed, the need of a balance between those two is often taken as a challenge. Children and celebrities share the capacity to privatise public spaces, but how and why they do it is different. Moreover, the role of a celebrity demands a constant negotiation of publicness and privacy (McNamara 2009), which largely happens in public spaces. For instance, if the balance of public and private is threatened by the paparazzi, the public place is turned into a secure private zone. In a way, while seeking to catch the gaze, celebrities also seek to avoid it. In the case of the kids, the public place is privatised internally—many ‘children’s places’ (Rasmussen 2004)—and public spaces are actually known and considered significant just by them alone (Figure 9). These experiences might be as situation-dependent as the private zone of a celebrity, as well as having long-term meanings and practices associated with it.

This kind of engagement with public space becomes relevant from the early ages of 5–10, when children start to explore the surroundings of their homes and later in the wider environments—their neighbourhoods or districts of the city (Kylin 1999), which become their playgrounds. Exploration happens through discovering or creating one’s private spaces within the public (Figure 10). These places offer independence from the rules of the world of grownups. Thus kids’ private places outside their homes, rather than becoming

threatened and limited, actually become spaces of freedom. Children's places, both real or imagined, can be zones of experimentation, play and joy. Although children's drawings also involve pictures about pre-designed "official" playgrounds such as sites where they feel secure and experience happiness (Figure 8), less designed and natural places are more significant in terms of development and understanding the world (Kylin 1999).

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MEDIATED CITY



Figure 1. *What I dislike in a city? I drew how bad people rob and hit good people. I choose this topic, because I see every day on TV, how something bad like this happens, especially in cities. I do not like bad people. They pick a quarrel, fight and say stupid things loudly. They interfere with people who need just the slightest bit of a peace! This city is located somewhere in Russia. Luckily I don't live in a city at all. (Kevin, 8 years)*



Figure 2. My drawing is about the underground life of mafiosos and dark powers. Cruelty, evilness, revenge and big money rule over there. Robbery and stealing are a habit. Why did I draw this picture? Well, because it is an exciting topic, as well as a big problem, which has to be erased. All this is of course mostly a problem in big cities. For example, everything you can see on this picture might happen in Tallinn. Fortunately I live at the other end of Estonia, in a silent and peaceful countryside. (Sirelin, 8 years)

ZONES OF DISORDER AND DECAY



Figure 3. *I drew a city where I am in the dark and I am frightened. Dogs are barking and there are just a few people around. I think that it is horrible in this city, big cars are passing by, well—a dark city is frightful. (Birgit, 9 years)*



Figure 4. *What I dislike in a city? There is dense traffic in a city and there are dangerous situations; one could be hit by a car. There are a lot of people in a city and some of them are fighting. Rubbish is dropped on the ground; this is ugly. Someone made a bonfire in a city, although this is not allowed. You must follow common rules in a city. (Kairi, 8 years)*



Figure 5. *I drew the traffic in Tartu. Drew myself in the centre of the picture, because sometimes I am afraid that I get into dangerous places or situations. I drew it because I do not like noise and it seems to me that the cars are an emerging threat both to me and to others (including animals). In the past, after all, the houses were wooden and everything was safer for sure. I do not live in Tartu, but live near the Ilmatsalu. (Ronja, 8 years)*



Figure 6. Life in a bad side of town, or what I do not like in town. I do not like if the drivers are driving drunk. I do not like that some are driving faster than the permitted speed and do not take road conditions into account. Pedestrians must be visible in the dark and use pedestrian reflectors. I do not like that banks and stores are robbed and it is not much of an achievement to steal from your fellow men. I do not like that a lot of accidents with people, cars, trains, boats and planes happen. (Rasmus, 8 years)



Figure 7. I drew the ruins of the house next to the Police department. I drew them because I do not like this place – it is so ugly and frightening. This place is in Pärnu. I live there and I look forward to Pärnu City Government tidying this place urgently!!! (Ellen, 10 years)

SPACES OF FREEDOM: PLAYGROUNDS AND HIDING PLACES



Figure 8. I drew a playground not far from home, because we feel good and secure over there with my friends. I like this place because we can be there together, tell each other secrets and things we worry about and no one will betray our cabin on top of a tree. It is situated in Pärnu where my home is. I live in that city. (Arabella, 10 years)



Figure 9. *I have drawn my very good hiding place. This is my favourite and only hiding place, which is located between the garages. This is my hometown Pärnu, where I like to live very much. (Helari, 10 years).*



Figure 10. *There is a thief between the flats, who spies over people. I am in this secret place with my friends. My favourite place is located on top of three trees. (Stella Regina, 8 years)*



Figure 11. *This is my hiding place. It is good to hide there and tell riddles. You can play under beautiful trees over there. (Rasmus, 7 years)*

EXPLORING THE POWER DIMENSIONS OF FESTIVALS¹

Alessandro Testa

0. Introduction

Over the last few decades, the awareness of the importance of the festival as a transcultural and transhistorical phenomenon has noticeable maturity². However, this awareness has deep roots: in the work of E. Durkheim, the festival was recognized as a transcultural phenomenon representing a central cultural experience for a community to represent itself and its social life (Durkheim 1912). A few years later, M. Mauss, in a well-known essay about gift giving and exchanges (Mauss 1923–1924), addressed the socio-economical features of the circulation of goods in certain non-western societies. He coined the expression “fait social total” to describe not only the act of exchanging gifts as such, but the entirety of social features involved in it. Hence, since this exchange of gifts in the societies studied by Mauss was usually part of a chain of broader events roughly conceivable as festivals, the festival in itself became, by synecdoche, the total social fact *par excellence* for many scholars, amongst whom we count several “classic” thinkers in the anthropology of religions (see Caillois [1939] 1963, Eliade 1949, Geertz 1973).

¹ This contribution has been conceived and written as an elaboration of certain issues discussed during the course “Carnivals, Festivals, Public Events. The Historical-Anthropological Approach”, held at the Estonian Institute of Humanities (Tallinn University) in the frame of the DoRa doctoral programme.

² “Festival” should be conceived as a conventional, non-reified comparatively-constructed category useful for cultural investigations regardless whether they are anthropological, sociological, historical or of any other sort.

In more recent scholarly literature, festivals are still considered to have been social events of the greatest importance for centuries (Apolito 1993, Ariño, Lombardi Satriani 1997, Burke 2009, Valeri 1979). For D. Handelman, festivals and public events are “privileged points of penetration into other social and cultural universes” (Handelman 1990: 9), and I would stress: not only in “other” but even in “familiar” cultural universes³. This argument has probably been shaped on V. Turner’s theorization on performance—a topic strongly linked to festival and ritual studies—, developed throughout his career: “for me, the anthropology of performance is an essential part of the anthropology of experience. In a sense, every type of cultural performance, including ritual, ceremony, carnival, theatre and poetry is an explanation of life itself [...]. Through the performance process itself, what is normally sealed up, inaccessible to everyday observation and reasoning, in the depths of sociocultural life, is drawn forth [...]” (Turner 1982: 13)⁴.

I. A turning point in theory and method: Don Handelman’s *Models and Mirrors*

Models and Mirrors. Towards an anthropology of public events, by D. Handelman (Handelman 1990) marks a crucial moment in the history of studies on festivals⁵. Handelman’s method derives both

³ Thomas Pettitt, a social historian, has similarly stated that “social history has learnt to appreciate the festival as a valuable window on society and its structures” (Pettitt 2005: XXI).

⁴ An exhaustive history of studies on “Festival” (intended both as a social transcultural fact and as a theoretical notion) is still to be written. However, interesting and critical indications for such a history can be found in Isambert 1982, Handelman 1990 and in Palumbo 2009. Obviously I cannot go into details in the extremely vast field of ritual studies, which is much more vast than—as well as deeply correlated to—the field of festival studies. In the text I will only quote few authors and works that have represented pivotal theoretical moments for the development of festival studies. For a very good critical compendium on ritual studies, see Bell 2009.

⁵ Handelman does not really justify his use—nor explain the theoretical implications—of the notion of “public event”, which in his book is often used as a synonym

from an assimilation of the lesson of the so-called Manchester school and from the theoretical outcomes of the interpretative and reflexive turns of the seventies and the eighties. His work, therefore, represents a return to the interpretative and methodological needs for the study of rituals pointed out by scholars such as M. Gluckman and V. Turner—who furnished new methodological tools with which to study the ritual by contrasting the functionalist assumption of the immovability of social order and the homeostatic function of its manifestations—as well as a natural and coherent product of the tension towards deconstruction and innovativeness of the times (the book was written in the second half of the eighties). Other major influences overtly mentioned in his book are those by E. Durkheim and C. Geertz.

Handelman's approach to the study of festivals—an approach that addresses both historical and ethnographic examples—can be described as a neo-functionalism deeply concerned with the features of power. We are going to see in which terms by going more deeply through the conceptual tools that support the theoretical apparatus of his book.

According to my reading, the three main questions that Handelman asks himself in his study of several historical and ethnographic examples of rituals/festivals/public events (The Palio of Siena, the Christmas mumming in Newfoundland, the State ceremonies of Israel, the Dance of Man of the Tewa, etc.) present in the book are: 1) what kinds of relationships are there between the structure and the function of an event and the social order of which the event itself cannot be but a product? 2) In what terms may this relationship be explained and 3) is it possible to construct a formalized paradigm

of “public ritual” and “festival”, although those two terms/notions are also present in the book. Anyway, in ritual studies it is generally accepted that there is always a ritual dimension in festivals, but not the contrary—that is to say: there is not necessarily a festive dimension in every ritual. According to the previous assumption, in Handelman 1990 “public event” seems to overlap with the range of ritual inasmuch as every public event has a ritual dimension whereas not every public event is a festival and, vice versa, not every festival is necessarily a public event.

which points out and explains the different kinds of interactions between public events and the society in which they occur? These three questions are related to a more fundamental one: why study festivals or—to use Handelman’s own terminology—public events? As we have already read, Handelman’s answer is as simple as it is effective: “for the ethnographer, public events are privileged points of penetration into other social and cultural universes” (Handelman 1990: 9), and this is possible because of the strong *function* that public events have in every society. In effect, a key-concept in the work of Handelman is function. In his opinion, which is a very sharable one, no anthropological enquiry can avoid the recourse to it, and especially not in his particular field of study: “the ‘functional’ relationship lies at the epistemological core of any concepts of public events” (Handelman 1990: 12), and this is because public events are characterized by a profound dimension of codifications of values, beliefs, practices. As a consequence, the codes by which relevant cultural features are expressed are embedded in a “meta-design” (Handelman 1990: 7), to be conceived as the general logics of the structure of an event. This meta-design can be reconducted—or rather is functional—to three different patterns or models.

Despite the title of the book, Handelman’s interpretative proposal is tripartite. He develops three macro-categories of public events, each of which stands as a representative model of a kind of relationship between a given event—which can be brought back to one of the models—and the social order in which the given event comes into being. The models have been conceived to be universal, or rather adaptable to any historical or ethnographic context. I will continue to use the word “event”, according to the author’s choice, but actually also the word/notion of festival may define (almost all) the cases discussed by Handelman.

The first typology is “events-that-model” the social reality. Events ascribable to this category permit to operate through themselves, in the social life, and to change something in it. These events

are therefore characterized by a transformational dimension: the actions performed in them are codified in the reality and affect the world. For instance, rites of passage or public exorcisms can be considered examples of “events-that-model”, because both dramatize *and* cause a change (in the quoted two examples, a change that shapes one or more members of the society). These events are also characterized by a relative predictability: the ritual performances in them are not casual but causal, and their purpose is to cause an expected or desired change in something: “an event-that-models must have predictive capabilities [...], it contains futures in itself” (Handelman 1990: 28). Conflicts or rebellions can be dramatized in such types of events.

“Events-that-present” are events that reflect, by giving a standardized and predetermined image, the social order or some aspects of social reality in which they are imagined and lived and for which they are functional. “The event of presentation holds up a mirror to social order” (Handelman 1990: 48). No conflicts or transformations are brought or dramatized by these events: they are supposed to show, justify or glorify the order *as it is*. They are the most suitable for—and used by—hierarchies, because their purpose is to maintain, legitimize and strengthen the *status quo*. It is not by chance that they are representative of totalitarian regimes.

Events that represent social reality (“events-that-re-present”, the third type) are constructed differently and are functional to different scopes: “if events-that-present are axiomatic icons of versions of social realities, then events that re-present do work of comparison and contrast in relation to social realities” (Handelman 1990: 49). Intuitively, the ideal-type of this category is the carnival, and in fact Handelman chooses the medieval carnival of Nuremberg to exemplify it. Performances like masking and mumming are perfect manifestations of events ascribable to this typology inasmuch as they shape a distorted or ideal (but more often distorted, negative) representation of the society or of some aspects of the society. Events-that-re-present show how the society should or should not—or might or

might not—be, whereas events-that-present show how the society is (or *must* be)⁶.

Handelman does not consider this tripartite interpretative paradigm as a theory according to which, by deduction, one might broach the study of a public event. On the contrary, he states that he developed that theory during a long period (“many years”, he writes: Handelman 1990: 23) working by induction, that is to say, shaping the different models as he went through the interpretation and the assessment of the historical or ethnographic cases he studied. Nor should the three models be considered as concrete examples of certain kinds of events, and in fact he underscores that “these typological aids are meta-designs of public events, not the events themselves” (*ibid.*). Handelman is extremely critical of his own proposal and often in the long theoretical introduction to his book, he tries to anticipate the objections that might arise. It is he himself who enlightens certain weaknesses of his system, suggesting that it should not be considered as decisive or motivated by dogmatic aims (see Handelman 1990: 58–62)⁷.

Handelman’s neo-functionalist theory has the merit of being relatively dynamic and flexible, and therefore able to adapt itself to cases even extremely different from each other. Moreover, it shows how “classical” oppositions (norm/transgression; ordinary time/extraordinary time; sacred/profane and so on) used to describe and interpret the dynamics of festive events can still be fruitful, if used

⁶ It is quite evident that each of these models can be referred to as more functional (but not exclusively functional) to different socio-cultural tendencies: “events of presentation seem associated especially with modern, bureaucratic states; events of modelling with tribal and traditional people; while events of representation tend to an association with traditional, hierarchical societies” (Handelman 1990: 77).

⁷ There have been several reactions to Handelman’s theorization: he answers some of these critical reviews and deepens certain theoretical aspects of his tripartite model in the preface to the second edition of the book: Handelman 1999. For an application of Handelman’s paradigm to an Italian festive case—an application described as fruitful as well as “problematic”—see Palumbo 2006: 303–306. Another critical application of Handelman’s model can be found in my doctoral thesis (Testa in press).

correctly (that is, critically). As for other issues related to power or to the politics of festivals present in Handelman's speculation, I will address them more explicitly in the last section of this study.

2. Analytics of Power

"Cultural universes", "sociocultural life", "social structures": these expressions, often quoted so far have belonged to the historical, sociological and anthropological vocabulary for more than a century, but the main focus in the study of the realities behind them has switched, with time, from general cultural, symbolical, religious topics to the one of power and the ways in which and by which power relations express, control, characterize social manifestations (such as festivals).

Nevertheless, the concept of "power" itself is ambiguous and has been intended differently by different theorists. There is no such thing as a conventional definition of "power" as a phenomenon of social life or, at least, as a notion used in social sciences⁸. Power is a concept present in the entire history of Western political philosophy, and has been formulated in diverse and often contradictory ways—we might wander to the differences in the conceptions of power in the thoughts of philosophers as T. Hobbes, Montesquieu, F. Nietzsche or J. Rawls, to make just a few examples.

It goes far beyond the scope of this paper to propose an outline of the notion of power, though a theoretical digression on power seems necessary in order to justify and establish my use of the concept. Hence, I will briefly point out the main theoretical references for a conception of power useful for festive studies, the first of which is

⁸ "Power" is an absolutely polysemic word. If we look for dictionary definitions of it, we find dozens of different, not necessarily linked or coherent meanings: from "the ability to do or act" to "military strength", "political or social control", "vigour", "energy", "active property or function", "source of energy", "magnifying capacity", "strong influence", "a deity" and so on. The same polysemy exists in Italian "potere", French "pouvoir" and Spanish "poder".

doubtlessly found in the thought of the first theoretician who made of power his main concern and who explored it in modern and scientific terms: K. H. Marx. However, an even greater influence in the construction of the conception of power in anthropological terms and in its use in the field of festival studies has had the Italian Marxist thinker—and founder of Italian Communist Party—A. Gramsci, especially through his theory of hegemony, developed in different passages of the “*Quaderni dal carcere*” (Gramsci [1951] 2007). There are two main dimensions in the Gramscian formulation of the concept of hegemony. The first one is related to the commonsensical sense of the world, which comes directly from the meaning the word had in ancient Greek, namely the predominance of one political entity over another; the second one, much more fruitful from a theoretical point of view, is about *how* this predominance is possible, and, for instance, how it is possible for dominant class(es) of a given society to maintain their control over the dominated one(s). It must be said that at the basis of this theoretical concern, for Gramsci, stood the question of why, in capitalistic societies, the classes of workers had not risen up against their exploiters, as predicted by Marx. Gramsci answered himself: it is because the hegemony is not only political, but also *cultural*. As D. Strinati has written about this feature of Gramsci’s thought, “dominant groups in society, including fundamentally but not exclusively the ruling class, maintain their dominance by securing the “spontaneous consent” of subordinate groups, including the working class, through the negotiated construction of a political and ideological consensus which incorporates both dominant and dominated groups” (Strinati, 1995: 166). Cultural hegemony, in Gramscian terms, is both the domination itself and the result of more or less conscious strategies of the dominant classes/groups/strata to maintain the domination “through the elaboration and penetration of ideology (ideas and assumptions) into their [of the lowest classes] common sense and everyday practice; it is the systematic (but not necessarily or even usually deliberate) engineering of mass consent to the established order. No hard

and fast line can be drawn between the mechanisms of hegemony and the mechanisms of coercion. [... In fact] in any given society, hegemony and coercion are interwoven” (Gitlin 1987: 240)⁹.

What stressed so far could already be considered as a very useful theoretical contribution for the study of the power dimensions of festivals, but actually there is another link between Gramsci’s thought and the field of festival studies, a link which has been rather neglected—or at least not usually quoted—by English scholarly literature: some Italian and French currents in the study of folklore.

Starting both from the general suggestions on hegemony present in Gramsci 2007 (1951) and from the ones about folklore in Gramsci 1991 (1952), Italian ethnologist A. M. Cirese (Cirese 1973 [1971]), followed by L. M. Lombardi Satriani (1974) and then, closely, by others, developed a theory of a structural demarcation which, although expressed slightly differently by these scholars, can be summarized as follows: according to Gramsci’s estimation of folklore as the conception of the world of the subaltern classes (Gramsci 1991 [1952]), “popular culture” started to be conceived and theorized as the more or less coherent and homogenous culture of “subaltern classes” in opposition to the culture or “hegemonic classes”¹⁰. This model had been somehow present even in previous theorization of popular culture (in the one of Bakhtin for example: Bakhtin 1984), but had never been structured in rigorous theoretical terms (as, for instance, in the reference handbook “*Cultura egemonica e culture subalterne*”, Cirese [1971] 1973). According to the development of original Gramsci’s ideas in more anthropological terms by those thinkers, folklore was definitely no longer the study of errors and curiosities of ignorant

⁹ “In the last twenty years Antonio Gramsci has become a major presence in British and American anthropology, especially for anthropologists working on issues of culture and power” (Crehan 2002). In effect, in English literature in the field of humanities and social sciences the influence of Gramsci has grown exponentially, especially after the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

¹⁰ A very early interest on Gramsci’s ideas on folklore is to be found in E. de Martino (see de Martino 1952), an Italian anthropologist and historian of religions, but in terms not exactly comparable to those of Cirese.

folks or the pure, spontaneous creation of genuine peoples or, yet, a casual, random product of historical circumstances, but the result of deep structural and cultural differences as well as the expression of the spirit of resistance of the lower classes throughout the history of Europe. According to this perspective, the reason why the folklore had been discredited by aristocratic and bourgeois élites—and fought by clerical élites—since the Middle Ages became clear: folklore had an inherently contesting—if not subversive—charge and represented the cultural production of one of the two cultural poles in the very polarized Gramscian-oriented conception of hegemony applied to European contexts (clerical/aristocratic/bourgeois/“high”/cultivated/dominant/hegemonic cultures/classes/strata of society *versus* rural/peasant/“low”/popular/dominated/subaltern cultures/classes/strata of society). This paradigm was quickly—and roughly in the same terms—borrowed by French historical anthropologists of the Middle Ages (Le Goff [1979] 2000, Schmitt 1976, 1988) and then by many scholars interested in “popular culture” in medieval, modern and contemporary times (Burke [1978] 2009, Clemente, Meoni, Squillaciotti, 1976, Cuisenier 1995, Padiglione 1978, just to quote some examples)¹¹, and it was since then declined, adjusted or nuanced differently according to different needs for different topics or fields of research.

All the scholars mentioned above and many others approached the study of European festivals—especially of carnivals—holding these Gramscian-shaped methodological tools, focusing on different topics, such as the circulation of cultural themes between the two poles (for example in literature), the features and the functions of certain ritual representations or myths, the ways in which festivals could represent and translate social patterns in a given community or comparatively. We shall return to the relevance of the paradigm of cultural hegemony for a critical anthropology of festivals.

¹¹ For an early assessment of the methodological relevance of this paradigm, see Isambert 1982: 62–72; more recent and exhaustive are Strinati 1995 and the introduction to Burke 2009.

Like Gramsci, P. Bourdieu constructs a part of his theories upon those of Marx. Here we will focus only on one part of his vast, outstanding production, namely on his formulation of capital(s) as a crucial point in his speculation about the nature and the dimensions of power in society as well as a theory useful in the field of festival studies.

Bourdieu distinguishes three (or four) main types of capital: 1) economic capital, 2) cultural capital, 3) social capital, 4) symbolic capital—the latter being a form of “reflexive” capital, that is to say the cognitive perception, based on socially-constructed categories, of any of the former three capitals. He writes: “capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as *economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights; as *cultural capital*, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of educational qualifications; and as *social capital*, made up of social obligations (‘connections’), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of a title of nobility” (Bourdieu 1986: 242)¹². For Bourdieu, these capitals or sub-forms of a sole Capital are the products and at the same time the currency in the market where the objects and the relationships that regulate the mechanisms of the reproduction of the social structures and hierarchies are traded. This social dynamics of reproduction is possible mainly because capitals are partially cumulative, partially transmissible and partially convertible into each other. How that can be of methodological use in the study of the festival will be pointed out later.

¹² Bourdieu’s theory of capital(s) is absolutely preeminent in his thought, to the extent that he considered “the structure of the distribution of the different types or subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world” (Bourdieu 1986: 241). For a wider—as well as introductory—exploration in the field of Bourdieu’s theory of capital(s), with an emphasis on the relationship between this and other aspects of his speculation, see Bourdieu 1994.

As previously stated, another French theorist, M. Foucault, has been explicitly and deeply concerned by the notion of power. It is not simple to assess Foucault's ideas on power inasmuch as, as it has been often noticed, "during Foucault's intellectual journey his views on power had changed significantly" (Bielskis 2009: 80). With him, for the first time, power has been considered as a *relational* factor produced and enacted in a complex set of social processes, not only as the empirical result of the action of an individual, a given social class, the state (or other leviathanic entities)—although this feature is not neglected in Foucault's literature (see, for instance, Foucault 1975). Foucault later developed new methods and even a new academic language in the will of exploring the dimensions of power "but without the King" (Foucault 1977: 125). For him, power seems to be a multiform thing that exists and operates in social life, giving validity to the systems of truths, founding the legitimacy of discourses, shaping the conception of human body as well as shaping human body itself and the ways it is conceived and manipulated (Foucault 1972, 1975). In its factual expressions, Foucault's power can be a violent and repressive force as well as a positive condition for the stability of social life and the production of knowledge. As suggested in the old English expression "the powers that be"—which is actually the translation of a biblical verse—power is deeply rooted in—and felt by—individuals but at once it transcends them as such (that is, as individuals), for its very immanent, ubiquitous and reticular nature, which at last is mainly occult to social agents—unless it becomes coercive.

Foucault never theorized power in definitive terms or bonded it to an univocal definition. Power is "something" that underlies and gives lymph to his scripts as well as it does in social life¹³. To what

¹³ An anthology of Foucault's scripts explicitly consecrated to the theme of power is "*Microfisica del potere*" (Foucault 1977). A good starting point for the understanding of the slightly different conceptions of power that can be found in Foucault's works may be a comparison with Nietzsche's conception of power, inasmuch as Foucault himself has often declared his intellectual debt to the German philosopher (see Bielskis 2009).

extent and how Foucault's speculation on power might be useful for a better understanding of the dynamics of festival will be stated in the next section.

At the end of this brief journey through some of the most influential and fruitful speculations and theories on power, I think that a personal, operational definition of power to be used in the investigation of the dynamics of festivals might be useful, especially at this point, before entering again the field of festivals: power can be considered as the set of conditions and effects of relations amongst individuals or classes of individuals for the control, use and administration of capitals—whether they be material or cultural—or services *and* the engine which makes possible the functioning of the structural and symbolic mechanisms that regulate the reproduction of a hegemonic order *and* the underlying, immanent, embodied and relational dimension which allows practices, poetics and discourses to affect all the areas of social life.

3. Festivals: Times and Spaces of Power

Festivals are always embedded in moments and places “given” (given by the calendar mostly, and mostly according to the “tradition” or other forms of social habits). As such, a festival can be considered as a privileged modality for the “socialization of space and time”, to use an expression by A. Appadurai (Appadurai 2001: 233); a sort of “super-social” moment in which space and time are filled with non-ordinary—although fully socially relevant—meanings. It is obvious that the experience of time is always culturally constructed—under the forms of the articulations of calendars, clocks, symbolic or conventional dates and years, etc.—just as well as “the experience of space is always socially constructed” (Gupta, Ferguson 1992: 11). And the experiences of time and space themselves are always related to power. J. Le Goff has rightly argued that “only the charismatic holders of power are the masters of calendar: kings, clergymen, revolutionaries” (Le Goff

1979: 501)¹⁴. It is therefore not a chance if calendrical reforms have always been resisted or openly refused by subaltern classes, in Europe (Le Goff 1979, Grimaldi 2002): festivals depended on a calendar, and whereas the hegemonic classes manipulated the calendars with more or less freedom and according to given circumstantial needs or interests, traditional festivals based on a calendar were on the contrary the “most important moment in popular culture” (Burke 2009, Caillois [1939] 1963, Eliade 1949, Jesi 1977, Lanternari 1959 e 1997, Valeri 1979). However, with the passage from the traditional (pre-industrial) world to the modern (industrial, then post-industrial) world, the relevance of calendrical dimensions of festival has been radically involved and transformed. I would not go as far as V. Valeri, who argues that “the social time, which was mainly cyclic and reversible in the traditional world, becomes mainly irreversible and numeric: Swiss clocks are our festivals” (Valeri 1979: 94); nevertheless, it is doubtless that the conceptions, the perceptions and the practice of festivals have radically changed in the last two centuries. Certain social functions accomplished by the festivals in the traditional world are today accomplished by other social events: the culture of clubbing, discothèque and other forms of leisure or rupture of ordinary time and behavior—especially under the shape (still calendrical!) of week-end events—are probably good examples (see Testa 2011a)¹⁵. Still, the festival remains a major social phenomenon, especially in the life of the most macroscopic product of modernity: the nation-state, and its main condition/effect: nationalism.

¹⁴ In his outstanding essay on calendar and historical calendars (Le Goff 1979), Le Goff often broaches the issues of the political control of time. By the quoted synecdoche “kings, clergymen, revolutionaries”, Le Goff refers probably to the three most important calendrical “revolutions” in the history of Western world: the calendrical reform by Julius Caesar, the Gregorian reform by Pope Gregory XIII and the “calendrier républicain” imposed during the French Revolution.

¹⁵ The transformations and the discontinuities to which the festival has been subjected in the last two centuries have been studied from different perspectives (see Apolito 1993, Ariño, Boissevain 1992, Gallini 1971, Lombardi Satriani 1997, Testa in press).

The power dimension of festivals in the modern world cannot be approached without considering the issues of nationalism and the cultural strategies of nations. Festivals and public events are nowadays, almost in any case, placed under the direct or indirect surveillance of the main emanation of the power of the nation-state: bureaucracy—although in my opinion it is still to be proved whether bureaucracy, *New Leviathan*, is an instrument of nations rather than the contrary. The recent anthropological awareness of the bureaucratic tendency to gaze at, infiltrate and, if possible, control all the aspect of social life does not allow us to underestimate its power in the perspective of a deep investigation of festive dimensions in contemporary Western world¹⁶.

As we have already assessed, D. Handelman has deeply explored and conceptualized the relations between festivals and national/bureaucratic logics in several works (Handelman 1990, 1999, 2004, Shamgar, Handelman 1991), focusing on the role of public events—especially mirror-events, the second type according to his paradigm—in the hegemonic reproduction of an ideological image of the society to be shown and participated by the society itself. Handelman convincingly demonstrates that even apparently loosely organized or spontaneous festivals, such as the carnival of Rio de Janeiro, are actually deeply penetrated by bureaucratic substances and moved by bureaucratic dynamics. This pervasiveness of nation bureaucracies and their will of controlling as many manifestations of social life as

¹⁶ Reflections on the power of bureaucracy and its immense role in shaping the modern state are already present in Marx. M. Weber gave an early, important contribution to the matter (Weber [1922] 1978). In the anthropological debate, M. Herzfeld has given a major contribution (Herzfeld 1992). D. Handelman, pushing some Herzfeld's arguments on an extreme conclusion, has written that "bureaucracy is a structure of hegemonic consciousness in the modern world" (Handelman 1999: XXX) and that the "bureaucratic practice is constituted through the invention, use and modification of taxonomies that generate and change social realities" (Handelman 1999: XXXI; see also Shamgar, Handelman 1991). According to this conclusion—and to the works of M. Herzfeld – B. Palumbo has proposed a new and even more radical theory on the taxonomic power of transnational bureaucracies (Palumbo 2010).

possible allows Handelman to bridge two apparently incomparable cases: “despite its [the carnival of Rio de Janeiro] exciting allure, the distance between this carnival and the totalitarian spectacles has narrowed considerably” (1999: XXXIX). After all, totalitarian Western regimes were as bureaucratic as the ones that had preceded and followed them, not to speak about the case of Soviet Union, whose powerful, Kafkaesque bureaucracy is actually proverbial.

When bureaucracy meets a very hierarchical social order in which paroxysmal nationalistic sentiments permeate society, like in the cases of totalitarian regimes, the moment of a festival—and public events in general—gains even more power of representing and solidifying hierarchies and order¹⁷. The liturgical solemnity of public manifestations during Fascism has been deeply investigated in all of its social, political and symbolical implications by E. Gentile, who has proposed the notion of “sacralization of politics” (Gentile 2003) to describe its effects. The ritual, almost religious dimension of the cult of the “Duce” or of the “Fascio Littorio” during public gatherings functioned both as an exposition of power of the hierarchy and of its highest point (the Duce) and as a machine to produce sentiments of participation, solidarity, patriotism and, thus, consensus.

Similarly, in his outstanding study on the “nationalization of the masses”, G. Mosse (Mosse 2001) has argued that the consensus for the Third Reich and the veneration for Hitler were constructed and reproduced constantly by a set of discourses, symbols and practices enacted by the hierarchies for the scope of maintaining and rooting the control over German “masses”. The martial solemnity of Nazi parades, the sacral aura that surrounded Hitler’s speeches, the living participation of hundreds of thousands of people created a synergic atmosphere which inspired sentiments of order and brotherhood amongst the German people, finally reunited under the symbol of the Swastika. Parades, gatherings, national festivals were—and must be—rigidly ordered, coordinated and organized just as rigidly

¹⁷ From here on, I will focus rather on European cases, which are more familiar to me.

ordered, coordinated and organized was—and must be—German society, army and hierarchies. Public events truly were (hegemonic) mirrors that projected an image of the order of the Third Reich¹⁸. The symbols manipulated and implemented in totalitarian public events represented the structured elements of a social engineering that, in the last analysis, was meant—consciously, probably for the first time in history—to orientate and control the psychology of masses. The main purpose was, obviously, to raise consensus by raising sentiment of nationalism and, by doing so, reproducing the social order created with the rise of the dictatorships. In these terms, the collective experiences *as such* (regardless of their specific nature), became politically relevant¹⁹.

In democratic nation-states, as already mentioned, festivals and public events can function similarly, namely as mirrors of social order, although without certain of the above-mentioned features that are proper of totalitarian states. However, it must be said here that festivals can also function not to carry sentiments of nationalism or consensus, but, on the contrary, as a means for contestation and resistance, social claims, sentiments of locality or as a vitrine for exposing minority identities. In this case the examples could also be numerous and always multipliable, so I will focus only on some chosen ones.

In 2008 the carnival of Notting Hill, London—which is supposed to be the second biggest carnival in the world, after that of Rio de

¹⁸ Nazi and Fascist cases are not isolated, of course. Other historical examples could be quoted, and, if it is true that popular festivals have been of the greatest importance during medieval and modern times, it is equally true that not all festivals were exclusively popular or, better, symbolically relevant only for lower classes; on the contrary, it has been demonstrated that “festivals and their ceremonies were used as manifestations of power by the upper classes in any medieval society” (Mänd 2005: 11), and in modern era as well (Burke 2009: 270).

¹⁹ Studies on the relations between nationalism(s) and festival(s) are growing in the last years. It is not the scope of this script to review all of them. I have already quoted certain examples that I consider particularly significant. However, exhaustive references will be found in the bibliographies of Handelman 1999 and 2004 and Palumbo 2009.

Janeiro (Malik 2011)—ended with violent riots. Actually disorders and violence seem to have been quite usual in this carnival, not only in the last years (Malik 2011), but also in the last decades: the riots that occurred in 1976 have been studied by several scholars (see, for instance, Jackson 1988). Both in the seventies and recently, the disorders have been caused by what the media have called the “London black youth”—mainly of Caribbean origins—who have several times transformed a loved, massively participated carnival into an arena in which social tensions were canalized and dramatized. At least apparently: it is far from clear whether the riots—which were doubtless started by representatives of marginal social strata—had the purpose of denunciation, visibility and the claiming of social changes or were “just” the violent expression of frustration against an order considered as rigid and discriminatory²⁰. What is sure is that the festival was *used* for political or pseudo-political purposes in spite of its (apparent) non-political nature. Regarding the Notting Hill Carnival disorders of 1976, it has been written that Carnival as

²⁰ There are several interesting similitudes between the riots of the Notting Hill carnival in 1976 or 2008, the rising which took place in Romans, a French village, during the carnival of 1580 (Le Roy Ladurie 1979), the violent rebellion of the wine-growers occurred during the carnival of Dijon in 1630 (Porchnev 1963: 135) and the “masked protest” of a group of communist peasants during the carnival of Governolo, in northern Italy, in 1950 (Bertolotti 1991). Examples could be multiplied, but these are particularly representative. Carnival, in Europe as well as elsewhere in the places where it has been imported, is still the most multiform and unpredictable type of festival, as it has been for centuries: although it represents exemplarily the third type in Handelman’s paradigm—namely an event-that-re-presents social order—and, above all, the “‘safety-valve’ or ‘social control’ theory” (Burke 2009: 286), its symbolical and political malleability allows all kind of manipulation even nowadays. In fact, the carnivals quoted above and in the last lines of the text fit with each of the two other types of Handelman’s typology (carnivals being normally examples of the third type): the carnivals of Dijon, Romans, Notting Hill and Governolo, through the subversive violence that characterized the former three and the contesting nature of the latter, functioned—partially at least—as events-that-model society, or, better, as events that tried to model society inasmuch as their charge of social protest stressed and put under pressure the social order; whereas the carnival of Rio, insofar as it has been institutionalized through bureaucratization—as Handelman has shown—becomes, paradoxically for a carnival, a mirror of the social order in which it takes lieu.

a “contested event that expresses political and ideological conflict” (Jackson 1988: 214), “began to be used as an organizing mechanism for protest and opposition” (216).

More quiet but equally filled with social tensions are festivals like the modern “feste padane” promoted by the Italian party “Lega Nord” or the traditional festivals in the Basque Country. These festivals express sentiments that go in different directions in the highway of nationalistic sensibility: on one hand they deny the hegemonic nationalist discourse, that is to say the discourse of the political state identity in which they come into being; on the other hand, they affirm another type of nationalism based on sentiments of cultural identity and virtual political independency. In these contexts, festivals are among the very few moments in which these sentiments can be freely expressed and exposed.

Tendencies towards independence embedded in festivals, when they oppose a form on nationalism to another one, like in the above-mentioned cases, are linked to another form of politics of festivals: the construction of identity through tradition(s). There are numerous historical and anthropological works about the politics of tradition in the making of cultural—therefore political—identities (Herzfeld 1982, Hobsbawm, Ranger 1983, Handler 1988, Palumbo 2006, Testa 2010 e 2011b). Tradition, especially in the form of re-invented or re-functionalized “old”—or supposed so—social facts, is a major social tool used to create and structure identity; and the traditional manifestations *par excellence* are rituals, ceremonies and festivals. An interesting case in the field of the politics of festive traditional culture is the “Notte della Taranta”, a folk music festival held every summer in Salento, southern Italy, and studied by the anthropologist G. Pizza (Pizza 2004) amongst others. Despite the traditional imaginary to which it refers, this festival has been literally invented some years ago, becoming quickly a major social phenomenon with important economic and political implications in the area. In this case also, the festival produces sentiments of locality, authenticity, cultural community and belonging, sentiments which

usually go either in the direction of localism (conceived as a tendency more or less opposed to nationalism) or of national pride for the cultural diversity and the peculiarities of the nation. These sentiments are—or can be used—for political purposes, which is actually the case in several contexts in southern Italy. But if these sentiments of identity, neighborhood, authenticity created by festive traditions can be controlled or exploited by hierarchies for political reasons, they can even be, more or less often, the object of a re-appropriation and re-semanticization by classes or groups which have no access to hegemonic positions: social practices *can* transcend, overlap and deconstruct functions and meanings produced by the hegemonic social engineering, especially in the case of existing tensions amongst classes or groups within the same social context, or in the case of political contestations—which does not mean that the disarticulation happens all the times. On the first of December 2011, Romania celebrated its 93rd Independence Day. Thousands of people gathered around the “Arcul de Triumf” in Bucarest. However, despite the festive intention and atmosphere and despite the big popular participation to the military parade and other celebrations, the politicians, amongst which the Prime Minister and the President of Republic himself—namely the highest representatives of the State—were severely booed during their speeches by thousands of people protesting for the economic condition of the country: the mirroring, hierarchically-set function of the festival was wasted by the reaction and the contestation of people. The order was ridiculed and put under pressure in the very moment of its self-celebration.

Today, the time-space of the festival is the playground where the ethnographer can discover, observe and participate in the actions of the social agents in their manipulation and use of symbols, in the negotiations of political interests and claims, and in the expressions of the inner tensions that lie within a given social context. The metaphor of the playground is useful to imagine the concrete, phenomenological moment/place of the festival in which social agents

(or social classes) operate according to different purposes and often regardless of the official “function” or the “nature” of the festival itself. An event when/where the agency of agents and social structures can either collimate or collide. In fact, festivals, conceived as deeply codified and meaningful moments in the social life of a given community, are obviously charged with tensions embedded in social expectations, political claims, religious passions, individual emotions, and so on; tensions whose force can either support or destabilize the hegemonic order and its functional imaginaries. Thus, the playground of festival is a catalyst of power, and history has shown us that, in the very moment of the “play” on the “ground”, this charge of power may be discharged, often with dramatic results. To this effect, the “outcome” (or the ultimate “function”) of festivals is inherently unpredictable, in spite of the usual fixity and apparently indolent, perpetual return of festivals in the circular time of seasons, culturally ratified by the calendar.

As for the historical research regarding festivals, the task might be the same: a critical reading of sources—of any kind—aware of the issues highlighted so far and attentive to the power dynamics which were enacted in past festivals should permit to better understand and interpret how social agents operated power relations (or like power operated in them, in more Foucaultian terms) and how and why changes happened in time. However, examples in historical studies about power dimensions in festivals are already numerous, as we have seen, (for an overview on historical studies on festivals, see Mänd 2005; Testa in press). Furthermore, historical studies of festival(s) are relevant because they permit the construction of wider comparative models, like in the case of D. Handelman’s *Models and Mirrors*.

Thanks to the recourse to methodological tools shaped by scholars as Gramsci, Foucault, Bourdieu and Handelman, the power dimensions of present or past festivals can be evaluated differently and more deeply.

From a Gramscian perspective, festivals can be conceived as a means by which hegemonic groups express and transmit their set of values and their vision of the world, enacting, more or less consciously, a strategy for the production—and the acceptance—of cultural—therefore political—subordination, which is necessary for a hegemonic order to survive and reproduce itself. On the other hand, festivals can be used as a means of resistance or of cultural awareness by subaltern groups. Power is therefore produced in the dialectics between these two main poles of social structure, and festivals are amongst the cultural manifestations in which these dialectics can be expressed and dramatized.

Similarly, in Foucaultian terms, contemporary festivals can be considered as devices for the expression and the use of power. But Foucaultian power is not—or rather not only—embedded in a given social class; it is rather a dimension present in any manifestation of social life. Foucault's "micro-physics" of power drives the researcher to know that power dimension "is there", and that discovering and interpreting it is only a question of how deep the researcher is disposed to go into the study of his/her case: particles of power are always present in the folds of highly-socialized moments as festivals in the shape of actions based on discourses, knowledge, scientific conventions, uses of the body; all things which for Foucault are, at last, the results of power relations.

Bourdieu's considerations on capital(s) are useful to understand how social agents and their capitals affect the logics of festivals. Bourdieu's capitals allow to open a window on the factual, procedural dimensions of the politics of festivals: a festival is always organized or promoted or just lived, participated, acted differently by different social agents. The capitals are useful to understand why some agents have "more power" on—or in—a festival. To make some virtual examples: in the case of organized, commercial festivals, the representative of, say, a sponsoring company will certainly have more decisional power inasmuch as his/her economic capital is higher than others'; in the case of a traditional festival,

an anthropologist will declare what is the deep, true “meaning” of a rite inasmuch as his/her cultural capital is higher than others’; in the case of an official festival, a politician will have the privilege and the right of exposing him/herself in front of the public and mark the beginning of the celebrations inasmuch as his/her social capital is higher than others’. It goes without saying that the processes roughly exemplified so far produce and reproduce hierarchies, that is to say, a formalization of power relations amongst social agents.

Uses of Handelman’s theories are less problematic, because his methodological contribution was explicitly meant as a tool for the study of festivals and because his tripartite paradigm has been shaped to be applied to different cases: as a comparative paradigm, any new case is inherently interesting and helpful to better calibrate and set the models which form the paradigm itself. Furthermore, Handelman has thoroughly studied the political relations between nation-state and festivals, which makes his approach relevant as well as very practical and useful for contemporary cases.

In this article I have tried to highlight the theme of power as being a relevant feature to be explored in the study of festivals, also following some recent suggestions by Italian scholars interested in the study of festivals as F. Faeta (Faeta 2005) and B. Palumbo (Palumbo 2009). I will not negate or underestimate the relevance of the study of elements linked to religious or emotional themes as well as the symbolic aspects, the continuities or the ruptures that can be observed both in the present and over the time. However, in this paper I wanted to show that another perspective is also possible. Festivals are, in fact, a privileged point of view from which to observe the dynamics of power in social life and the strategies of support and legitimation of—or resistance to—hegemonic orders.

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ANTI ANTI-UTOPIANISM: IMAGINING ALTERNATIVE SPACES¹

Sean Homer

In *Archaeologies of the Future* (2005) Fredric Jameson observed that postmodernism marked the end of traditional utopias, insofar as we can no longer imagine alternatives to global capitalism. For the Left utopia frequently operated as code for a form of socialism that no longer seems realizable, while from the Right utopianism has become a synonym for totalitarianism. What interests Jameson is how these two views have come to overlap today, designating any form of politics that wishes to radically change the system as utopian and therefore inherently authoritarian and misguided. Yannis Stavrakakis (2007) has recently restated this position from a Lacanian perspective, arguing that utopia is a discourse that offers political solutions from the point of view of a “subject-supposed-to-know”, whose opacity and authority is never questioned.² Fascism and Stalinism are the prime examples of such utopian thought, with their imaginary promise of fullness and recapturing lost *jouissance*. What characterizes utopian thought, for Stavrakakis, is a fear of the negative, the refusal to acknowledge lack or the ultimate failure of *jouissance*. The urgent political task facing us today, he argues, is to traverse the fantasy of utopia (whether that is revolutionary, fundamentalist or post-democratic consumerist society) and reinvent transformative politics in a post-fantasmatic space (2007: 261).

¹ A version of this paper was presented at the 36th IAPL Conference “Archeologies of the Future” at Tallinn University.

² For a discussion of the “subject-supposed-to-know” see Lacan ([1973] 1979: 230–43).

What has always struck me about Lacanian anti-utopianism and its critique of an obsolescent Left politics is that it fails to do justice to the diversity of utopian thinking within Marxism and Critical Theory.³ This paper will take its cue from Jameson's remark that the best utopias are those that fail most comprehensively. Stavrakakis is right, utopia is impossible, but it is this very impulse to imagine the impossible (and fail) that marks utopian thinking today. From a Jamesonian perspective, in an era of neo-liberal austerity and when we are constantly told that "there is no alternative" (TINA), the very attempt to imagine alternative spaces, alternative ways of addressing the problem, is by definition utopian. In this sense utopia is not about visions of the "good life" or the "just society" (although there is nothing wrong in trying to imagine either) but more akin to Samuel Beckett's 'you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on' (1979: 382) or Žižek's recent Beckettian slogan "Try again. Fail again. Fail better" (2009a: 86). Far from representing a fear of the encounter with the negative, utopian thought always contains within itself a negative gesture, a negation of the present in the name of the impossible, and in the process it opens up the possibility for something new to emerge, for the emergence of novelty in Badiou's sense. In this paper I will argue that it is possible to maintain a commitment to the Lacanian divided subject, the insatiability of desire and the failure of *jouissance* within an overall utopian perspective through the work of Jameson and Žižek. Before turning to this issue, however, I will consider the basis for anti-utopianism with respect to Lacan's own texts.

³ In *The Lacanian Left* Stavrakakis identifies Trotsky as a Left utopian (2007: 261) and in *Lacan and the Political* he criticizes an early paper of mine (Homer, 1996) for its naïve utopianism (Stavrakakis 1999: ch. 4), but he never systematically engages with Left utopian thinkers.

Lacan and utopia

Stavrakakis' critique of utopia is certainly not without foundation in Lacan but, as Adrian Johnston has noted, the term utopia rarely occurs in Lacan's work:

Over the twenty-seven year course of the Seminar, Lacan directly mentions the notion of utopia a mere four times. In the fifth seminar, he associates utopianism with the aspiration toward a society organized around the communist principle, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." ... he then indicates that this communist-utopian aspiration fails to take into account structures revealed by psychoanalysis in its treatment of the libidinal economy and subject formation. These structures (specifically those delineated by Lacan in terms of his need-demand-desire triad) purportedly render any such utopia ... an unattainable fantasy-ideal. ... in the seventh seminar, Lacan ... [called] utopia a "dream world" that overlooks "the distance that exists between the organization of desires and the organization of needs," ... Freudo-Marxists of the Frankfurt School neglect precisely this gap separating desire from need ... and thereby avoid confronting those aspects of subjectivity that would be resistant to embracing easily the benefits of a revolutionary new political economy in which goods are distributed more equitably. (2008: 72–73)

The final two references appear in seminar sixteen, the seminar of 1969 immediately following the revolutionary upheavals of May 68. In this seminar, Lacan identifies both the inherent limitation of the utopian imagination (in the sense that it aspires to an ideal autonomous space that is non-existent) and what he calls indissoluble barriers to the concrete actualization of a certain type of utopia. With reference to Plato's *Republic*, Lacan observes how Socrates 'moves back and forth between the microcosm of the soul and the macrocosm of the *polis*' in his philosophical pursuit of the essence of justice and claims that 'the utopian *Kallipolis* (beautiful city) envisioned in

this text is a disguised distortion of the microcosmic “body image” (Johnston 2008: 73). Such an image, writes Johnston, ‘of embedded spheres in which microcosm and macrocosm form a harmonious, integrated whole is an untenable fantasy’ (2008: 74). The indissoluble barrier to the actualization of utopia is, thus, nothing less than the impossibility of *jouissance*, insofar as this unattainable enjoyment is defined as the elimination of the discrepancy between need and desire. Lacan’s critique of utopia, then, rests on the idea of utopia as a fantasmatic anticipation of *jouissance* expected, which never corresponds to *jouissance* obtained. As Johnston notes though:

[T]he kind of utopia rendered unattainable by the impossibility of *jouissance* (as an actually realized state of full, undiluted enjoyment) is that of an entirely happy set of sustainable circumstances, in which all serious dissatisfactions are resolved without remainder, dissolved into the placid waters of a social milieu, in which the individual microcosm and the collective macrocosm are peacefully at one with one another. (2008: 74)

This may be “a certain type of utopia”, but it is not the view held by most Lacanian influenced Marxists. As Jameson points out, the Lacanian critique of utopian thought rests on a homology between the “lacking” subject and an incomplete social and there is no particular reason why we need to accept this homology as given (2005: 191–192). One can, as writers such as Jameson and Žižek demonstrate perfectly well, accept the truth of the Lacanian divided subject and at the same time maintain a strong utopian impulse towards social transformation, without believing that this will result in a harmonious, conflict free, post-ideological world. The problem with rejecting all forms of utopianism is that it so often leads to a rejection of radical transformative politics in the name of the partial *jouissance* that status quo allows us. Let me now turn to the rather different conceptions of utopia in Jameson and Žižek.

Jameson: Suspending the Political

What Jameson defines in *Archaeologies of the Future* as the desire for utopia has long been one of his signature concepts, and here I just want to draw out some of the Lacanian roots of that desire. In an article from 1983, 'Science versus Ideology', Jameson argued that Marxism reduced to a mere method of historical analysis and which does not project an alternative future, an alternate set of social relations, is worse than dead, it is worthless (1983: 297). Such projections are the function of ideology rather than science, and Jameson has long been an advocate of developing a properly Marxist ideology to accompany its scientific, historical, method. Jameson drew on Althusser's ([1970] 1984) now familiar definition of ideology as an imaginary relation of individuals to their real conditions of existence, but of more concern to me here is that behind this lay the Lacanian distinction between science and truth. In 'The Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan', Jameson suggested that one problem with Althusser's definition of ideology is that it lacks any collective or class mediation, whereas the Lacanian notion of 'science as a historical original form of decentering the subject' ([1977] 1982: 390) that does not at the same time embody the truth of the subject would seem to offer us a way forward. A properly Marxist theory of ideology, he contends, needs to transcend the aporias of the centered subject and the indeterminate flux of the Deleuzian nomadic subject through a renewal of utopian thinking, which projects the subject to the other end of historical time, a time beyond class antagonism, alienated labour and the remorseless logic of the market. The purpose of such a displacement, however, is not a naïve belief in the possibility of the utopian vision; on the contrary, it is to cast judgment on our impoverished present, through historically situating these specific forms of consciousness, the illusory centered subject and the completely fragmented subject. The ideological representation must be seen, writes Jameson:

[A]s that indispensable mapping fantasy or narrative by which the individual subject invents a “lived” relationship with collective systems which otherwise by definition exclude him insofar as he or she is born into a pre-existent social form and its pre-existent language. ([1977] 1982: 394)

Lacan’s notion of the decentred subject, structurally distanced from both language and the Real, but with an “indispensable” imaginary function, thus, offers a potential route for a Marxist theory of ideology, but one in which ideology is seen to be at one with the utopian impulse. What differentiates Jameson’s conception of ideology from Althusser’s is that it is mediated through the collectivity of class consciousness and is at one and the same time utopian. As he writes in *The Political Unconscious*:

[T]o project an imperative to thought in which the ideological would be grasped as somehow at one with the Utopian, and the Utopian at one with the ideological, is to formulate a question to which a collective dialectic is the only conceivable answer. (1981: 96)

Controversially, Jameson claims that all class consciousness, which is to say all ideology in the strongest sense of the term, is utopian insofar as it expresses a desire for collectivity.⁴ Such a formulation could certainly fall under Lacan’s definition of a utopia of full *jouissance*, were it not for the fact that Jameson here deploys Bloch’s distinction between compensatory and anticipatory utopias, that is to say, a utopia that compensates for contemporary ills by projecting a vision of society in which all ills are resolved (fascism) and an anticipatory utopia, which functions as an opening to the unknown (communism). The point is always for Bloch, and for Jameson, to recover the anticipatory desire from the debris of our degraded present, or, as Žižek has recently come to formulate it, ‘to redeem

⁴ See Eagleton (1990: 404) for a critique of Jameson on this issue.

the emancipator potential' from the failure of historical socialism (2009b: 3).

What is new in *Archaeologies of the Future* is the idea that utopias emerge through the suspension of the political. They emerge in the calm before the storm of revolution, and they require a certain distance from the political and daily life in order to be able to critique the existing order and describe the utopian moment. In this sense utopia is not a positive vision of the future so much as a negative judgment on the present:

Its function lies not in helping us to imagine a better future but rather in demonstrating our utter incapacity to image such a future—our imprisonment in a non-utopian present without historicity or futurity—so as to reveal the ideological closure of the system in which we are somehow trapped and confined. (2005: 46)

What is utopian today is simply the commitment to imagining alternatives as such (2005: 217). Utopias come to us, as Jameson rather wonderfully puts it, as barely audible messages from a future that may never come into being (2005: 54). Let me now turn to the work of Slavoj Žižek.

Žižek: “We are the ones we have been waiting for.”

Žižek's reflections on utopia are rather scattered and, at first, appear to be inconsistent. He has not, for example, elaborated a fully developed theory of utopia in the Jamesonian sense. From these scattered remarks, however, I believe it is possible to extract a consistent view of utopia that remains grounded in Lacan and does not fall prey to the fantasmatic trap of full *jouissance*. As Stavrakakis has pointed out, in his early work Žižek endorsed a strict Lacanian anti-utopianism. In *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Žižek dismissed utopian thinking as 'a belief in the possibility of a *universality without its symptom*, without the point of exception functioning as its internal negation' (1989: 23). For Stavrakakis, it is the acceptance of the irreducibility

of lack that differentiates the Lacanian Left from the “Utopian” Left and Žižek sadly, he argues, has fallen from the former to the latter (2007: 124). It was only two years after *The Sublime Object*, however, that Žižek was articulating a rather different conception of utopia. In *For They Know Not What They Do* he writes: ‘Utopias are “utopian” not because they depict an “impossible Ideal,” a dream not for this world, but because they misrecognize the way their ideal state is already idealized in its basic content (“in its notion,” as Hegel would say)’ (1991: 184). Utopians misrecognize the present, not in the sense that they are deluded and project impossible fantasies of the future, on the contrary, they awaken us from the dream world of late capitalism and see things as they actually are without knowing it. In short, through misrecognition the truth of a situation is revealed.

This view of utopia as misrecognition finds echoes in Žižek’s more recent work, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*, where he discusses the predicament of the Morales government in Bolivia, Aristide in Haiti and the Maoists in Nepal. The situation of these governments, observes Žižek, is hopeless, the whole drift of history is against them, objectively they will fail; all they can do is improvise in their desperation and it is this that endows upon them a unique freedom and hope:

Decried by enemies as dangerous utopians, they are the only people who have really awakened from the utopian dream which holds most of us under its sway. They, not those nostalgics for twentieth-century “Really Existing Socialism,” are our only hope. (2009a: 156)

As with Jameson’s distinction between anticipatory and compensatory utopias, Žižek plays on the ambiguity of concept, elaborating the different meanings of utopia, often simultaneously, that is to say, the idea of utopia as an impossible imaginary (the harmonious society without antagonism) and the more radical sense of utopia as that which is impossible *within the framework of existing social relations* (2009b: 310).

*

Žižek elaborated on the distinction between true and false utopias in a talk in Buenos Aires at the beginning of Astra Taylor's 2005 documentary. In an era when we can no longer imagine an alternative to global capitalism, he argued following Jameson, we need to reinvent the concept of utopia but in order to do so we must first reject false utopias. Žižek outlines two false meanings of the concept of utopia: first, the old idea of an imaginary ideal society that we all know will never be realized. Second, the capitalist utopia of the realization of newer and newer desires that are not only permitted but even solicited in our society. In contrast to these false utopias, he suggests, a true utopia is when the situation gets so bad, when it is without resolution within the coordinates of the possible that, out of the pure urgency of survival, one has to invent a new space. Utopia in this sense is not the free play of imagination but a matter of inner most urgency as we are forced to imagine an alternative as the only way out. And this is the kind of utopian thinking that we so urgently need today. Žižek explores the possibility for such a revival of utopian thought in his most recent book, *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* (2012), where he dissects the radical protest movements of 2011-12: the *indignados*, Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring for traces of an emancipator potential beyond the existing framework. One year on Žižek is not hopeful, with the exception of Greece, but he concludes the subterranean work of dissatisfaction is still going on, the rage is building up once again, there is an overwhelming sense of blockage and in this lies hope (2012: 127). The question is how can this rage be turned into a revolutionary event rather than remaining senseless violence. I think that here Žižek's reading of Lenin's ([1917] 1968) *The State and Revolution* as a utopian text is exemplary.

In *The State and Revolution* Lenin sought to clarify his views on the *withering away of the state* and *the dictatorship of the proletariat* against what he saw as the revisionism and opportunism of Karl Kautsky and the German Social Democrats. The text also contains

an unrelenting attack on utopian socialism and anarchism. ‘There is no utopianism in Marx,’ writes Lenin, ‘in the sense that he made up or invented a “new” society’ ([1917] 1968: 295). In contradistinction to the anarchist view of immediately abolishing the state, Lenin argues: ‘We are not utopians, we do not “dream” of dispensing *at once* with all administration, with all subordination. These anarchist dreams ... are totally alien to Marxism’ ([1917] 1968: 296). Given this explicit rejection of utopian thought by Lenin, in what sense then can Žižek read *The State and Revolution* as a utopian text? It was out of the experience of the complete catastrophe of 1914, when social democratic parties across Europe opted to support the war effort of their respective national governments and facing the complete collapse of the International socialist movement that Lenin wrote *The State and Revolution*. Following Badiou ([1988] 2007), what Žižek calls the Leninist event (the breaking of the evolutionary historicism of the second international) emerges from the recognition ‘the Truth of THIS catastrophe’ (2001: 9). Out of this moment of despair, writes Žižek, the kernel of the Leninist “utopia” arises, ‘the radical imperative to smash the bourgeois state, which means the state AS SUCH, and to invent a new communal social form without a standing army, police or bureaucracy, in which all could take part in the administration of ... social matters’ (2001: 10). The Leninist utopia arises from the recognition of utter failure and the demand for the impossible, for a complete social revolution, at a time when not even the majority of Bolshevik party thought it possible. We should also note here that this utopian gesture is predicated upon an initial act of negation, the smashing of the old state in order for the new to emerge. This is what Žižek calls an “enacted utopia”:

In a proper revolutionary breakthrough, the utopian future is neither simply fully realized, present, nor simply evoked as a distant promise which justified present violence—it is rather as if, in a unique suspension of temporality, in the short-circuit between the present and the future, we are—as if by Grace—for a brief time

allowed to act AS IF the utopian future is (not yet fully here, but) already at hand, just there to be grabbed. (2001: 16)

For Žižek, then, Lenin's utopianism resides in his misrecognition of the present (his refusal to accept the prevailing view that revolution was not possible and consequently his ability to articulate the truth of the situation) and to think beyond the horizon of the present. Lenin, writes Žižek, 'stands for the compelling FREEDOM to suspend the stale existing (post)ideological coordinates, the debilitating [situation] in which we live—it simply means that we are allowed to think again' (2001: 10).

In his dialogue with Judith Butler and Ernesto Laclau, Žižek defends his position against their charge of naïve utopianism, by pointing out that today it is not predominately the Left who are utopians but Right wing populists with their dreams of grass roots democracy and belief that the market can solve all social ills. Against the predominant ideological closure which '*prevents us from imagining a fundamental social change, in the interests of an allegedly "realistic" and "mature" attitude*' (2000: 324), he insists on the necessity today, more than ever, of holding the '*utopian place of the global alternative open, even if it remains empty, living on borrowed time, awaiting a content to fill it*' (2000: 326). As with Jameson, utopia for Žižek is not a blue print for the future, or a harmonious society of full *jouissance*, where the gap between need and desire is eradicated, but it is a thought beyond the horizon of the imaginable, a leap into the unknown.

Conclusion

This brief account of the desire for utopia in Jameson and Žižek suggests that one can maintain a commitment to the Lacanian divided subject, as both theorists do, and at the same time an equally strong commitment to the utopian impulse. The Lacanian critique of utopia, I have argued, is directed at 'a certain type of utopia,' the utopia of full *jouissance*, and from a Lacanian perspective this is an

impossible Ideal image. The problem from my perspective is when this “pernicious fantasy” is generalized to all forms of utopian thinking and, more dangerously, to all forms of radical transformative politics. As Lacan’s response to the students at Vincennes in the aftermath of May ‘68 revealed, there is just as much an inherent conservatism to Lacanian psychoanalysis as there is an emancipatory potential, and the utopian desire, I have argued, is the desire to redeem that emancipator potential.⁵ Jameson and Žižek offer just two perspectives on contemporary utopian thought and both, in their very different ways, demonstrate the critical negativity of utopianism through its demystification of the present. As Jameson puts it, utopian thought is plagued by a perpetual reversal, in which ‘our most energetic imaginative leaps into radical alternatives [are] little more than the projections of our own social moment and historical or subjective situation (2005: 211). As such, utopianism stands as a perpetual judgment on the present and the possibility for imagining a more just and equitable future society.

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⁵ Confronted by students at Vincennes to articulate his position regarding their revolutionary demands, Lacan responded, ‘the aspiration to revolution has but one conceivable issue, always, the discourse of the master. That is what experience has proved. What you, as revolutionaries, aspire to is a Master. You will have one’ ([1974] 1990: 127).

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INDIGNITY OF SPEAKING FOR OTHERS: OCCUPY WALL STREET AND THE CRISIS OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

Tarmo Jüristo

In early fall of 2011, occasional reports started to trickle into the international media about a group of people camping out in a public square in downtown Manhattan, referring to themselves with the peculiar name of Occupy Wall Street. What started as a relatively unremarkable protest on September 17th grew—into a great puzzlement and then dismay to authorities—into a permanent encampment in Zuccotti Park, a couple of blocks from Wall Street, complete with public canteen, autonomous energy grid (it ran on biodiesel generators), its own Wi-Fi network, nursery and fast-growing library staffed with professional librarians. Authorities' initial, somewhat half-hearted, attempts to contain and evict the colony were met with peaceful yet determined resistance, and ultimately only succeeded in galvanizing the movement even further, and by early October similar encampments had sprung up in tens of different cities all over the United States as well as in Europe.

In and of itself, this kind of politically charged occupation of public space was of course nothing particularly new—one can think of the *autonomia* movement in Italy in the sixties and seventies, or the way how the May 68 got started in Paris, with students occupying the Sorbonne and refusing to leave—which eventually translated into one of the most iconic slogans of the subsequent riots: *On ne revendiquera rien, on ne demandera rien. On prendra, on occupera.* A widespread discontent that followed in the wake of the financial crisis had created a fertile soil for radicalization of politics which brought along the rise of different protest movements throughout

the western world and beyond. It was only a couple of months earlier that the so-called 15-M movement sprung out in Spain, with its members (*los indignados*) occupying public spaces in major cities, such as the Puerta del Sol in Madrid or Plaça Catalunya in Barcelona. The same indignation and disillusionment with big politics was behind the rise of America's own right-wing populist Tea Party in 2009.

Despite all of that, the emergence of OWS—as it became known for short—created a lot of confusion throughout the political spectrum. In fact it was difficult to establish whether it could indeed be called a *bona fide* political movement at all—as this would imply some kind of a political program and leader(s). Those, however, OWS did not have—and apparently did not even want. A couple of weeks after the start of the occupation, an official declaration of sorts was adopted by the General Assembly of the Zuccotti Park,¹ but this too looked decidedly weird when compared with typical political manifestos or party programs. Instead of demands, it consisted of 23 grievances, aimed at an unspecified “them,” complete with a footnote that the list above is not all-inclusive. In stark contrast to the linearity of a typical manifesto, OWS declaration was rhizomatic, without clear axis, hierarchy or center, reminiscent of the *cahiers de doléances* (lists of grievances compiled by different estates of the Ancien Régime and then presented to the *Etats-généraux* on May 5, 1789) from the early days of the French Revolution. It was also ambiguous and vague in its message, calling for people to “exercise [their] right to peaceably assemble; occupy public space; create a process to address the problems [they] face, and generate solutions accessible to everyone.”

However, it was the (in)famous slogan of “*We are the 99%*” that became perhaps the most confusing and contentious aspect of the movement. Many people were quick to point out that their opinion was never asked for in terms of opting in or out of this

¹ Cf. <http://www.nycga.net/resources/declaration/>

constituency. Almost immediately, a counter-movement of “We are the 53%” sprang up, meant to not-so-subtly underscore that only 53% of Americans pay federal income tax which, as the vocal members of the 53%-movement stressed, pays for the social benefits of those who choose to camp out at parks and do nothing. Actually the 53%-movement itself provides a very good response to the complaint that the 99% movement is nowhere near as broadly based and representative as the title would lead one to believe. The fact of someone paying taxes in no way means that he or she would have to hold the opinions voiced by the 53%-movement, evidenced by the fact that according to the demographic profile of OWS almost half of the people at Zuccotti park were employed full time.

However, in terms of OWS, the issue of mandate and representation is profound one and merits a closer attention. When speaking of democracy—at least in general public discourse—we nowadays tend to mean by it a *particular kind* of democracy. While it is commonly recognized that democracy has historically had a number of different shapes and forms, the realization that this is also true right now seems to come with more difficulty. It is all too easy to assume that since, in the contemporary western world, the *de facto* dominant state order is representative democracy, then this is what democracy must mean. By the same token, as a vast majority of western democracies are majoritarian (i.e. political arguments are generally settled by a majority vote), it is tempting to take this as a fundamental feature of any democratic political system. Of course, neither of these assumptions holds true.² Although representative democracy has emerged as the most common form of democratic state-level governance in the contemporary world, it certainly does not exhaust all the possibilities, nor is there anything particularly *essentially* democratic about it. At the heart of representative democracy is—as the

² This has been most prominently argued by Arend Lijphart in *Democracies* (Yale University Press, 1984) and *Patterns of Democracy* (Yale University Press, 1999). See also Frank Hendriks, *Vital Democracy: A Theory of Democracy in Action* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

name refers—a concept of representation, which means governance by the people through elected representatives who carry a mandate to enact a particular political program. This is where the problem becomes apparent: to criticize OWS in the key of representation and political mandate betrays a misunderstanding of the fundamental tenet of the whole movement that could be framed as a “resistance to representation.”

Perhaps the best known and classical wording of the central principle of the representative democracy was given by Edmund Burke in his 1774 Bristol speech,³ where he argued that the elected representatives of the people are not to follow the fickle wishes of their constituency rather than their “own unbiased opinion, [...] mature judgment, [and] enlightened conscience.” According to Burke, the elected representative is a trustee rather than a delegate—free and independent in his decisions, serving after his own best judgment not his constituents rather than the public interest common to all. As such parliamentary politics is not merely an act of representation but also of creation and constitution, resulting in one and indivisible state and nation.⁴ However, this unity relies on the transfer of power from many to the few, from those who are represented to those who represent.⁵ Whether such a thing can be justified—and if so, then under what circumstances—has been an issue of contention in the history of the modern western political thought from Hobbes and Rousseau to the present day, and it seems unlikely that the final verdict is to be reached anytime soon. It is clear, however, on which side of this debate the OWS is. The whole Occupy movement (not only in the Zuccotti park, but also elsewhere in the US

³ The full text of the speech can be found in *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke. Vol. I* (1854), 446–448.

⁴ This is reflected in Burke’s own view of the parliament as “a *deliberative* assembly of one nation, with *one* interest, that of the whole” (*Ibid.*: 447).

⁵ In order to be precise it is necessary here to distinguish between political and administrative representation, whereby the latter (a delegate model, if to follow Burke) does not necessarily involve a transfer of power but can rather consist of a delegation of particular actions or functions.

and Europe) was based on radical openness and consensus-based decision-making.

Power relationships and hierarchies are self-emergent and practically unavoidable in any community, and thus there was no way to escape them also in OWS. However, in Zuccotti Park they were not accepted as an inevitability that one would simply have to get used to. One of the basic principles of all the OWS daily practices and processes was an attempt to balance and counter such emergent and “natural” hierarchies, by creating conditions whereby all power would be ephemeral and *ad hoc* in nature. As Bakunin (1953: 240) famously put it “where all govern, no one is governed”—in addition to the lack of leaders in general, also the facilitation teams of regular assemblies and working groups were ran on a rotational basis, with all decision-making bodies being in principle open for all who wanted to take part in their work. As could be guessed, this is not among the easiest and most efficient ways of getting things done, and making decisions daily on general assemblies with hundreds of participants soon became a very laborious and time-consuming enterprise. In order to deal with this problem, the general assembly of October 28 passed a decision on the organizational structure of the New York OWS, which established spokes councils as a parallel structure to the general assembly, which—although still open to all in principle—was reliant on delegation to some extent. This change was met with a stiff resistance in some quarters of OWS, as many people found it to be in conflict with the principles of radical openness and direct participation of the movement.

Another issue that is related to political representation concerns political demands—or rather the lack thereof—of the OWS movement. When Adbusters published the now iconic call for occupation in June 2011, it depicted a ballerina standing on top of the Bowling Green bull and prominently featured a question “*What is our one demand?*” As Kalle Lasn of Adbusters has later explained, this approach was inspired by the Arab Spring and in particular the massive protest of Tahrir Square which was centered around the demand

for president Hosni Mubārak to resign. However, the hope to find a similar central demand for OWS faded quite early and in its stead a debate arose on whether the movement should have demands at all—or to be more precise, if it is necessary to state them.

The whole notion of political demands (and by the same token, party programs) rests on the idea that it is possible to represent everyone through their political interests. This means in turn that as political subjects we are reducible to a limited set of interrelated political ideas and values. Insofar as those interests are unsatisfied or violated they become demands of a particular group or community to the power, and indeed, this is what parliamentary politics consists of on the most fundamental level—seeking for balance between often conflicting and mutually incompatible interests of different groups of people. It is a process directed towards an increasing homogeneity: separate people form parties, parties join in coalition which in turn forms a government, and the legitimacy of the whole structure stems from the marginalization of differing opinions (and more broadly, of difference) through the political process. This is why political representation is always also a reduction⁶ and perhaps it is this that Gilles Deleuze (1977: 209) had in mind when referring to “the indignity of speaking for others.”⁷ Political representation reduces or individual voices into votes, turning them from opinions that one would have to listen to and relate with into something that can simply be counted. Our different political judgments, sympathies and antipathies, convictions, opinions and hopes are thus collapsed into a vote in support of someone’s mandate and thus as a political subject we have become indistinguishable from all the others who have cast their vote for the same party and program.

⁶ This is also the general reasoning behind the different historical aniconist and iconoclast religious movements, as well as the anti-representationalist leanings of the modern art.

⁷ G. Deleuze and M. Foucault (1977), “Intellectuals and Power” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* ed. Donald Bouchard, trans. Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 209.

It is thus apparent that the Occupy movement's lack of political demands was not simply an inability to agree upon their precise content, as any such list would presuppose a political process in direct conflict with fundamental principles of openness, radical freedom and heterogeneity that animated the OWS movement. Moreover, OWS aimed to drive home the same general point that was made already in 1923 by none other than Carl Schmitt in his essay *Die geistesgeschichtliche Lage des heutigen Parlamentarismus*⁸—there is a glaring contradiction between the declared principles and actual practices of parliamentary democracy, as the proclaimed faith in open and rational discussion is inconsistent with the way how the political decisions are made behind closed doors by party leaders and only formally vetted by voting in parliament. OWS was thus not merely a protest movement aimed at economic inequality and political corruption, but a radical critique of our contemporary social order.

“The moment the people is legitimately assembled as a sovereign body,” says Rousseau in *Contrat social*, “the jurisdiction of the government wholly lapses, the executive power is suspended [...]; for in the presence of the person represented, representatives no longer exist.” This passage neatly encapsulates an all-important aspect of OWS—which Bernard Harcourt (2011) has referred to with his distinction between civic and political disobedience.⁹ If the first stops short of actually challenging the legitimacy of the current political institutions, then political disobedience is a resistance to “the very way in which we are governed: it resists the structure of partisan politics, the demand for policy reforms, the call for party identification, and the very ideologies that dominated the post-War period.” This is where the true radical nature of the OWS becomes

⁸ In English as C. Schmitt (1985) *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, MIT Press, MA.

⁹ Paolo Virno (1996: 189–210) has made a similar point with his concept of Radical Disobedience in his essay “Virtuosity and Revolutions: The Political Theory of Exodus”.

apparent—it was a social laboratory, a playground for politics of presence rather than representation, a locus of critique and creative experimentation.

For the time being it is difficult to judge the ultimate impact of the movement. The occupation itself ended (or rather, *was* ended) a couple of days short of its two month anniversary when police forces all across the United States as well as elsewhere carried out a coordinated action, clearing public squares from their temporary denizens. In a way, this may well have been a *coup de grâce* for the movement that was facing constant challenges while being increasingly mired in internal strife. Although the commitment and enthusiasm of the occupiers held on until the last day, the movement was facing serious problems in its daily operation. Little by little the initial unity of the movement (fragile as it had always been) was disintegrating, decision processes were becoming bogged down and fragmented and ever more frustrating. The movement that had all along depended on the growing impetus, bringing in new people, was facing exhaustion.

However, the Occupy movement certainly left a legacy that did not disappear with the closing down of encampments in November, 2011. Over the less than two months of its operation, OWS created a series of fractures in the edifice of “big politics,” that are not at all easy to undo. While it is safe to assume that most of the people remain unconvinced by the answer that OWS offered to our current political predicament, there is now a wide consensus that at least the question was worth asking. And perhaps it is precisely here the most important aspect of the Occupy movement could be found. OWS brought left-wing political radicalism into the open, into the public space where it could not be ignored, where it demanded attention—and for the first time in a generation, also got it. While much of that attention was hostile, confused and frightened, it is also undeniable that Occupy managed to break through and reach out of the usual, relatively close knit and private circle of political activism. It is possible to outlaw and disperse demonstrations,

but—as people were chanting to the police who were tearing them out from Zuccotti Park in the night of November 14—you can't evict an idea.

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READER'S AFTERWORD

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ABSTRACTS

A. DON'T MENTION THE CAGE

PLAYGROUND. THE RANGE OF THE METAPHOR

Klemen Slabina and Francisco Martínez

The playground usually appears within discourses of child's play, carelessness of play, grounded within a temporal and spatial everyday life reality. Here, the notion of the playground is used to allude to an economic, social, and cultural setting of political articulation, as it is attempted and/or applied within a particularity of present context. Wish and its final exhaustion in agony and choice in its responsible and morally sensible context are perceived as to borderline examples of the origin of the playground. Thus, the wish and choice of participants' (re)actions originate in the interplays of communal and individual habitus they inevitably possess. It is a fact that not all players can withstand the economic, social, cultural and emotional pressure; perhaps some choose not to play by the rules of the game, while others may be the victims of circumstances beyond their control. The dynamics of our social actions never reach their end; hence it is the process of decision-making that appears as an opportunity to stretch the historically grounded democracy we live in, so far as to enable the active agency to articulate its agenda and move the institutions forward.

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE... OR A CAGE?*Siobhan Kattago*

In Plato's famous allegory of the cave, most are comfortable in the darkness, watching the shadows on the wall. In the 18th century, Rousseau boldly proclaimed that 'man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains.' Later Weber diagnosed modern man's rational progression to an iron cage of his own making. All three use the metaphors of confinement: caves, chains and cages. If Plato argues that the philosopher-king can find a way out of the cave, Rousseau's *Emile* requires the proper tutor for his enlightenment. Weber, though doesn't see a way out of the cage, aside from a possible charismatic leader. The masses seem doomed to their own comfortable confinement. Given today's mass society that is oriented towards consumerism and virtual reality, can we say that Weber is perhaps correct? Has the iron cage become an impersonal journey on the Internet, softened by Facebook chats? Are the criticisms of Plato, Rousseau and Weber too pessimistic or do their stories of blindness and confinement provide an apt description of contemporary society?

GOVERNING THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE: BIOSOCIAL POWER AND THE PLAYGROUND AS A 'SCHOOL OF CONDUCT'*Kevin Ryan*

The chapter is organised around the concept of biosocial power, and is in two parts. Part one uses political theory to examine how the subject of freedom, responsibility, and choice is formed from the living substance we call childhood. Part Two focuses on the public playgrounds of Progressive Era America, which were conceived of as an 'ethical laboratory' and 'a school of citizenship', focusing in particular on how the technique of supervised play was tasked with managing the tensions between democracy and capitalism,

cooperation and competition, self and society. By mapping the historical and ideological coordinates of biosocial power, the aim is to examine responsibility and choice as agonistic aspects of freedom in the context of liberal democracy, which makes demands upon, and offers possibilities to, a subject at once individual and collective. Furthermore, although we now speak of children's rights, including the right to play, we have by no means escaped the question of how best to act upon life with a view to securing 'freedom'.

PLAY, REPETITION AND TESTIMONY:
MEDITATIONS ON DEATH AND TRUTH

Tom Frost

Ingmar Bergman's most famous film, *The Seventh Seal*, begins with one of the most famous scenes in cinema history—Death playing a game of chess for the life of the protagonist.

Drawing upon the thought of Martin Heidegger, Giorgio Agamben, Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Nancy, this chapter takes up Bergman's connection between death and play with respect to the political future of transitional societies, exemplified here by states involved in the 'Arab Spring'.

These transitional societies will be faced with the problem of how to deal with their past and how to found a new political society. The oft-used device for this is a Truth Commission, which aims to create a meta-narrative of history that forms the constituent act of a new politics. This constituent act has the potential to oppress democratic politics through establishing a 'truth', the acceptance of which defines political belonging.

This chapter contends that to be responsible at all, politics must be thought of as a play-toward-death with others. A link is drawn between Heidegger's focus upon death opening up the possibilities for existence and Agamben's positing of 'play' as the vocation of

man. By exploring this connection, it is argued that an inter-relational political existence can take shape without recourse to oppressive notions of 'truth'.

B. OVER THE FENCE

POST-SOCIALIST MODERNITY...

Francisco Martínez

This chapter suggests that late-modernity is imploding particularly in post-socialist societies, wherein liminality has become a permanent condition and there are less in-between institutions. I also put forward that the current differences between West and East European societies are not about being highly-developed systems and imitative followers, but rather related to ways of negotiating modernity and ways of applying a transition ideology. Therefore, I propose to question post-socialist and late-modern processes as simultaneous and interrelated, substituting any 'developing / imitating' approach for one that acknowledges excesses of modernity and crisis of normality. As empirical material, I expose several ethnographic examples from Tallinn and Berlin in order to ground concepts and theories. The term 'post-socialist modernity' is eventually proposed in the attempt to study multiple regimes of modernity, their reciprocity, and the forms they create disconnections and present failures as aberrant.

THOU SHALT NOT FAIL TO DO GOOD: HUMANITARIAN ARENAS
AS PLAYGROUNDS OF THE SOUL

Marcos Farias Ferreira

The politics of pity is a controversial subject and should not be taken for granted in a globalizing world, where some would expect a swifter diffusion of moral norms and cosmopolitan obligations. Nor should for that matter the capacity of empathizing with the pain of others and use it as ground for moral knowledge and progress. Globalizing humanitarian arenas seem to be possible insofar as humans undertake a certain sentimental journey where pictures, fictions and metaphors instigate a leap of imagination that extends the bounds of possibility. As Bosnia and Abu Ghraib have repeatedly shown though, practices of de-humanization and colonizing hierarchies are always part of the possibility framework, while inflicting pain to others might become playground fun for the perpetrators and turned into mere 'picturesque' content to post online, share and comment. A politics of pity must take into account a specific precarity that starts from the assumption that the human body is always exposed to social and political forces, as well as to claims of sociality including language, work and desire on which it depends to thrive, and to be protected, but that can also conspire to annihilate it.

ALIENATION AND THE BRANDLESS COMMUNITY:
BIG KIDS IN THE SANDBOX

Jaanika Puusalu

Android, iPads, Twitter, Instagram—the list goes on—we live in a period that has supposedly transcended the crassness of designer culture, the limits of materialism. No longer are we thought to be slaves to the products, they are our friends and tools, aiding us as we playfully define, design and redefine ourselves. This is 'i-ideology'—and for all its emancipatory potential it is often anything but. In

this chapter I assess i-ideology in the light of the concept of alienation, suggesting that it is a new twist upon an already sophisticated notion of false- belonging by which traditional consumptive capitalism hides its alienating nature. i-ideology leads us to believe that we are wise to the false promise of branded communities and with its aid can turn back to self-realisation. Yet in embracing its products, tools and ethos we are simply tied to a new brandless community, as empty and alienating as its branded predecessors. Where we should grow up, develop and commit we are urged to procrastinate and equivocate, to stay in the sandbox a little while longer.

RESEARCH AS A GAME OF LOVE

Dita Bezdičková

This article is nothing more than an intellectual and emotional inquiry on alternative ways of relating to our research subjects in the process of knowledge construction. Through personal lenses and several important choices, the author presents an alternative epistemology, based upon the ideas of Martin Buber, Jean Luc Nancy and Harlene Anderson. The process of knowledge construction is based upon emotional and existential encounter with the *other*, the research counterpart, *Thou*; and consists of participating and getting emotionally involved with him and her. It can be understood as a woman's mumbling about love, as much as a highly respectful and practice oriented way of relating oneself to research and to life. Above all it strives to be perceived as an invitation to experience and take part in the *playground*—the delineated space for playing, it strives to create and represent.

C. STREET LEGAL

THE NEO-FLÂNEUR AMONGST IRRESISTIBLE DECAY

Patrick Laviolette

Providing an impressionistic (if at times an absurdly ‘dadaesque’) account of the relationship between risk and diverse cultures of fear, this chapter remains a work in progress. Ethno-poetically and auto-anthropologically inspired, it weaves a fragmented narrative about experiential anti-aesthetic acrobatics. Employing flânage, stalking and urban decay as meta-methodological backdrops, my aim with this essay is to offer a rapid-fire exploration into the foreboding. Pondering over how limited public access connects to the clandestine entry into abandoned zones of the recent past begins to expose such misnomers as the accelerated stroll, forbidden play and post-modern ruins.

THE TRANSGRESSIVE GEOGRAPHIES OF DAILY LIFE

Alastair Bonnett

This chapter draws on art and anecdote to explore creativity and transgression in urban space. It begins with the group that has traditionally monopolised discussion of creative interventions in the city—the avant-garde—but soon turns to those contemporary artists who are turning their backs on the ideologies of avant-gardism and beginning to see themselves as interpreters and politicisers of the everyday spatial imagination. The rest of the chapter talks about a couple of particular instances of ordinary people transgressing everyday space: a group of young men running across a motorway and some older woman chatting (and failing to move quickly on...) at a supermarket check-out. I conclude by taking inspiration from Colin Ward’s *The Child in the City* yet also arguing against

narrowly political, instrumental, interpretations of everyday spatial transgression.

FLEA MARKET AND URBAN THEATRICALITY
(CASE STUDY OF BERLIN MAUER PARK)

Oleg Pachenkov and Lilia Voronkova

In our chapter we stress the role a marketplace plays in the life of a city and then bind it to urban theatricality. Our main thesis is the belief in a rigid distinction between market and theatrical activities and, in such a way, between consumption and production—is an error caused by particular historical doings. We believe—and would like to prove with the example of the phenomenon of a flea market—that the market place is and has always been a spot where the borders of economy and theater are blurred and transgressed. This is a source of the allure of an urban marketplace and of a flea market in particular. This point of view allows treating marketplaces in general and flea markets in particular as phenomena possessing the power to overcome the rapture of social experience, the breach between consumption and production, spectatorship and acting, passivity and creativity.

We start with a brief historical analysis of the relations between marketplaces and city in Europe since medieval times till twentieth century. We show how market and theater, which used to be one and the same in medieval towns were split and separated in meaning and space in modern times. Then we address the present day and take as an example one sort of marketplace—a so called ‘flea market’, a variety of marketplace that appeared in European cities quite late, but in our view is the closest and most direct successor of medieval markets and fairs—in terms of spirit and atmosphere. Our analysis is based mainly on a case study of one recent flea market in Berlin. With this example we treat flea market as a ‘city scene’, a place that transforms a city itself into a place, unfolds natural urban theatricality.

D. ANOTHER SIDE OF FREEDOM

THE URBAN GEOGRAPHY OF SWEDISH NON-CITIZENSHIP

Helena Holgersson

Today we see a distinct conflict of interest in Gothenburg. At the same time that many non-citizens come to Gothenburg, the local authorities work hard to reduce this 'inflow'. Consequently, this article focuses on how matters concerning how the welfare state ought to deal with the presence of non-citizens come to a head in cities. It argues that one characteristic of the Swedish non-citizenship is that noncitizens are more obviously excluded in Sweden than in other European countries as a consequence of the social democratic welfare regime. In Sweden the most common way of naming rejected asylum seekers is 'hidden refugees', an expression that envisions these people as living 'underground' and 'outside of society'. However, the informants' everyday life turned out to revolve around learning to navigate in the local terrain of Gothenburg and to create a life in the intersection between national regulations and the opportunities that the city, after all, has to offer.

THE SPANISH 15M AND THE RETURN OF THE POLITICAL

Patricia García Espín and Manuel Fernández García

The 15M social movement appeared in Spain in the context of the economic crisis from 2007 onwards. It reached extraordinary rates of popular support and massive participation. How was it possible in a country with such a high level of political disaffection and disengagement? In this paper, we tried a two way strategy to understand the sympathy and massive support for the protest: firstly, we analyzed its practices and, secondly, we approached the public opinion climate in which collective action emerged. As a tentative

interpretation, we suggest that the success of this protest could imply a *return of the political* in the public debate, as the social movement put under scrutiny the political and social fundamentals as a matter of public discussion.

THE ART OF CAPITAL: ARTISTIC IDENTITY
AND THE PARADOX OF VALORISATION

Benjamin Noys

The paradox of the artist's self-valorisation is simple: on the one hand, it coincides with capitalism's self-valorisation—artistic practice has become the model for contemporary labour: fluid, precarious, creative, mobile, etc. On the other hand, the artist seems to exceed capitalism and prefigure non-capitalist or communist social relations: the refusal of alienated work, an excessive creativity, and play. The emergence of 'aesthetic capitalism' seems to have tipped the balance of this paradox towards subordinating the artist to capitalism. Tracing the analysis of this situation through the theorisations of Antonio Negri, Alain Badiou, and Jacques Rancière, I explore the contradictions and tensions of their explorations of the 'communist moment' in artistic self-valorisation—from Negri's model of the reversible moment of subjection to creation, Badiou's thesis of the moment of subtraction from capitalist through independent affirmation, and Rancière's suggestion of aesthetic dissension and refiguring that rejects the absolutisation of capital. While such theorisations attempt to retain the communist moment of artistic self-valorisation, I suggest that they find their limit in a tendency to not fully engage with the 'real abstractions' that generate the paradox of value. It is these forms of abstraction, revealed through the denuding effects of the contemporary financial crisis, that require traversal to engage with the capillary effects of capitalist power.

E. GENEALOGY OF THE FUTURE

FROM BATTLEFIELDS TO PLAYGROUNDS: ETHNIC AND NATIONAL IDENTITY OF THE CHILDREN OF FREEDOM

Madli Maruste

The Children of Freedom (*Vabaduse lapsed*) is a generation of Estonian young people, who have grown up in the re-independent Estonia after the fall of the Soviet Union. The Children of Freedom went to school after the 1991 and became the first post-World War II generation to be able to choose their educational and career options on a global playground.

When the Soviet Union collapsed and the old nation states were re-established in 1991, the post-empire identity question emerged in Estonia as in the other ex-Soviet states: who becomes whom in considering ones ethnic and national identity? The issue of ethnic belonging and national identity of the Children of Freedom is much more complex than has been discussed until now. It is necessary to give voice to these young people to see how they navigate their position in the politically charged reality with a complex history.

Estonia, as a re-independent state, did not start from a blank page in 1991, nor did it continue straight from 1939, but it is carrying a difficult legacy of the Second World War and the Soviet Union, which still affects the Children of Freedom of today. I argue that Estonia's identity and integration politics should become more inclusive, turning away from polarized and highly politicized options of belonging. Instead the formation of the national identity should be taking into account the generational differences and different historical experiences of all the ethnic groups living in Estonia. Estonia would need a wider discussion on the topic of how the post-Soviet legacy is influencing ethnic and national belonging of the people living in Estonia since the re-establishment of the nation states in 1991.

EXPLORING THE POWER DIMENSIONS OF FESTIVALS

Alessandro Testa

The festival has not only been a relevant object of study in many an ethnographic research but also a major comparative category shaped by the theoretical contribution of different social sciences, particularly history and anthropology.

In this article I present recent anthropological approaches to the study of festivals as well as certain theories of power that can be useful to better understand both historical and contemporary festivals. I then engage in a general methodological reflection in order to try to encapsulate these theories in the description and interpretation of several brief case studies.

ANTI ANTI-UTOPIANISM: IMAGINING ALTERNATIVE SPACES

Sean Homer

In *Archaeologies of the Future* (2005) Fredric Jameson observed that postmodernism marked the end of traditional utopias insofar as we can no longer imagine alternatives to global capitalism. The term utopian has come to designate any form of politics that wishes to radically change the system and is therefore seen as inherently authoritarian and misguided. From a Lacanian perspective Yannis Stavrakakis argues that what characterizes utopian thought is a fear of the negative, the refusal to acknowledge lack and the fantasy of full *jouissance*. Although there are grounds for such a critique in Lacan's rare comments on utopia, theorists such as Jameson and Slavoj Žižek demonstrate that we can perfectly well accept the truth of the Lacanian divided subject and at the same time maintain a strong utopian impulse towards social transformation. The problem with rejecting all forms of utopianism is that it so often leads to a rejection of radical transformative politics in the name of the partial *jouissance* that the status quo allows us.

INDIGNITY OF SPEAKING FOR OTHERS: OCCUPY WALL STREET
AND THE CRISIS OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

Tarmo Jüristo

In late 2011, a series of loosely associated protests flared up in major American and European cities, which became known as the “Occupy movement”. Its “leaderless” structure and distinctive lack of political demands caused a great deal of confusion both in media as well as among mainstream political forces, and raised the question of whether Occupy can be called a political movement at all. This piece will argue that the lack of demands and official leaders were intrinsic to the radical political critique constituted by the Occupy movement — which could be called “resistance to representation”. The short-lived occupations of public space in downtown Manhattan and other cities were at the same time playful and deadly serious, experimenting with and testing the limits of non-representative politics. Although the Zuccotti Park and other encampments around the world were cleared up by police forces in less than two months from their inception, the challenge raised by this experiment has surely outlived the movement itself and still needs to be faced.

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